

INSPECTION REPORT

St. Martin de Porres Primary School

Luton, Bedfordshire

LEA area: Luton

Unique reference number: 109639

Headteacher: Mrs P. A. O'Byrne

Lead inspector: Mr A. C. Matthews

Dates of inspection: 24 – 27 May 2004

Inspection number: 257797

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: Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils: 3-11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 388

School address: Pastures Way
Luton
Bedfordshire
Postcode: LU4 0PF

Telephone number: 01582 617600
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr R. Boxall

Date of previous inspection: New school

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Martin de Porres is a voluntary aided Catholic primary school which opened in 2000 with the amalgamation of the junior and infant schools. There are 368 full-time pupils on roll (189 boys and 179 girls) taught in 14 classes and 41 part-time pupils in the nursery. The majority of pupils come from the immediate area with a further 10 per cent travelling from wider afield. Pupil mobility is below average. The socio-economic background of the school's catchment area is below average and the school is part of an Education Action Zone. The school is larger than other primary schools. Thirty per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds which is above the national average but only a very small proportion of these does not have English as their first language. Sixteen percent of pupils have free school meals. There are 81 pupils on the register of special educational needs and five have Statements of Special Educational Need. These figures are above the national average. There is one child in public care. The school was awarded Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2003, and the Football Association Charter Mark, Investor in People and Healthy Schools awards in the last three years. It is also involved in a British Council project in literacy and information and communication technology with Australian schools. The school takes part in family learning programmes involving literacy and information and communication technology. During the inspection the school was in the middle of a building programme to link the old infant and junior schools and create a new administration block.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19410	Andrew Matthews	Lead inspector	Science, information and communications technology, design and technology
19743	Ann Taylor	Lay inspector	
22740	Margaret Leah	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, art, geography
28200	Paul Stevens	Team inspector	English, history, modern foreign languages, music
30573	Sonia Bosworth	Team inspector	Mathematics, physical education, special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective school with many very good features, well regarded by parents and very popular with pupils. Very good leadership and management underpin the many developments that have taken place since this new school opened four years ago. The quality of education is very good and pupils of all abilities achieve very well as they move through the school. By the end of Year 6, standards are average in English and above average in mathematics and science. By the end of Year 2, standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school leadership and management is very effective because all staff have a keen sense of their roles and responsibilities and know how they can contribute to improving the school further.
- The teaching is good and pupils of all abilities are fully included in the school's activities and achieve very well.
- There is a very strong Catholic ethos in the school which is reflected in the very good relationships between adults and pupils who are enthusiastic, well behaved and hard working.
- The school's curriculum is good, effectively planned and well informed by the very good assessments that are carried out.
- Co-ordinators work hard but have limited time to monitor teaching and learning in their subjects to identify the very good practice so that it can be shared with all staff.

This is the first inspection of the school since it opened in 2000.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 6 results (end of Key Stage 2)

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

Key: A - very high, 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.

Throughout the school pupils of all abilities work hard and achieve very well overall. This is particularly so in the acquisition of the skills of numeracy and literacy. Children enter the Foundation Stage with well below average attainment. These children make good progress because of the good teaching and well focused support they receive, but the majority will not meet the expected standards by the end of the reception year. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is average in reading, writing and mathematics but below average in science. The present group of Year 6 pupils has a much higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs. However, all pupils in the year have made significant improvements since they were in Year 2 and attain average standards in English and above average standards in mathematics and science. In all other subjects inspected, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, except for physical education where the attainment of the Year 6 pupils is above expectations. Higher-attaining pupils are consistently well challenged and pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs are very well supported. All of these groups achieve very well overall.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is good. There is a very supportive ethos in the school and relationships are very good. Attendance is average, although a small minority

of pupils does not always arrive punctually for the start of school. **The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good.**

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. Throughout the school the quality of teaching and learning is good and often very good and leads to pupils achieving very well as they move through the school. There is good support from the experienced teaching assistants who work effectively and sensitively with individuals and small groups. The work of the computer teaching assistant is particularly effective. The school has developed very good assessment procedures and teachers use the results from these very effectively to ensure that pupils of all abilities are appropriately challenged. In general, pupils achieve very well because relationships are very good, the teaching is consistently challenging and pupils are very enthusiastic learners. Teachers mark work conscientiously but do not consistently inform pupils how they can improve their work. **Overall the quality of teaching is good.**

The curriculum provision meets statutory requirements and is good overall. The curriculum for English, mathematics, information and communication technology and science is consistently good. The curriculum benefits from a very good range of visits and extra-curricular activities. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is very good and contributes significantly to these pupils' very good achievement. Resources are good and the school's accommodation is very good, with all years having a good size additional teaching area for small group and practical work. The school is very well resourced for information and communication technology, with the computer suite being used very effectively during lessons and lunchtimes. The school has good links with the community and very effective links with local schools. The school provides a very good level of care for all its pupils and makes very good use of outside agencies to support pupils with specific learning difficulties.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher's leadership is very good and she is very well supported by her knowledgeable deputy. The headteacher has a very clear vision of what needs to be done and high aspirations. She leads by example and has a very strong determination to ensure that all pupils are fully included in all the school's activities and achieve to their full potential. Leadership and management are great strengths of the school, with subject co-ordinators playing a significant role in helping the school to continually improve its provision. The school's commitment to constant evaluation of its practices is helping it to improve even more. However, even more time could be made available to co-ordinators to identify the very good practice in their subjects so that it can be shared with all teachers. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very supportive of the school and fulfil all their statutory duties. They are experienced and have effective links with subject co-ordinators. They work closely with the school in planning developments and overseeing the budget. The school provides very good in-service training for staff that is meaningfully linked with targets in its development plan and the teachers' performance management.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory, with some parents feeling that more information about their child's progress would help them to become more effective partners in their child's learning. However, the parents have confidence in the school's provision and pupils greatly enjoy their learning experiences.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The governors, headteacher and staff should now:

- further improve the quality of teaching by identifying and sharing the very good teaching practice amongst all staff.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **very good** overall. In the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 achievement is good and very good in Years 3 to 6. There is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Standards in the core subjects at the end of Year 2 are average overall and above average in these subjects at the end of Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities work hard and achieve very well overall.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are very well supported and make very good progress as they move through the school.
- Standards in recent National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 have been consistently high.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.0 (15.5)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.4 (13.5)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.7 (15.7)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 45 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Despite the fact that results have been consistently below average at the end of Year 2, the improvement trend over the last three years has been slightly above the national trend. The results of 2003 show that the Year 2 pupils' attainment, compared with all schools, was average in writing but below average in reading and mathematics. When compared with similar schools, pupils' attainment was above average in writing and average in reading and mathematics. When compared with similar schools, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 3, was average in reading, above average in writing and well above average in mathematics. As a result of a detailed analysis of last year's national tests, the school has divided the present two Year 2 classes into three ability groups for the teaching of literacy and numeracy in order to raise standards further.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.9 (28.3)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.4 (28.8)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.2 (30.5)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 57 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Results at the end of Year 6 over the last three years have been consistently well above average, with an improvement trend that is higher than other schools. Results in 2003 show that pupils' attainment was well above average in English, mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools, pupils' attainment was well above average in mathematics and science and very high in English, being in the top 5 per cent of schools in the country.

The proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5, when compared with similar schools, was well above average in English and mathematics and very high in science, being in the top 5 per cent. This group of pupils had made very good progress since Year 2. Over the last three years there has been very little difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

3. When children enter the school, the detailed assessments made show that their attainment is well below average and particularly low in their personal, social and emotional development and in their language and literacy development. The good provision enables the children to make a positive start to their schooling and they make good progress in the majority of the areas of learning. This is due to the good assessment procedures that inform the teachers' planning and the good support that the children receive. In their mathematical and physical development, where the quality of teaching is not so consistently good, they make satisfactory progress. Despite the strong provision, the majority of children will not attain the early learning goals¹ by the time they start in Year 1.
4. Standards are average in reading, writing, speaking and listening and mathematics in the present Year 2. In science, the pupils' attainment is below average, with a low proportion of pupils working at the higher level. The present standards in reading, writing and mathematics show an improvement over previous years and the impact of the extra support pupils receive in literacy and numeracy lessons. Overall, these pupils are achieving well because the teachers plan consistently challenging work that successfully builds on their previous learning. At the end of Year 6, where there is a particularly high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, the standards are not as high as in previous years, being above average in science and mathematics and average in English. However, this particular group of Year 6 pupils has made very good progress since they were in Year 2.
5. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are achieving well overall and attaining standards that are in line with national expectations in all other subjects inspected. In Years 3 to 6, standards are again in line with national expectations in all subjects, apart from physical education where attainment is above average. In information and communication technology, despite standards being in line, pupils are achieving very well because of the way the subject is integrated across the curriculum.
6. The school has high expectations that pupils of all abilities will achieve their full potential. This is particularly applicable to pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. It is successful in reaching this aim because it makes consistently very good provision for the individual needs of these pupils. In lessons, the teachers and teaching assistants interact very well with these pupils. They ensure that they are fully integrated into the work of the class and that extra support provided is focused clearly on challenging the pupils to do their very best. Gifted and talented pupils are also achieving very well because their needs are clearly identified and appropriately challenging work is planned for them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are very good and behaviour is **good**. Relationships are **very positive**. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good** overall. Attendance is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy lessons. Attitudes to learning improve as they move through the school.
- Pupils behave well because the school has high expectations.

¹ Early learning goals - these are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer mainly to achievements children make in connection with communication language and literacy; mathematical development; and personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall and staff successfully create many meaningful spiritual opportunities for pupils to reflect on the importance of the Catholic faith in their lives.
- Relationships are very positive and supportive, and there is much encouragement for pupils to mature and develop as individuals.
- The 'house' system works well.
- The new computerised attendance recording system has been inaccurate and the monitoring of attendance has lacked rigour.
- A small minority of pupils are often late for the start of school.

Commentary

7. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to learn. Their attitudes improve as they move through the school. This is clearly shown by the very good attitudes of the older pupils. Some younger pupils, especially in Year 2, find concentration difficult and need a lot of adult support in class. Pupils are learning well in a positive, supportive environment, where relationships are very warm and supportive.
8. The school particularly encourages pupils to develop socially through house-based activities. Lunchtime sessions where older pupils can share different games and crafts with housemates particularly encourages them to make new friends from different year groups and classes.
9. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Provision for pupils' moral development and the quality of pupils' behaviour are both good. There are some pockets of very difficult behaviour in some areas which occasionally affect learning. Staff have some good ways of encouraging pupils to conform and modify their actions, including using 'Golden Time' where pupils earn the privilege of special activities if they behave well. The school has put in place many different strategies to support pupils both emotionally and socially, so they can help resolve problems which prevent them from learning as well as they could. This is an important factor in pupils' very strong social development. The support work of the school's learning mentor is particularly effective for the small number of pupils who need skilled one-to-one support with controlling their behaviour and improving their attitudes to school.
10. There have been no exclusions in the last two years. Pupils are happy that bullying is not a worry for them and that adults help if there is a problem. The school is a very harmonious and supportive place to work, where everyone, regardless of background, gets on very well with each other.
11. Opportunities for spiritual development are very good and are based firmly and sensitively upon the teachings of the Catholic family. Assemblies are especially uplifting occasions because a strong spiritual atmosphere is created. The Year 6 pupils' assembly on 'Peace' demonstrated these pupils' level of maturity and their concern for others. Assemblies also contribute strongly to the very good provision for pupils' personal development, as do the many opportunities that teachers create in lessons for pupils to work in collaborative situations.
12. There are a good number of visits out and visitors coming in to give pupils different cultural experiences. The 'Invaders and Settlers' who 'invaded' during the inspection are a prime example of the quality of experiences the school offers. Opportunities to take part in Caribbean dance, work with authors and an annual drama production (Shakespeare last year) shows the school provides wide and varied cultural experiences for the pupils.

Attendance

13. There are problems with the school's computerised attendance recording which is being addressed. Scrutiny of registers shows that attendance for the present year is average overall. A small minority of pupils often arrive a few minutes late after the official starting time for school. This is one reason why the nationally published attendance figures for last year are misleading as pupils arriving late were categorised as being absent for the session. Improving punctuality in the mornings is an area for the school to address.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002-2003

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.8	School data	0.5
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.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education planned by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is very good. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 is very good. The curriculum for Years 3 to 6 is very good. The enrichment of the statutory curriculum is very good. The accommodation is very good and the range and quality of resources are good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' high expectations for good behaviour and hard work ensure a brisk pace to learning.
- Teachers use the very good assessment procedures very effectively to match the work to the range of age, gender and ability within each class.
- The effective deployment of the teaching assistants makes a good contribution to teaching and learning, especially for pupils with special educational needs.
- Teachers plan effectively for pupils to use information and communication technology to support their learning.
- Teachers mark pupils' work carefully but do not consistently inform them how to improve their work or move towards their targets.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 60 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	15 (25%)	28 (47%)	14 (23%)	2 (3%)	1 (2%)	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.

14. The good quality teaching in the Foundation Stage enables children of all abilities to achieve well. The teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants work effectively together. They have a good understanding of how young children learn and plan a good range of activities which build constructively on the children's previous learning. Every opportunity is taken to develop children's speaking and listening and early reading, writing and mathematical skills. Routines are clearly understood by the children and make them feel secure and valued.

Teachers use the good range of resources to help children develop an enthusiasm for learning. Assessment is good and effectively informs the children's future learning.

15. In Years 1 to 6, pupils of all abilities, and particularly the higher-attaining pupils, are well challenged and are achieving very well, particularly in literacy and numeracy where the quality of teaching is consistently good and often very good. Pupils achieve very well in English and mathematics because teachers consistently plan opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in these two subjects across the curriculum. Teachers' planning is good and particularly well informed by their assessments and evaluations of lessons. As a result, strengths are built on and weaknesses addressed in future planning. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully but do not consistently inform pupils how to improve their work. Similarly, teachers rarely comment on pupils' targets that have been set for them in numeracy and literacy. However, because teachers know the pupils very well and use assessment very effectively to plan the pupils' work, these omissions in marking are having very little negative impact on pupils' achievement. The school's marking policy is shortly to be revised and the school is aware that the weaknesses identified by the inspection need to be addressed to enable pupils to benefit more from teachers' marking.
16. Teachers are consistently good at creating opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. They make good use of these skills in lesson introductions and in the way they develop the pupils' learning through careful questioning. This encourages pupils to share their ideas which, in the best cases, are reinterpreted by the teachers so that all pupils benefit from their peers' answers. This was particularly effective in a Year 6 science lesson when pupils were explaining about the workings of their burglar alarms. Plenaries at the end of lessons are carefully planned and, in the most effective cases, are used to assess pupils' understanding of their new learning. In the best lessons, pupils are also asked to evaluate how they think they have met the objectives of the lesson and to reflect on whether they need future help.
17. The management of pupils' behaviour is good overall and good use is made of teaching assistants who often work on an individual basis with a small number of pupils with identified behavioural problems. As a result, these pupils are well included in lessons and their behaviour does not usually affect the learning of the other pupils. However, there are a very small number of pupils whose behaviour is sometimes very difficult to manage. In a very small proportion of lessons observed, the behaviour of this minority did affect the learning of the class. Resources are used effectively in English, mathematics and science to consolidate and extend pupils' learning. The use of computers to support and extend pupils' learning in other subjects is well planned and particularly good use is made of the skills of the computer teaching assistant who works with all classes during their time in the computer suite.
18. Pupils who have special educational needs are well taught and receive very good support. Teachers and teaching assistants support their learning very well and effectively develop these pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Individual education plans are carefully drawn up and used well by the teachers and teaching assistants to plan the work for the pupils. The targets in them are clearly focused on the next stage in the pupils' learning and amended regularly to build on pupils' successes and extend their learning to the next stage. Similarly, pupils who have English as an additional language are also very well supported. After their language needs are assessed, they are placed on a nationally agreed scale, given appropriate support and, as a result, achieve very well like their peers.
19. Homework is set very regularly in Year 6 and makes a positive contribution to the learning of these pupils, particularly in English, mathematics and science. However, in other years, mathematics homework is not set and opportunities are missed to consolidate and develop pupils' learning in this subject. Very good use is made of assessment information gained from national and commercial tests and from teacher assessments to track pupils' progress. This information is used very well by teachers to inform planning and to ensure that pupils of

all abilities are appropriately challenged and achieving to their full potential. The school is making increasing use of relevant computer programs to help assess pupils' learning. Particularly good use is made of a mathematics program which pupils use for a short period every day. Their work is marked by the computer, which gives teachers a clear insight into individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses in a particular mathematical concept.

The curriculum

The school provides a **good** range of learning opportunities. There are **very good** opportunities to broaden pupils' experiences through extra-curricular activities. Accommodation is **very good** and resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well and is enriched by stimulating extra-curricular activities.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is very good and helps them to achieve very well.
- The accommodation provides very good facilities for teaching all subjects.
- There is a very good emphasis on pupils' personal, social and health education.
- The use of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is carefully planned across the curriculum.

Commentary

20. The school provides a good curriculum that meets all statutory requirements to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils is very good and all pupils are included very well in the activities provided. The national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are applied very well and teachers plan good links for pupils to use their skills in these areas across the curriculum, particularly in science, geography and history. The school uses national guidance effectively to provide a good range of curriculum activities in all subjects. The recently improved resources for information and communication technology provide enhanced opportunities for all pupils to extend their skills in the subject. There are very good links between information and communication technology and other subjects, particularly mathematics for pupils in Years 1 to 6. The teaching of Italian to all pupils in Years 5 and 6 enriches the curriculum well. The school places a high emphasis on the well being of pupils. The very good personal, social and health education has very clear links with every subject and activity within the school.
21. In their planning, teachers recognise pupils' different levels of attainment within their classes and work hard to plan work to match the needs of them all. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Individual education plans have very clear targets, which teachers use well in planning for lessons or in the very good support by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Teaching assistants work well with small groups of pupils on class or additional support programmes. The school uses the advice from outside agencies very well to support pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties. The school provides very well for pupils identified as gifted and talented. A teacher works particularly with groups of these pupils to challenge and extend their thinking skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils take part in other exciting challenges at other schools and centres.
22. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities to enhance pupils' learning. The extensive range of sporting clubs is very well attended. The use of coaches in lessons and activities has very effectively improved provision in physical education. Music activities are popular and provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to perform in school and in public. Pupils visit local places of interest to extend their learning in various subjects. The school uses visitors very effectively to promote pupils' understanding in subjects. For example, pupils in Year 3 carried out a wide range of exciting activities led by a 'Viking' visitor.

The Year 6 residential visit to Alton Castle is popular and of great benefit to the older pupils who attend. The school promotes particularly good links with a local Catholic secondary school to ensure the smooth transition of Year 6 pupils into Year 7. A mentor from the secondary school works sensitively with pupils whom the school has identified as having potential problems with moving up to Year 7.

23. The school's accommodation provides a very good environment for learning. It is light, well furnished and spacious. Classrooms are well appointed, including bays dedicated to computers and library areas. They also have excellent practical areas between them. However, the recently built Year 1 classes do not have toilets and this results in some lessons being interrupted when the teaching assistant has to accompany certain pupils. Two large multi-purpose halls allow pupils to carry out their physical education safely. There are a large number of extra rooms for activities like music and small group work. Pupils have access to two large fields as well as their playgrounds. The temperature in the computer suite can become uncomfortably hot because of poor ventilation and affects pupils' well-being and concentration. Subject resources are mostly good.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure pupils' care and welfare are **very good**. The school provides pupils with a **very good** level of support, advice, and guidance. There is a **satisfactory** level of involvement through seeking, valuing and acting upon pupils' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff provide a very good level of care within a strong Christian framework.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language receive very good support.
- There are a number of innovative ways pupils are supported and guided, helping them to overcome problems that could affect their learning.
- Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully.
- The learning mentor works effectively with small groups of pupils.
- There are currently no formal opportunities for the school to seek pupils' views.

Commentary

24. There is very good care for the welfare of pupils and the school has a friendly, supportive, atmosphere. Circle time² is used well to help pupils deal with day-to-day issues. The school has several effective strands to its very good support for the individual. By being part of an Educational Action Zone, the school benefits enormously from the services of a learning mentor. She provides specially tailored guidance, for example, in the form of anger management, support for those with friendship problems and low self-esteem, and helping pupils with their behaviour. Other valuable strands to the support systems include a large number of specially trained counsellors to help pupils at especially vulnerable times through the school's *Rainbow Programme*. Testimonies from pupils who have taken part in this programme describe the big difference it makes to their ability to cope with difficult times.
25. Child protection procedures are good and staff are experienced. There is an appropriate level of health and safety understanding. An awareness of safety is also carefully conveyed to older pupils. For instance, Year 6 pupils will have lessons before they leave Year 6 advising them about the possible dangers associated with the use of mobile phones and the Internet.
26. At present there are no formal opportunities for pupils to discuss issues of a whole school nature. The school is aware of this and plans for a school council are in next year's school

² During Circle Time pupils discuss a wide range of personal and general issues. It is agreed by all pupils that no interruptions should occur and only one person at a time will speak. Respect for other pupils' views will occur at all times and therefore pupils feel confident that they can talk with ease and free from any form of interference of interruption from other children.

development plan. Older pupils are mature and responsible and would benefit from the opportunities that a council would give them, whilst gaining an important understanding about citizenship.

27. Support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs is very effective. The school has established a good inclusion philosophy and other pupils are often very supportive of those who experience learning and behaviour difficulties. Very good individual education and behaviour plans are in place. Regular monitoring by teachers and support staff ensures that the targets set for pupils are both realistic and achievable. The school fully complies with the Code of Practice and promotes effective liaison with external agencies. Similarly, pupils for whom English is an additional language are very well supported and fully included in all the learning activities of their peers.
28. Targets, based on the National Curriculum level descriptors, are set for pupils by their class teacher at the end of the summer term. They are reviewed by the pupils' new class teacher and the deputy headteacher in October to ensure all pupils are making appropriate progress. This is a very effective procedure as it enables the school to put in place focused support for pupils who are not making the expected progress. Individual targets for improvement are also set for pupils in their annual reports for parents and these are intended to help pupils reach appropriate standards by the end of the next academic year. At present, teachers do not refer to these individual targets consistently in their marking of pupils' work. Whilst the impact of this is not great, it does deny the pupils opportunities to become more involved in their learning.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents is **satisfactory**. **Good** links are forged with the community. Relationships with other schools are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the headteacher in high regard and are supportive of the school.
- The school works closely with local schools who make good use of its expertise.
- The school is receptive to parental views and keen to respond positively.
- There are very good arrangements for pupils moving to secondary schools.
- There is little information termly for parents about what their child is going to learn and too few opportunities to view their children's work during parent/teacher interviews.

Commentary

29. St Martin's is a friendly and welcoming place, where the headteacher is highly regarded by parents. Parents find the school approachable and are pleased with the way it has improved over the years. They are supportive of the school and happy with all it offers their child and the way it responds to parents' needs, such as the family literacy courses. Parents at present do not see their children's work during all teacher interview meetings and inspectors agree that this is desirable if they are to be effective partners in their children's education.
30. Information for parents is satisfactory. The school accepts that termly information letters about the work the pupils will be covering in each year group would be more helpful to parents than the current annual information sheet. Staff in the Foundation Stage have good procedures for building links with parents by personally visiting each family at home before children start in the nursery.
31. The partnership with other schools is very good. The school's practice for helping Year 6 pupils move from primary to secondary education is especially strong. This partnership has been developed and continually refined over the years and, as part of it, pupils start units of work in Year 6 called *bridging units* which are continued when the pupils move to their new secondary schools. Another good practice includes the sharing of exercise books, so primary

teachers can see how their former Year 6 pupils are progressing. There is also an extensive number of sporting links with other schools which pupils compete in successfully.

32. The headteacher's work, advising other schools, partnered with the school's reputation for good practice in a number of areas, brings in many benefits. These include extra money to use for the school's provision and the chance to try out new ideas and be part of new initiatives, such as the teacher visit to Australia as part of a project on literacy and information and communication technology.
33. The school has close and mutually supportive links with the parish. The priest is a regular visitor to the school. Assemblies, masses and liturgies are looked forward to and are well attended. Pupils entertain parishioners at Christmas and the school shares its facilities with the parish children's football team, the Brownies and the local Cantata Choir.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good. The governance of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher leads very effectively and, with the help of the united staff team, manages the ongoing development of the school very well.
- Governors are supportive and have good links with subject co-ordinators.
- The school has very good self-evaluation procedures and tracks pupils' progress very carefully as they move through the school.
- The leadership and management in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and in the Foundation Stage are consistently good.
- Very good systems support new staff and ensure the ongoing professional development of existing staff.
- The school provides limited opportunities to share the very good teaching practice amongst all staff.

Commentary

34. The headteacher provides very good and effective leadership for the school and enjoys the full support of a loyal, hardworking and highly committed staff and a supportive governing body. She has a very clear agenda for the school's improvement and, through very regular monitoring of pupils' work and classroom practice, has gained a very good and accurate perception of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher is very effective in the way she involves staff and governors in discussion, whilst giving a clear and well-considered lead to the decision-making process.
35. The headteacher works very closely with her deputy and uses the school's very good assessment systems to monitor and track pupils' progress through each year. As a result, the great majority of pupils are achieving to their full potential, with well-focused support introduced when needs are identified. The amalgamation of the two schools in 2000 has been carefully managed. Staff have been strategically moved to ensure teaching through the school is of the same high standard. The joining of the school with the new administration block and staff room will bring to fruition the hard work of the last four years. The school is part of a local Education Action Zone and has made good use of extra funding that this provided. For example, the school has been able to employ a full-time learning mentor who works very closely with pupils who have specific behavioural and emotional difficulties.
36. The management of the school is very good. All staff have a secure understanding of how the school is expected to run from day to day and carry out this policy in a consistent fashion. The role of the co-ordinator, particularly in the main subjects, has been very carefully developed and they have a particularly positive impact on standards in their subjects. Co-

ordinators regularly monitor teachers' planning and pupils' work but at present have limited time to monitor teaching and learning in their subjects so that the best practice can be identified and shared with all staff.

37. The governance of the school is satisfactory. Governors provide good support for the work of the school. A combination of information gleaned from governor visits and from the headteacher's detailed termly report gives them a secure appreciation of the strengths of the school and the areas that need to be improved. Regular feedback of the school's monitoring keeps governors well informed of the progress of individual year groups, particularly Year 2 and Year 6, and the achievement of different genders, abilities and ethnicities. The planned termly monitoring of teachers with the co-ordinator is a good initiative and will make good use of time, whilst further deepening the individual governors' knowledge. Whilst governors keep a keen eye on school initiatives, even greater use could be made of their expertise to help the school monitor its developments; for example through formal discussion with pupils.
38. The school has developed very good self-evaluation procedures and uses these most effectively to draw up improvement plan priorities. The views of governors, staff and parents are carefully considered. These, together with information from the school's monitoring systems, enable the school to set accurate targets for its development plan. These have a direct impact on the school's provision and ultimately the pupils' achievement. The close and effective teamwork is reflected in the very good arrangement for the support of newly qualified teachers and the ongoing development of other staff. Performance management is very well implemented and very effectively linked to developments in the school development plan. Careful identification of development plan priorities, allied to well-focused training, maximises the impact of initiatives. All support staff will be brought into the school's performance management system this year. These staff are very positive about this initiative and rightly see it as a way of enhancing their professional development and supporting school initiatives.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	931,972
Total expenditure	937,146
Expenditure per pupil	2,519

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	76,506
Balance carried forward to the next	71,332

39. The headteacher, together with the governors' finance committee, manages the budget very carefully to ensure sufficient money is available to finance developments. In this way, the school is now well resourced, particularly in information and communication technology. Much of the higher than average carry forward at the end of the financial year has been earmarked for the present school building programme.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

40. Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**. From a well below average starting point, children achieve well overall. However, the majority of children are not on course to reach the early learning goals in each of the areas of learning by the time they leave the reception classes. Arrangements to ensure that all children are fully included are very good. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress. Leadership and management are good. The new curriculum co-ordinator has extended the range and quality of learning opportunities so that the curriculum now meets children's needs well. Due in part to several recent changes of staff, the curriculum co-ordinator has not yet had the chance to monitor teaching and learning or to share her expertise effectively throughout the Foundation Stage. Teaching and learning are good overall, with the best teaching seen in a reception class. Assessment systems are good and are used effectively to monitor children's progress and develop the curriculum.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults clearly establish a purposeful working atmosphere where children grow in confidence and develop enthusiastic attitudes to learning.
- Spiritual development is fostered particularly well.

Commentary

41. Teaching and learning are good. Children achieve well from a particularly low start, but generally do not reach the early learning goals by the end of the reception class. Staff establish a calm and secure working atmosphere where children become increasingly confident in carrying out work that adults have asked them to do, or in selecting tasks for themselves. Children respond well to frequent praise and encouragement and most try hard to do their best. Rules and routines are clearly and consistently established. Whilst children know what is expected, some nursery children have difficulty in waiting turns and, for instance, interrupt at story time or in discussions. Reception children are keen to learn but do not always maintain concentration without adult attention. Circle time and assemblies are especially well led and provide well-organised opportunities where children reflect and share thoughts. A lighted candle sets an effective focus for spiritual development and successfully promotes a sense of wonder. For example, in the reception class, children's sense of self-worth and respect for others was successfully nurtured in a well led assembly when each one peeped into a mirrored box to see 'something special' which was of course themselves. With help, they carefully consider how other people are special too.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of stories to promote discussions and to raise enthusiasm for books.
- In the reception class, the teaching of letters and their sounds is good.

Commentary

42. Teaching and learning are good. Achievement overall is good from a particularly low start, but the majority of children do not reach the early learning goals by the end of reception class.

Many nursery children start school with speech difficulties and do not express themselves clearly or listen well to others. They become increasingly confident and coherent because of the frequent well-organised opportunities to talk and listen in large and small groups. Reception children join confidently in discussion, but many still have limited vocabulary to talk for a specific purpose, for instance, to describe or explain. Adults tell stories expressively and make effective use of large and attractive picture books. Consequently, children are interested and enthusiastic. They often choose to look at books by themselves. The National Literacy Strategy has been carefully adapted to meet children's needs in the reception class. Suitable emphasis is put on the step-by-step teaching of letters and their sounds. Teachers demonstrate clearly and successfully by using visual aids, such as a puppet, to hold children's interest. As a result, reception children recognise some letters by shape and sound and can accurately tell which is the initial sound in a word. Higher attainers use this knowledge well in their reading and spell out three-letter words like *rat* and *cat* in their writing. Group tasks are usually carefully planned to provide good challenge for children of different attainment so that all make good progress.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Practical experiences are generally well organised to promote sound development of mathematical concepts.
- Teaching in the nursery is not always planned accurately to meet children's needs.

Commentary

43. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory, but most children are not on course to reach the early learning goals. Staff provide many clearly focused opportunities for children to sort, match and count purposefully throughout the day, as well as in mathematics sessions. Lively strategies keep children busy and enthusiastic. For example, reception children are well motivated and excited to spot the teacher's deliberate mistakes. Children in the reception class count correctly along a number line to 5, to 10 or to 20 and are competent in counting on 4 more. With help, children are accurate in finding the total number of items in two groups by counting all of them. In the nursery, activities are not always accurately matched to the children's stage of development. For example, in a class lesson on addition, only a few children understood the basic concepts and others were confused and lost interest.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-planned topic work is complemented by the exciting contributions from visits and visitors.
- Staff use questions skilfully to help children extend their ideas.
- Occasionally tasks do not focus sufficiently on the development of specific skills in knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

44. Teaching and learning are good in reception and the nursery. Children achieve well but do not reach the early learning goals by the end of the reception class. Topic work is usually lively and interesting. Children's understanding of animals and their needs has been enhanced particularly well by a visit to Whipsnade Zoo. The stimulating visit of an animal welfare officer gave the children good insights into looking after pets. Children are adept at using the computer, control the mouse well and print out their own work. Adults are skilful in helping children think for themselves through careful questioning. As a result, children make sense of

what they see and hear, but few children are confident to initiate ideas or to ask questions of their own. Some group tasks, such as word matching of the names of animals and their young, do not concentrate enough on specific practical skills to promote learning in this area.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good relationships promote confidence and effort.
- In physical education lessons, teachers do not put enough emphasis on showing children how to improve.
- The school hall and the outdoor area are well resourced and used effectively.

Commentary

45. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the nursery and reception. Children achieve satisfactorily but the majority do not reach the early learning goals. Staff manage children successfully in the outdoor area. They use praise effectively so that children are confident. Reception children are competent to control large wheeled toys and use the space with care and consideration for others. In the hall, they hop, jump and balance with good control. Teachers' expectations are not always high enough and children do not have enough chances to collaborate to devise their own tasks. Teachers give insufficient guidance to children on exactly how they can improve their own work. Many purposeful activities are well organised to promote children's fine motor skills. As a result, most reception children are competent in using tools like scissors and pencils to their own purpose.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

No judgement is made on provision because no direct teaching was seen.

46. Work on display and scrutiny of teachers' plans indicates that children experience a suitable range of media and techniques. The zoo visit effectively provided a lively stimulus for painting, collage and clay modelling. There are opportunities for imaginative role-play in the *pet shop* and children sing a satisfactory repertoire of action songs.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning are good so that pupils achieve well.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject and make effective use of the good quality resources.
- The quality of the curriculum is good and well informed by the very good assessment systems.
- The leadership and management of the co-ordinator are good but there are insufficient opportunities for the very good practice to be shared.
- Teachers' marking does not consistently inform pupils how to improve their work and pupils do have not enough opportunities for extended writing.

Commentary

47. In the 2003 national tests, Year 2 pupils' attainment was average in writing and below average in reading. When compared with similar schools, their attainment was above average in writing and average in reading. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was

average in reading but above average in writing. The present Year 2 pupils have achieved well since starting in the school and are attaining average standards in reading, writing and speaking and listening. These results show that reading and writing standards have improved as part of an upward trend since the new school was opened. In the 2003 national tests, Year 6 pupils' attainment was well above average when compared with all schools and very high, being in the top 5 per cent, when compared with similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels was also well above average. Standards at the end of Year 6 have been consistently high in the national tests of the last three years. The attainment of the present Year 6 is average in speaking and listening, reading and writing. The apparent fall in standards is due to a much higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, with the great majority of these pupils having distinct weaknesses in the development of their literacy skills. However, these pupils are achieving well and have made significant progress since they were in Year 2.

48. By the end of Year 2, the more able pupils are confident in speaking on their own to an adult but most pupils tend not to initiate conversation. They are more prepared to speak in detail to their class. For example, in a lesson about books, Year 2 pupils gave considerable detail about the personalities of the characters they were reading about. By the end of Year 6, pupils have developed much more confidence with adults and hold conversations about their work. They listen attentively and are sensitive to the views of others.
49. Pupils in Year 2 read books fluently for their age but few read with expression. They have appropriate strategies for tackling difficult new words. However, lower attaining pupils do not use clues in a sentence when trying to pronounce a difficult word. The higher attaining pupils read challenging books with good expression, give considerable detail about the plot and characters and have good library skills. By the end of Year 6, pupils have developed the confidence to read fluently and with some expression. They have definite preferences for authors and explain why they would recommend certain books. They are independent in their use of the non-fiction library. Higher attaining pupils have clear preferences of genre.
50. By the end of Year 2, pupils' writing is still at the stage of being a string of statements. Few have begun to structure their writing, for example, so that there is a clear beginning, middle and ending. Pupils mostly write simple sentences, but are beginning to link ideas with words like *when* and *because*. Handwriting is not always consistent, but generally very legible. The more able do not yet join their letters. Pupils spell basic words accurately and make plausible attempts at longer words. By the end of Year 6, they structure their writing well. The more able are not yet writing long stories but are aware of how to engage the interest of the reader. Pupils' grammar is mostly accurate, even if they are not adventurous with punctuation. Handwriting and spelling are both above average.
51. The quality of teaching is good. Unsatisfactory lessons are very rare and usually associated with difficulties in managing a number of pupils with behavioural difficulties. Teachers plan well so they match different tasks to the pupils, including the more able and those with special educational needs. Their methods challenge pupils to think hard. Teachers have good strategies to include all pupils in lessons. Those with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language are fully involved. All teachers mark pupils' work carefully but do not consistently inform pupils how they can improve or move towards their long-term targets.
52. The curriculum is good overall. Pupils experience a wide variety of ways to use writing and often record their work on computers. Younger pupils have too few opportunities to develop story writing and all classes do not have sufficient time for extended writing. Nevertheless, pupils learn to express their feelings through poetry, which makes a good contribution to their spiritual development. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and management. She uses some of her release from the classroom to monitor teaching. Staff collaborate very well in order to raise standards and make use of the very good systems for monitoring pupils'

progress. However, not enough opportunities exist for teachers to observe the very good practice in other classes to help raise standards further.

Literacy across the curriculum

53. Overall, teachers plan good opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills in other subjects. Pupils make particularly thorough reports of their investigations in science, and in history and geography they research information using both books and the Internet. There are also some good links in pupils' mathematics investigations and when they evaluate their finished products in design and technology.

ITALIAN

54. The school receives a grant from the Italian government to provide a weekly half-hour **Italian** lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6. This enables the school to broaden its curriculum with the opportunity for pupils to study a modern foreign language. Only one lesson was observed. Whilst pupils were enthusiastic and made satisfactory progress in learning new vocabulary, a significant minority experienced difficulties in using this vocabulary to create simple conversations.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in Years 3 to 6 because teaching is never less than good and often very good.
- The co-ordinator and deputy headteacher provide very good leadership and management.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are very well supported and achieve very well.
- Although pupils' attainment is monitored very well, they are not sufficiently aware of how they can improve their work.
- There are insufficient opportunities to share examples of very good teaching practice across the whole school.

Commentary

55. In the 2003 national tests, Year 2 pupils attained standards that were below the national average but broadly the same as the average of similar schools. The school put into place a rigorous programme of monitoring pupil performance which identified that pupils in Year 2 were not making as much progress as they could. Very positive action was taken to teach the two present Year 2 classes in three ability groups and to use a mathematics computer program geared to individual levels in Years 1 and 2 on a regular daily basis. These strategies are successful as most pupils now achieve well. An analysis of pupils' work confirms that pupils in the present Year 2 are on target to attain average results in national tests. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 also use the effective individual program either in the classroom or the computer suite, with further opportunities targeted very well in lunchtimes for those who are having the most difficulty. In the 2003 national tests, Year 6 pupils attained well above average standards in mathematics compared with all schools nationally and to those in similar social contexts. Because a higher proportion of the present Year 6 pupils have special educational needs, the school has rightly set itself lower targets for 2004 and scrutiny of their work shows pupils are on track to attain above average standards. Pupils' achievement is very good. Those pupils who do not speak English as their home language achieve as well as their peers.
56. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well by class teachers and teaching assistants and achieve very well. Teachers plan learning activities carefully and have good questioning techniques during the oral and mental starter sessions to develop skills and understanding of pupils of all abilities. The most able in mathematics are challenged well in

small group additional sessions to apply their knowledge and skills in problem solving situations. Year 6 booster classes are very beneficial to those pupils who have not made progress as rapidly as the school had expected.

57. Teaching is good overall. It is good overall in Years 1 and 2, consistently good in Years 3 to 6 and is a significant factor in helping pupils to achieve very well. Most teachers provide interesting and challenging work, which helps pupils to enjoy mathematics and to persevere. They work successfully with teaching assistants to enable all pupils to be fully included in lessons and to achieve their full potential. Where teaching is very good, teachers have high expectations of the amount and quality of what pupils can do and maintain a brisk pace to the lesson. They use a good range of activities that successfully consolidate and then extend pupils' skills and knowledge. Teaching is less effective when teachers do not build securely on previous work or involve themselves and their teaching assistant directly in the focused group work. This limits achievement. At present, not enough opportunities exist for the high quality teaching observed to be shared with all staff to help improve the school's provision further. Most teachers plan activities that encourage pupils to collaborate and this assists pupils' social development well. All work is marked regularly and each term individual improvement targets are set for pupils. This is a recent initiative that will be reviewed at the end of the present school year. At present too few pupils know their targets or understand what they need to do to improve their mathematical skills. However, teachers know their pupils' mathematical ability very well and pupils' lack of knowledge of their targets is not making a noticeable difference to their achievement. Although Year 6 have regular homework that reinforces their learning well, no other year group has homework for mathematics set consistently each week. In discussion with groups of pupils in Years 3 to 5, most considered that regular homework or mathematical games would help them to consolidate and improve their standards. Inspectors agreed that homework could be used more effectively to help these pupils develop their mathematical skills.
58. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator has monitored teachers' plans and pupils' work well and keeps well informed about the subject's strengths and weaknesses. Although he has little personal experience of teaching in the lower school, the deputy headteacher is a very experienced leader of the subject and has a very good understanding of the learning of young pupils. Jointly, they have monitored pupils' attainment and achievement meticulously and put together very effective action plans to focus on improvement across the whole school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

59. There is very good evidence that pupils are applying their mathematics skills well in other subjects. This contributes to the good and very good achievement of pupils. For example, Year 5 pupils find the average of rainfall and temperatures and construct graphs to compare these in two countries. In a Year 1 information and communication technology lesson pupils controlled a car using the terms 'right', 'left' and 'backwards'. In science investigations one group of Year 6 pupils timed paper falling and others made graphs of the stretch of an elastic band when different weights were applied.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well as they move through the school and attainment is above average at the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is consistently good and effective use is made of assessment.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about the subject and enjoy the strong emphasis on investigational science.
- Pupils make good use of information and communication technology to support their learning.

- The subject is very well led and managed, although even greater use could be made of the co-ordinator's expertise.
- There is an over-reliance on worksheets in Year 2.

Commentary

60. In 2003, the results of the teachers' assessment for Year 2 pupils indicated that, whilst the proportion of pupils gaining the expected standards was well below average, the proportion attaining the higher levels was average. Evidence from lessons, talking to pupils and looking at their work indicates that attainment is below national expectations in the present Year 2. Whilst the proportion of pupils gaining the expected standards has risen, the proportion gaining the higher levels has fallen. This is due to the higher than average number of pupils with special educational needs in the year group and the lower proportion of higher achieving pupils.
61. In the 2003 national tests and in the previous two years, standards attained by Year 6 pupils were well above average both nationally and when compared with similar schools. The proportion achieving the higher levels was also well above average. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in the present Year 6 are above average. This apparent fall in standards from previous years is purely due to the nature of this year group, with almost 40 per cent of the pupils on the special educational needs register. Overall, these pupils have made significant progress during their time in Year 6.
62. Pupils make overall very good progress through the school because teachers make very good use of the well planned curriculum, which has a strong emphasis on pupils' learning from practical and investigational work. Practical investigations are a key feature of many science lessons and the opportunities that pupils have to work together play a significant part in their social development. This starts right from Year 1, where pupils begin to understand the importance of beginning to develop a fair test. Investigational work is satisfactorily developed in Year 2 in all aspects of the subject. An over-reliance on work sheets does, however, restrict pupils' opportunities to write at length and does not always give adequate space for higher attainers to explain the results of their investigations. Progress accelerates in Years 3 to 6 where pupils are encouraged not only to make predictions but to use their scientific knowledge to explain the results of their many investigations. Teachers plan good links with mathematics and information and communication technology. For example, pupils in Year 5 drew graphs to show the amount of daylight at different times of the year that clearly showed the results of their work. The progress of pupils in Year 6 accelerates further and all pupils, including the higher-achievers and those with special educational needs, have made particularly strong progress through the year. Fundamental to this very good progress is pupils' use of hypotheses before starting an investigation and in the very good assessment of each unit of work by the teachers. As a result, pupils' learning is constantly adjusted to build on their strengths and address their weakness. This is very effective learning and is well supported in Year 6 by the use of revision books for homework.
63. The quality of teaching and learning in both key stages is good, with some very good teaching seen during the inspection. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to assess pupils' understanding and to develop their scientific learning. Particularly effective is the 'wait time' teachers give pupils with learning difficulties so that these pupils have time to formulate their answers. In the supportive climate that teachers create, all pupils, including those with English as an additional language, the higher achievers and those with learning difficulties, achieve very well because of the well focused, challenging work they receive and their great enthusiasm for the subject. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully but not all teachers give pupils clear advice about how they can improve.
64. The co-ordinator leads the subject very well, monitors pupils' work carefully and makes effective use of the school's very good assessment procedures to ensure pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are achieving to their full potential. At present she has limited time to observe teaching and learning regularly through the school to ensure that subsequent in-

service training is relevant to individual teachers' immediate needs. The co-ordinator has worked very closely with the information and communication technology co-ordinator to introduce relevant computer programs to support and develop pupils' learning. She has built effective links with the secondary school to which most pupils transfer. Teachers from the secondary school take the Year 6 classes for a science lesson during the summer term and all Year 6 pupils work on an energy topic that they will complete in Year 7.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and make very good use of the experienced computer teaching assistant in lessons.
- The school is very well equipped and makes effective use of the computer suite.
- Information and communication technology is used widely in other subjects.
- The subject co-ordinator leads the subject very well and has a clear understanding of how the subject can be improved further.
- The computer suite gets uncomfortably hot in warm weather because of a lack of ventilation.

Commentary

65. Pupils are achieving well in Year 2 and very well in Year 6 where the quality of teaching is consistently strong. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, make good progress as they move through the school. Standards are average overall but at the end of Year 6 pupils are developing above average standards in the area of control. Pupils greatly enjoy the subject that makes a very good contribution to their social development through the collaborative way in which they work in lessons.
66. By Year 2, pupils make good progress in developing keyboard skills and the careful use of the mouse. In work linked to literacy, the pupils display satisfactory word processing skills in altering the size, colour and style of fonts. They move items about the screen knowledgeably and import pictures and texts to enhance their work. They understand that information can be put into a computer and used to create graphs. Pupils use their mathematical directional language well when using a control program to move a car along a series of roads and streets.
67. By Year 6, pupils' attainment is average. They access the Internet confidently to research various topics as part of their history and geography work. They make good use of spreadsheets to enter and analyse data in mathematics. They make good progress in developing their multimedia presentations. In literacy, pupils confidently insert, delete and replace text and attach clipart imaginatively, such as when they use a publishing program to make an information brochure for a theme park. The skills of the gifted and talented pupils are particularly well extended. Pupils' knowledge of control is above average, clearly seen when pupils designed and built a dancing robot. A recent development is for all pupils to have their own email address for the secondary school to which they are transferring. This is a good initiative as it will allow pupils to send examples of their own work to the new school for use in Year 7.
68. The teaching is good overall and often very good. The school benefits greatly from the very good skills of the computer teaching assistant who supports teachers in the computer suite. There is a strong focus on using information and communication technology to enhance learning across the curriculum. Skills are taught in the computer suite. Here, the teachers manage the class groups well, maintaining good balance between direct teaching of computer skills and allowing the pupils to experiment for themselves. All teachers have very

good skills and knowledge and use these well in the high quality questioning which is used to consolidate and extend pupils' learning.

69. Leadership and management are very good and have been a significant factor in the development of the subject and the way that it is used to support pupils' learning across the curriculum. The co-ordinator has very good expertise and has given very good support to staff to enhance their own skills. He does not have regular release time at present to monitor teachers at work in the suite so that good practice identified in elements of the subject can be shared. The curriculum for information and communication technology is good and has recently been enhanced by the introduction of a self-assessing 'Smart Learning' program, which is proving particularly effective in developing pupils' monitoring and control skills. There are particularly good links with mathematics, with all pupils in the school daily using a self-assessment mathematics program which complements their work in numeracy. There are very good procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and for using assessment information to plan the next steps in the pupils' learning. The school works very hard to ensure equal opportunities for all its pupils. A regular after-school club is run by the school's learning mentor for pupils who do not have a computer at home. The school is particularly well equipped. The computer suite has sufficient computers for whole class teaching, whilst all classes have at least two computers for class work. However, ventilation in the computer suite is at present inadequate during hot weather.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

70. Teachers plan good opportunities for pupils to practise and reinforce the skills they have learnt in computer lessons. Some effective use was noted in English, science, mathematics, geography, history, religious education and music. The school is regularly expanding its range of programs linked to different subjects. Particularly good use is being made of a new Education Action Zone funded program *Espresso*, which has wide applications across the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Only one lesson was seen in geography so no judgement could be made on provision.

71. Based on the evidence from samples of pupils' work and from a lesson observation in Year 6, standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly average. Pupils achieve well as they move through the school. In the lesson seen, teaching and learning were very good. The teacher used her high expectations to set challenging tasks as pupils independently used information and communication technology to find out about different mountain ranges and considered the effects of tourism on local environments. The lesson objectives were clear and shared with pupils so that all understood how to succeed. Specific tasks were well matched to the attainment of different groups. Consequently, all pupils worked hard and made very good progress in the lesson.
72. Field studies in the locality and work on the annual retreat for Year 6 enhance learning successfully. Information and communication technology is used well to support pupils, particularly in research work. The subject is well led and managed. The curriculum co-ordinator has successfully implemented effective assessment strategies but her role in monitoring teaching and learning in class is not well developed. The subject, especially in its opportunities to study life in different societies as well as to debate issues of environmental concern, makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

History

Provision for history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good, enabling pupils to achieve well.
- The quality of the curriculum is good so that pupils learn from a wide variety of resources and experiences.

Commentary

73. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement since they entered the school. Most pupils knowledgeably sequence events such as those which occurred during the 'Fire of London'. Pupils clearly distinguish what life was like in past eras from what it is like today and are aware of some of the different sources of information about the past. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is also in line with expectations and they have achieved well since Year 2. Pupils' writing shows an awareness of the chronology of main historical events and eras, but the higher achievers are not able to explain how things such as clothing and housing have changed over a period of time. Pupils empathise well with people in history.
74. Teaching is good, with teachers planning well and working from a good curriculum which matches pupils' abilities and interests. Pupils learn to explain the practices of people in the past through oral discussion and serious research. Teachers enable pupils to be increasingly independent in their use of the school's good resources. They use CD-ROMs and the Internet knowledgeably to gain the information they require. Some of this is challenging, with pupils not only having to understand difficult text but also to write it into their own words. By working alongside other pupils, those with special educational needs or those for whom English is an additional language achieve equally well.
75. Teachers enrich the curriculum by taking pupils on visits and welcoming knowledgeable visitors. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 3 learnt a great deal about the Vikings and Anglo-Saxons through a wide variety of experiences. These included cooking, making pots, weaving, woodwork, metalwork and drama. The recently appointed co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership and management to the subject, monitoring teachers' planning and pupils' work on a regular basis. The school has a thorough system for assessing and recording pupils' progress and this is used effectively to inform the planning when pupils move class at the end of a year.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

No lessons were observed in design and technology and only two lessons were observed in music. It is therefore not possible to make a judgement on provision in these subjects.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is varied and interesting and is supported by resources of good quality and quantity.
- Information and communication technology is used effectively by the pupils.
- Teachers do not always focus clearly enough on helping children to see how to improve their work.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

76. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly average. Pupils achieve well, particularly in the acquisition of skills and techniques and in their knowledge of the work of famous artists.

Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by teaching assistants and make good progress. Teachers make sure pupils who have English as an additional language are fully integrated so that they achieve well.

77. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use their good knowledge and understanding to plan a rich curriculum which is well organised to promote the step-by-step development of skills. Very good use is made of the work of famous artists and sculptors to extend pupils' appreciation of the way different techniques can be used to produce specific effects. Teachers use praise effectively, giving frequent and encouraging feedback to promote self-esteem. As a result, pupils enjoy the subject and are confident to explore new ideas. In some classes, whilst pupils are encouraged to look at each other's work, they do not focus sufficiently on what works well or on how to improve.
78. Information and communication technology is used well to support learning in art and design, with particularly good examples in pattern work in Year 3. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the well-organised opportunities to study artwork from other cultures and times, as well as promoting collaborative skills in paired and group work. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The curriculum co-ordinator is only recently in post and her role in monitoring teaching and learning and so disseminating good practice is not yet well developed. Satisfactory assessment systems are newly in place.
79. **Design and technology** is taught half termly, alternating with art and design. Discussions with pupils indicate that they are enthusiastic about the subject and enjoy its practical nature. The school uses a national scheme of work and links the subject well with other topics, such as when Year 3 made sandwiches as part of their science 'healthy eating' topic. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the importance of design. Examples of their finished work show they have access to a good range of materials and tools. They understand the importance of the quality of the finished product. Pupils' evaluations at the end of their project show sound understanding of how their products can be improved. The overall standard of the pupils' work is in line with national expectations. The new co-ordinator leads the subject satisfactorily. The school's record keeping for the subject is good and will help teachers to build well on the pupils' previous skills. The school has rightly identified linking the subject more closely with computer control as a priority for development.
80. The inspection gained too little evidence to make secure judgements about provision and its outcomes in **music**. Nevertheless, two lessons were observed and a practical session was held with two separate groups of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. Evidence from the lessons and practical sessions suggests that pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement since pupils entered the school. Pupils' singing is the strongest feature of their performing. Year 2 pupils sustain a steady beat when using percussion and confidently improvise over another repeated rhythm. By the end of Year 6, they compose longer rhythmic structures. Some of the more able sing strongly and with style. Pupils' attainment in listening to and appraising music is a weaker feature of their music and is comparatively under-developed.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain above expected standards at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' skills are effectively extended by the very good range of extra-curricular sporting activities.
- The school makes very good use of grants and specialist coaches to promote good quality teaching.

Commentary

81. Pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected in Year 2 and by Year 6 attain standards that are above those expected. Inspectors observed lessons in games, dance, athletics and swimming and most pupils attained standards that are above those expected nationally for their age in those areas of activity. In a Year 1 dance lesson, pupils displayed very good control of their bodies and movements in a seaside scenario. They were encouraged sensitively to comment upon the performance of others and had very good guidance to improve their own movements, which promoted very good achievement. They worked very well collaboratively to interpret the music and what actions they would do for their part of the story. With good coaching and teaching, pupils in Year 3 and into Year 4 have a concerted effort to work through the Luton Borough School Swimming Syllabus for three terms. By the end of the period, nearly all pupils swim the 25 metres expected for the end of Year 6 and have refined their strokes. About a third of pupils go on to higher levels in the programme. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, the teacher did not guide pupils sufficiently to improve their athletics skills and they made too little progress.
82. The subject leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator uses his enthusiasm very successfully to encourage pupils' participation and to promote the school's very good programme of extra-curricular sporting activities. Although he monitors teachers' planning well, he has had limited release time from his class to observe the lessons of other teachers. Nevertheless, he is very sensitive to areas of weakness in teachers' subject knowledge and arranges for specialists to take classes and to be observed. For example, both teachers and pupils in Years 2 and 6 enjoyed a series of lessons on Caribbean dance, which subsequently promoted very good teaching skills and very good achievement in pupils' dance skills. The subject leader established very good links with the local education authority and the local co-ordinator of the School Sports Programme. This has brought significant benefits to the school so that a wider range of sports can be offered after school by specialist coaches. The headteacher and subject co-ordinator work together very well to focus on ways in which the pupils can benefit from improving resources and extending the range of physical activities. For example, the acquisition of the Football Association Charter Mark has allowed access to additional grants and coaching opportunities.
83. Teaching and learning are good and promote pupils' enthusiasm for physical education. All lessons begin with a good warm-up of all muscles in the body. Teachers plan a progressive development of skills well using the guidance of a published scheme of work for all aspects of the subject. In games lessons, teachers promote very good team spirit as pupils work together to improve skills. This was seen in a Year 6 rugby lesson. The school involves itself successfully in the community sports programme and enables pupils to extend their skills very well by competing in local cricket, football, cross-country, tennis and hockey tournaments. This wide-ranging programme, together with good facilities and good teaching, encourages pupils' participation and enables them to attain above expected standards.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

84. Only three short lessons were observed in personal, social and health education and therefore it is not possible to make an overall judgement on the school's provision. Standards in personal development are good because the teachers plan carefully and thoroughly in this area. There are regular opportunities for the pupils to discuss relevant issues, such as community and environment, conservation, relationships and feelings. There are good opportunities for older pupils to exercise responsibility by undertaking worthwhile tasks around the school. They show concern for people less fortunate than themselves by supporting a number of charities. Pupils learn about the dangers of alcohol and drugs misuse and there is formal sex education for pupils. Whilst pupils' views are listened to in circle time, no formal opportunity exists, such as a school council, for pupils to have a greater say in the life of the school. The creation of a council is highlighted as a priority in the next school development plan.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</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	8
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
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	4
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	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	4
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).

