

INSPECTION REPORT

WATERSIDE COMBINED SCHOOL

Chesham

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110337

Headteacher: Mr Paul Marchant

Lead inspector: Mrs Stephanie Lacey

Dates of inspection: 12th – 14th January 2004

Inspection number: 258319

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	187
School address:	Black Horse Avenue Chesham Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP5 1QU
Telephone number:	(01494) 786 608
Fax number:	(01494) 773 287
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Cross
Date of previous inspection:	27 th April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is slightly smaller than average, with a falling roll. This is because there are fewer young families in the area than there were. Pupils come from a wide range of social, economic and academic backgrounds. About 60 per cent of families live in rented accommodation, with 40 per cent owning their own homes. The percentage of pupils claiming free school meals is below average, but this does not reflect the socio-economic backgrounds of the pupils and the Waterside ward is one of the poorest in Buckinghamshire in terms of the child poverty index and multiple deprivation. About 16 per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic families. Ten pupils do not have English as their mother tongue. When children start school, their skills, knowledge and understanding are wide-ranging, but well below average for their age overall. Twenty-four per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is above average. These pupils have a range of learning difficulties and five have a statement of special educational need. Until recently, the school had an attached department for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. This is being phased out and there are only three pupils currently in the department. These pupils are integrated into classes and have some small group support in the mornings. The percentage of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the normal time was below average last year. The school received a government school achievement award in 2003 for improving standards in national tests. Since the last inspection, the age of transfer has changed in Buckinghamshire and there is no longer a Year 7 at Waterside.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3764	Mrs Stephanie Lacey	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage, Science, Art and design, Design and technology
14756	Mr John Lovell	Lay inspector	
21003	Mr Dave Lee	Team inspector	English, Music, Physical education, Religious education, Special educational needs, English as an additional language
30618	Mr Paul Story	Team inspector	Mathematics, Information and communication technology, Geography and History

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
Barley House
Oakfield Grove
Clifton
Bristol
BS8 2BN

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a sound education. Staff at Waterside are committed to fostering the all round development of their pupils within a very caring environment. The strong pastoral leadership of the headteacher has helped to build a united staff team. Standards are rising because of improved teaching. Waterside gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils are happy at school, behave very well and try hard in lessons.
- Very good relationships between all members of the school's community underpin its work.
- Standards are below average, but overall pupils make steady progress.
- The challenge for higher attaining pupils is not always high enough.
- Children make a good start in the nursery and reception classes, where teaching and learning are good.
- The committed staff team provide very well for pupils' moral and social development.
- The headteacher provides strong pastoral leadership.
- Parents are very pleased with all that the school does for their children.
- Pupils achieve well in physical education (PE), where standards are above average.

Overall, the school has made steady progress since its last inspection in April 1998. It has maintained a very good climate for learning. Standards have risen in national tests and the quality of teaching is better than it was. Staff and governors have worked hard to tackle the issues identified for improvement in 1998. As a result, statutory requirements in relation to the budget and collective worship are now met. There is more rigorous monitoring of pupils' absence and attendance has improved. Support staff are now used effectively in classrooms. There has been improvement in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and standards are rising. Procedures for assessing how well pupils are doing are now established in English, mathematics and science, but much more work is needed on analysing and using the information to plan for improvement. Some subject co-ordinators are now undertaking their roles effectively, some are providing sound leadership, but others have a more limited grasp of standards and improvements needed in their areas of responsibility.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

Children achieve well in the nursery and reception classes, with pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieving satisfactorily. Pupils with special educational needs and those from ethnic minorities make the same steady progress as their peers, but higher attaining pupils could do better. When children start school in the nursery, their skills, knowledge and understanding have been wide ranging, but well below average overall for several years. This year, the number of children attaining the goals that children are expected to reach by the end of the reception year is likely to be below average. Standards are currently below average in English, mathematics, science and ICT throughout the school. Work in other subjects was not looked at in depth, but it is apparent that

pupils reach above average standards in physical education by the time that they leave in Year 6. Standards in national tests have improved since the last inspection. In the Year 2 tests, standards have risen faster than the national trend and in 2003 the school received a government achievement award for the progress made. Standards have also improved at the end of Year 6. The table above shows that standards have been well below average for several years and that pupils at Waterside do not do as well as their peers in similar schools. Science is the weakest subject and in some years pupils' performance has been in the bottom five per cent of all schools, both in relation to the national average and to similar schools. The table is slightly misleading because it includes the pupils who joined the department for moderate learning difficulties in Years 3 to 6. In spite of sound progress made, these pupils do not reach the levels expected for their age. This means that the overall standards achieved at Waterside are lower as a result.

Pupils' personal development is good. It is supported by the good overall provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are very keen to learn and behave very well. Attendance levels, although improved, are below average and unsatisfactory. Most pupils are punctual at the start of the day.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a sound education. Teaching is good in the nursery and reception classes and sound in Years 1 to 6. Throughout the school, pupils tackle learning tasks confidently because staff work hard to raise their self-esteem. Very good relationships between staff and pupils and very good support from teaching assistants help pupils to succeed. In some lessons, higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged and the marking of pupils' work in some classes is unsatisfactory. Homework arrangements are inconsistent. The curriculum is soundly based on the National Curriculum and national guidance, with good opportunities out of school time for older pupils to take part in sport.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are sound overall. The headteacher provides a strong pastoral lead and all members of the school community are valued and supported. The school is committed to raising standards. The headteacher, staff and governors monitor and evaluate the work of the school, but planning for improvement is not as clear as it could be and so standards are not rising as fast as they could. Some subject leaders are effective, but others have little impact on work across the school. Day-to-day procedures for managing the school are satisfactory. The governance of the school is sound, with one governor making an outstanding contribution. All statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are very pleased with all that the school does for their children and have no significant concerns. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) works hard to organise social and fund-raising events. Pupils are very positive about all aspects of school life.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise attainment by putting together and implementing a clear plan for improvement.
- Challenge higher attaining pupils more consistently.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Children achieve well in the nursery and reception classes. Pupils' achievement in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory overall, although higher attaining pupils could do better. Standards in English, mathematics and science are below average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's achievement in the nursery and reception classes is good.
- Standards in English, mathematics and science are below average.
- Some higher attaining pupils do not do as well as they should.
- Standards in PE are above average by the time pupils leave in Year 6.
- Standards in work seen in ICT, history, geography and religious education (RE) are below average.

Commentary

1. The inspection focused on standards in English, mathematics and science because standards in national tests have been below or well below average in Year 6 tests for several years.

Starting school

2. When children start school in the reception class, the school's own assessment shows that in most years their knowledge, skills and understanding are wide ranging but well below average overall.

Standards in national tests

3. Overall standards have risen in national tests since the last inspection and in 2003 school received a government achievement award for the good progress made. Standards have risen faster than the national trend in Year 2 tests but only kept pace with the national improvement trend in Year 6 tests. This means that in Year 6 tests standards have remained low.
4. Although the trend has been upward, standards have fluctuated in Year 2 tests over the last few years between average and well below average. This fluctuation is due to the particular make-up of different year groups. In some years, a larger number of pupils with special educational needs lowers the overall performance level. The year groups are relatively small and so the performance of one or two pupils can make a significant difference. In 2003, standards were average in mathematics and writing and well below average in reading. In 2003, pupils did as well in mathematics as their peers in schools with a similar free school meal entitlement. They did not do as well as their peers in writing and were much lower in reading. The table below shows the average point score for the last two years.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.3 (16.7)	15.9 (15.8)
writing	14.5 (12.9)	14.9 (14.4)
mathematics	16.4 (14.9)	16.4 (16.5)

There were 27 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. The table below indicates the average point score in Year 6 for the last two years. It shows that standards in 2003 were well below average in English and science and below average in mathematics. In comparison with schools whose pupils attained similar levels when they were in Year 2, pupils at Waterside were below average in mathematics, well below average in English and in the bottom five per cent of schools in science. This is slightly misleading. For many years, pupils with moderate learning difficulties have been admitted into the school in Years 3 to 6 to join the school's specialist department. Although this department is being phased out, the performance of these pupils still has an impact on overall performance in national tests. If these pupils are not included in the statistics, standards in 2003 would have been average in mathematics and below average in English and science.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	24.9 (24.5)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	26.0 (23.8)	27.0 (26.7)
science	25.8 (25.2)	28.8 (28.3)

There were 26 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Main factors accounting for the below average standards

6. There are several factors that need to be borne in mind when considering standards across subjects. These go some way to explaining why standards are as they are:
- When children start school, the proportion of children who are below average is higher than in many schools.
 - In most year groups, there is a large group whose attainment is broadly average and another large group of pupils below and well below average. There are only a few higher attaining pupils.
 - Sound teaching overall in Years 1 to 6 means that pupils make satisfactory progress but do not move forward fast enough to drive standards up significantly.

Improvement

7. The most improvement has been in mathematics and this is because:
- The school has analysed assessment data very carefully, with the support of a governor.
 - A clear action plan for improvement has been successfully implemented.

Standards have not improved as fast in English because:

- Data analysis has not been as thorough and has not provided a sufficiently focused agenda for improvement.
- The school is not using all the 'catch up' programmes available to support pupils who need it.
- The school has been concentrating on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills and has not pushed forward as far with reading and writing.

Standards have not improved fast enough in science and in 2003 the Year 6 pupils had not made as many gains in understanding as other pupils in Buckinghamshire. The main reasons for this lack of sufficient progress are:

- The lack of a clear plan for improvement based on detailed analysis of pupils' performance.
- A lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils.
- A lack of clear leadership from the subject co-ordinator.

Inspection findings

The Foundation Stage

8. Children have settled very well into school. They achieve well in all areas of learning because of the good provision made for them. They are making good progress in all areas of learning and are in line to reach the goals expected for their age by the end of the reception year in their physical development. Not all will reach these expected goals in other areas of learning. Children's good progress in the nursery and reception classes means that some children begin to catch up.

Years 1 and 2

9. Pupils achieve satisfactorily and make sound progress in Years 1 and 2. In Year 2, standards are below average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Limited evidence also indicates that standards are below average in ICT, history, geography and religious education (RE). In all other subjects, pupils reach the levels expected for their age.

Years 3 to 6

10. Pupils achieve satisfactorily and continue to make sound progress in Years 3 to 6. Standards are below average in English, mathematics and science in all year groups. As in Years 1 and 2, limited evidence indicates that standards are also below average in history, geography and RE. In ICT, pupils are still catching up on earlier gaps in their knowledge and understanding. In art and design and music, standards in work seen were average. They are above average in PE. In design and technology, insufficient work was seen to make an overall judgement, but in the work seen there was little evidence of pupils evaluating their work thoroughly.

Whole-school issues

Pupils with special educational needs

11. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. The pupils who attend the department each morning work hard and achieve good levels because they have lots of attention. Pupils in the rest of the school also work hard and achieve satisfactory levels, although their needs are not always best met in lessons. Sometimes, teachers do not break work up into smaller pieces that pupils could cope with more easily, and they struggle to do their best at times.

Pupils learning English as an additional language

12. There are not many pupils learning English as an additional language in the school. Their language needs are not markedly different from other pupils, and there is no separate provision for them. However, like all pupils, their attainment is monitored regularly by staff and if they require additional support, they readily receive it. Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons along with their friends; they achieve to a satisfactory level in lessons.

Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds

13. The local authority analyses the performance of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. At Waterside, the small numbers of these pupils in each year group makes any comparison tenuous. In lessons seen, these pupils achieved as well as their peers.

Higher-attaining pupils

14. In many lessons, higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Often they undertake the same activity as their peers, with the expectation that they will complete more. This does not extend their understanding sufficiently.

Boys and girls

15. In Year 2 tests, boys have not done as well as girls in recent years. This difference is evened out by the time pupils reach Year 6. In lessons seen, there was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves are also very good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils see themselves very much as part of the school team; their behaviour and personal development reflect this and these are also very good. Levels of attendance are below average and unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils develop into confident, friendly and articulate citizens within school; they are willing to accept responsibility increasingly as they get older; they feel very positive about their school and feel very much part of it.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning, behave very well in class and pay attention.
- Pupils are very involved in class and school councils; they expect to make a difference, have good ideas and are very keen to be taken seriously.
- Pupils and adults alike enjoy very good relationships; this really helps to ensure pupils learn as well as they can.
- Pupils' social and moral development are very good and their spiritual development is good.
- Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, but does not include a wider perspective to involve pupils in looking at cultures beyond their own in greater detail.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

16. This was a strong area at the time of the last inspection and still is. Pupils are clearly very enthusiastic about all aspects of school life and enjoy coming.

Attitudes

17. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, have very good attitudes to their learning. Pupils in the department really enjoy their morning sessions in a small group, and join their year groups enthusiastically in the afternoons. All pupils form very good relationships with staff and other pupils. They collaborate well with adults and with each other. In particular, older pupils really enjoy working together. In PE, for example, they help and support each other, making good progress together. In discussion, pupils readily admit that staff care for them well and this makes them feel confident and secure. They appear confident, friendly and articulate, with clear views about school development, which they share through class and school councils. For example, Year 4 pupils would like to share their lunches with younger pupils because they feel it would be a positive experience for them. All pupils willingly accept responsibility in class and around the school. Year 6 pupils are particularly keen to take on more. They readily see themselves as role models for younger pupils and they accept this responsibility confidently. Some referee football games at lunchtimes, others maintain the library, volunteers help on a rota system in the Nursery, and really value their time there.

Despite not enjoying it much, Year 6 pupils willingly do dinner duties. They share very much the team ethos that is easily visible within the school community.

Personal development

18. Pupils' personal development is good overall. Their spiritual development is good, and this is reflected in their openness with each other. Most pupils show an appreciation of beauty and fairness as well as understanding the impact of their behaviour on others. Their moral and social development is very good. They express their views readily, listen to others and make reasoned judgements. Older pupils, for example, questioned their teacher when he admitted he had kept an owl for 25 years – they expected the owl to be returned to the wild, but were satisfied with their teacher's explanations because they trusted him. A varied provision of interesting trips and residential journeys ensure that pupils have many opportunities to develop social skills, for example, during the annual Isle of Wight trip and the night spent by Years 5 and 6 at the Science Museum recently. Pupils are involved in a wide range of local activities, including the carnival, annual music festival and sporting activities with local clubs. Overall, their cultural understanding is satisfactory. Their knowledge of local culture is good, but their understanding of the multicultural society that exists in the wider world is not so good. The school misses several opportunities to develop this further, although they recognise how to improve this over time.

Behaviour

19. Pupils behave consistently well in lessons, largely because they are well managed, but also because they want to. Bullying occurs periodically, but pupils report consistently that they have adults that they trust to talk to, and they remain confident that their problems can be sorted out when they occur. Few incidents of racism occur, but these are dealt with effectively and pupils feel under no threat or pressure as a result. As the table below shows, there were no exclusions for inappropriate behaviour in the last academic year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No. of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	150	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	7	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	8	0	0

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

Attendance

20. Attendance has improved since the last inspection but remains below the national average and is unsatisfactory. The school has not formally analysed the attainment records of individual

pupils to see whether absence has an impact on their progress. However, anecdotal evidence indicates that for some pupils this is clearly the case. Most pupils are punctual at the start of the school day.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0	School data	1.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Pupils make steady progress because the teaching is sound overall. Teaching and learning are better in the nursery and reception classes where children engage in very interesting and challenging activities. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 work on similar tasks across a range of subjects and higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Work in classrooms is enriched by visits and out of school clubs, with good provision for physical education.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. It is good in the nursery and reception classes, where children made good gains in their learning. In Years 1 to 6, most pupils make satisfactory progress, but higher attaining pupils could do better if they were challenged more. Satisfactory assessment procedures are in place, but staff in Years 3 to 6 do not make best use of the information gained to plan for improvement. The marking of pupils' work is unsatisfactory and does not always help pupils to improve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very effectively and so pupils try hard and concentrate well.
- Teaching and learning are good in the nursery and reception classes.
- Teachers plan interesting activities, but higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently.
- Very good relationships between all members of the school community underpin learning.
- Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to work in classrooms.
- Pupils are not clear about how well they are doing or how to improve because of inconsistent marking and varying use of individual targets.
- Homework arrangements are inconsistent.
- Assessment procedures in the nursery, reception and Year 1 and 2 classes are used well to plan for the next step in learning.
- Assessment procedures for pupils' progress in subjects other than English, mathematics and science are not used consistently in Years 3 to 6.

Commentary

Inspection observations

21. The inspection focused on work in English, mathematics, science and ICT, with a sample of lessons seen in other subjects. Most full-time teachers were seen on at least four occasions and most were seen teaching both English and mathematics. Judgements about teaching were also based on pupils' work and teachers' planning. Overall, the quality of teaching has

improved since the last inspection, when ten per cent of lessons seen were unsatisfactory. The table overleaf indicates the quality of teaching in lessons seen across the school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 31 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	5 (16%)	10 (32%)	16 (52%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

Teaching in the nursery and reception classes

22. Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is consistently good with some very good features. As a result, children make good strides in their learning and achieve well. Particular strengths in these two classes include:
- Very good team work between the two teachers and classroom assistants.
 - Very good planning for all areas of learning based on a clear understanding of the way in which young children learn.
 - Very good teaching in the area of children's personal and social development.
 - Very well organised classrooms and outside area.

Teaching in Years 1 to 6

23. Overall teaching in Years 1 to 6 is sound, with some strong features. Apart from the overarching strengths in teaching identified below, individual teachers and assistants have particular strengths. These include:
- The expertise of a classroom assistant, previously attached to the department, in working with pupils with special educational needs.
 - Care taken in providing a stimulating classroom environment in some rooms, particularly in Year 2.
 - Subject expertise in music, ICT and natural science, which is shared with staff.

Strengths in the teaching

24. There are several significant strengths in teaching that are features of lessons throughout the school. The one that has the most impact on pupils' achievement is the very positive way in which teachers foster pupils' self-esteem. Pupils enjoy learning at Waterside. They work hard and are keen to do well. This is because:
- There are very good relationships between pupils and teachers.
 - Teachers know the pupils very well and respond to different individuals sensitively.
 - Pupils feel that their efforts are valued.

Engaging pupils' interest

25. All teachers succeed in engaging pupils' interest by planning interesting tasks and activities. This is especially evident in the nursery and reception classes. Teachers share their enthusiasms with the pupils. This is particularly apparent in the Year 6 classroom, which is a combination of a reptile house at the zoo and a natural history museum.

Very good levels of adult support

26. There are very good levels of adult support in all classes and so pupils often have the opportunity to work in a small group with a teacher or classroom assistant and this helps them to move forward well. Classroom assistants make a particularly strong contribution to the teaching and have a very positive impact on the work with pupils who have special educational needs.

Very good management of pupils' behaviour

27. Staff throughout the school manage pupils' behaviour very well. They set clear expectations for sensible behaviour which most pupils respond to well. There is rarely any need for teachers to talk to pupils about their behaviour and so lessons are calm and pupils concentrate well.
28. As a consequence of these very positive features, pupils are happy at school and enjoy learning. Parents too are very positive about the quality of the teaching.

Areas for development

29. Within this strong picture, there are some areas for development that reduce the impact of the strengths in the teaching. Consequently, pupils in Years 1 to 6 make satisfactory rather than good progress.

Challenge for higher attainers

30. One area for development is the challenge for higher attaining pupils. In most classes, there are only a few pupils who attain at higher levels and usually they work on the same task as their peers, with higher expectations of the amount of work to be completed. This means that they work hard and consolidate their learning, but are not challenged to do even better by working on more difficult activities.

Support for lower attaining pupils

31. Similarly, more could be done to help lower attaining pupils in some sessions. Usually, another adult, either the teacher or classroom assistant, supports them effectively. This helps them to understand what they have to do. When they are working without support, teachers do not generally provide other aids, such as writing prompts or printed sheets to help them to complete the task more easily.
32. The five pupils who attend the department in the mornings are taught literacy and numeracy skills effectively at their level of ability. They enjoy their learning and work hard. Teaching is clearly structured to meet their varying needs, and both pupils and adults enjoy a warm relationship where they all learn well together.

Marking of pupils' work in Years 1 to 6

33. In most subjects, marking is not being used effectively to help pupils improve their work. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but the quality varies between classes and does not often give pupils a clear enough picture of how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. It is better in Years 1 to 3 and Year 6. Different approaches to setting targets with individual pupils are being tried in different classes but a consistent approach has not yet developed.

Consistency in homework arrangements

34. Some parents are keen to help their children at home, but are confused by the homework arrangements. Different systems appear to operate from class to class, with the amount of homework given not necessarily increasing as pupils become older. Clearer expectations would be helpful for parents and pupils alike.

Assessing pupils' progress

35. Overall assessment is satisfactory. The school has tackled the weakness identified in the last inspection and teachers now make suitable use of formal and informal assessments to plan for the next stages of pupils' learning. Knowledge of pupils is built from regular assessments and ongoing observations. Formal assessment procedures have developed as the curriculum has evolved and are strongest in English, mathematics and science, where a regular programme of testing and assessing pupils has been developed. In other subjects, this is not as advanced. It is strongest in Reception and Years 1 and 2. In other year groups, the systematic assessment, recording and passing on of relevant information about pupils is variable. Careful analysis of test results in mathematics has helped to identify areas requiring attention and begun to raise standards. The school is about to adopt a more focused and rigorous approach to tracking, analysing and comparing pupils' individual progress using software.

The curriculum

The school provides pupils with a satisfactory range of learning opportunities. This includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and a good range of interesting activities outside lessons. There is a good ratio of staff to pupils, the accommodation is very good and resources are satisfactory.

Strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum and provision for pupils in the nursery and reception classes are very good.
- There are good opportunities for learning outside the school day.
- The curriculum is enriched by good use of the locality, visits and visitors.
- There are good levels of adult support for pupils with special educational needs.
- Insufficient links are planned to extend literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- The accommodation is very good.

Commentary

The Foundation Stage

36. The strong provision for children in the early years has been maintained since the last inspection. The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes is very well planned to provide a range of interesting and varied activities that cover the nationally identified six areas of learning. The small teaching groups mean there is a very good ratio of teachers and support staff, who are all well experienced in working with children of this age. There is a good range of resources to support the chosen activities and ample space for children to undertake them. Although there is no immediate access to the outside area for children in the reception class, the school is looking to address this.

Years 1 to 6

37. There has been sound progress since the last inspection in planning for work in different subjects. The school provides a broad curriculum based firmly on the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education that meets statutory requirements. The balance of time for teaching the range of subjects is satisfactory with justifiable emphasis placed on literacy and numeracy and good use made of the national strategies as the basis for planning in these subjects. This is contributing to the improvement in standards. Although some opportunities occur for pupils to use these skills in other subjects such as science, history, geography and design and technology, this is not consistently and systematically planned.
38. National guidance is used as the basis for planning in most subjects and teachers draw on this to ensure pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding develop as they move through the school. The school is beginning to augment this documentation by adopting a commercial

scheme for mathematics and investigating another for music. Teachers establish links between subjects to make learning meaningful and relevant for pupils and are making increasing use of ICT to support learning in other subjects, for example, its use to explore rotation in mathematics or emulate the style of Jackson Pollock in art. With further recent improvement to resources for ICT, the school is well placed to provide even better opportunities for all pupils and make greater use of ICT to support learning in other subjects.

Planning for pupils with special educational needs

39. The school has a strong commitment to including all pupils in the full range of learning activities. There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties or special educational needs from teaching assistants and teachers. Extra provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The five pupils in the department have their needs met through a well organised and highly structured approach that meets their varying learning needs. Plans are effective, highly detailed and specific to pupils' learning difficulties. Pupils' individual education plans help to inform the support staff of what needs to be done to help pupils make progress and achieve as well as they can. They give good support to pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and affirming. In class lessons, planning for these pupils does not always ensure that work is sufficiently different from others to meet their needs.

Activities outside lessons

40. A strength of the curriculum is the good range of extra activities that brings pupils' learning to life. Visits to places of interest, visitors, good use of the locality, the Year 5 and 6 residential visit, music and the very good opportunities for sporting activities all enrich pupils' learning and support their personal development well. Parents appreciate the range of activities offered.

Personal and social development

41. Circle time and the school council make a significant contribution to pupils' social and personal development and are supplemented by specific teaching on sex and relationships, health, and drugs misuse. The school now plans to develop a cohesive approach to this area that will further enhance the contribution it makes to pupils' development and understanding.

Staffing, accommodation and resources

42. There is a good overall match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum. The school has very good accommodation with extensive grounds, a range of specialist rooms and teaching areas in addition to the classrooms, well-equipped ICT suite and attractive library. However, disabled access is currently restricted by the sloping nature of the site and internal staircases. Resources in history, ICT, music, design and technology and RE, which were all unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, have all been improved. In all subjects, they are now at least adequate, whilst for ICT they are good.

Care, guidance and support

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils is good and arrangements for health and safety and child protection meet requirements. Pupils enjoy very good relationships with staff which benefit the development of their self-esteem and confidence in seeking support when they have any concerns or wish to share their news.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good relationships with adults working in the school and readily turn to them for help and support or to share their news.
- There are good arrangements for settling nursery and reception children into school.
- Teachers know the pupils well and provide good support for their personal development.

- Pupils are involved effectively in the work of the school through the work of the school council.
- Good risk assessments are in place and cover a wide range of situations.
- No restraint policy has been adopted but guidelines are available in the staff room.
- There is no first day phone call home when pupils are unaccountably absent unless the pupil is considered vulnerable.

Commentary

43. This is a strong feature of the school's work and provision has been maintained effectively since the last inspection.

A very caring school

44. The good overall care for pupils at Waterside is based on very good relationships between staff and pupils. These are established early. The good arrangements for settling children into school, including visiting families at home, help parents and staff to form a good liaison from the beginning. Staff know the pupils and their families very well. This underpins the very good guidance that pupils and parents feel staff provide. Pupils turn readily to their teachers if they have any problems. Staff monitor pupils' personal development carefully and are particularly aware of any factors that might affect their progress at school. Pupils' academic progress is also monitored and appropriate support given. Parents of children who have special educational needs are fully involved in annual reviews of progress. Sometimes, reviews are more often and parents are invited to those.

Care, welfare, health and safety

45. This aspect of the school's work is sound overall. Waterside is a safe place for pupils to be. Staff are vigilant in checking whether there are any hazards on the school site and there are good risk assessments in place. Some need to be formally completed for the reptiles and animals on site. Child protection arrangements are sound and in line with locally agreed procedures. There is not yet a formally agreed restraint policy, but staff have clear guidelines. The school has improved the way in which it monitors pupils' absence since the last inspection but when parents do not inform the school of the reasons for their child's absence, the school does not routinely telephone home to see why they are away.

Pupils' involvement in the work of the school

46. The school involves pupils successfully in contributing to the development of the school through the school council. This elected body has representatives from the reception year to Year 6. It is clear that these pupils feel that their opinions are valued. Last year, they were instrumental in arranging for markings for games on the playground.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents are pleased with all that the school does for their children. The partnership between school and home is good and the school uses a range of strategies to try to involve parents in their children's learning. Links with the community and other schools and colleges are good and enrich the curriculum and learning opportunities. There are sound links with early years providers.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most parents are very happy with all that the school does for their children.
- Parents find staff very approachable.
- Written reports to parents about their children's progress are satisfactory, but do not provide targets for improvement.

- The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is active in providing fund-raising activities, practical help and social events.
- A few parents, ex-parents and grandparents provide valuable voluntary support in school.
- Links with the community are good and enhance and enrich the curriculum.
- The school is trying hard to encourage parents to support their children's learning at home, but not always successfully.

Commentary

The school's links with parents

47. The school has maintained positive links with parents, the community and other schools since the last inspection.

The parents' views

48. Most parents are very positive about the education provided at Waterside. Parents were particularly pleased about the good relationships that they enjoyed with staff. They found staff easy to talk to and very supportive. This reflects the 'open door' policy that the school promotes. The only concern, raised by a few parents, was about bullying. The inspection found that the school dealt with any incidents reported effectively.

Information provided for parents

49. The prospectus and other information about what is going on in school are clear and helpful. The school also organises sessions for parents to explain how different areas of the curriculum are taught. Parents find these useful. Some information is given about what pupils are studying term by term, but this is brief and does not give any guidance about how parents could help their children at home.
50. Staff give parents regular information about how their children are progressing. There are two formal consultation evenings and parents are welcomed into school at other times if they would like to discuss how their child is getting on. Parents said that they find these discussions very useful. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are invited to more frequent reviews of their progress. There is also an annual written report for all pupils. These reports set out what pupils know, understand and can do, but do not clearly outline what the child needs to do next to improve. The reports are computer generated and tend to be impersonal.

Parents' involvement in the school and with their children's learning at home

51. Some parents, ex-parents and grandparents help regularly in school and staff and pupils value this support. The PTA also provides good support for the school by organising fund raising and social events, which are attended well.
52. Many parents support their children effectively at home by sharing books and helping them with their homework. This helps pupils to consolidate what they have learnt at school and improve their reading skills. The school is working on ways to involve all parents in this way, but has not yet been successful.

Links with the community

53. Good links with the community enhance pupils' learning. Pupils are involved in visiting various local amenities, such as the dentist and library, as part of their work. They also contribute to the community by singing to older citizens at Christmas and distributing gifts at harvest time. For many years, volunteers from a local industry have come in every week to read with pupils.

Links with other schools and early years and other providers

54. Staff in the nursery are in contact with the many early years providers in the area. Currently these links are sound, with plans by the school to improve them. There are good links with other schools and colleges. These make the transition from Waterside to the next school smooth. There have been some very successful projects with local secondary schools, including one in which students refurbished and decorated the library with an underwater theme.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management are sound. Both the leadership of the headteacher and that of senior staff is satisfactory, although some subject leaders are not as effective as they could be. Satisfactory management structures and procedures ensure that the school runs smoothly, although the school does not make best use of performance data to raise standards. The governors make a satisfactory contribution to the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school improvement plan is very detailed but priorities for improvement are not as clear as they could be
- The pastoral leadership of headteacher is very good.
- There is a strong staff team with a commitment to meeting the needs of individual pupils.
- The roles of some subject leaders are underdeveloped.
- The analysis of performance data is not used sufficiently to raise standards.
- The contribution made by individual governors to school improvement is very effective.

Commentary

A caring school

55. One of the most impressive features of the work at Waterside is the care and concern for the needs of all members of the school community. This was highlighted by the last inspection and still underpins the work of the school.
56. The long-serving headteacher knows the pupils and their families well and sets a very good example to staff in his concern for the all-round development of individual pupils. Staff are committed to doing their best for the pupils and this is evident in their hard work and clear understanding of the needs of the pupils in their classes.

Planning for improvement

57. The headteacher provides sound leadership overall. The headteacher, staff and governors strive to improve provision in the school. They hold in view the need to raise standards and have tried various strategies to do so. In spite of their hard work, standards have not risen as fast as they might have done. There are three factors that have slowed improvement in some areas. These are:
- A complicated plan for school improvement.
 - A lack of rigorous evaluation of standards and provision.
 - Underdeveloped subject co-ordinator roles.

The school improvement plan

58. The school improvement plan is put together by the headteacher, in consultation with staff and governors. It sets out appropriate areas for improvement, but these are not prioritised and so it is not clear which are the main ones for the year. To some extent priorities for improvement are mixed in with areas needing review. In conversation it is apparent that staff and governors are aware that this year, for example, the development of speaking and listening skills are the priority and so this shortcoming in the plan is not impacting too badly on what is actually happening. However, within the plan there is a lack of clarity in some other aspects. This means that the plan is not as effective as it might be as a tool for improvement.

The aspects that are not clear are:

- There is a lack of detailed information about how improvements are to be resourced
- Success criteria are not closely linked to the impact of new initiatives on standards
- It is not clear how new initiatives are to be evaluated.

Monitoring and evaluating standards and provision

59. The school has improved the monitoring and evaluation of standards and provision since the last inspection. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and staff with responsibility for English, mathematics and science regularly monitor both planning and teaching. Governors also make visits to classrooms to see what is happening and present informative written reports. The school therefore has a good deal of information about how well it is doing. At the moment, this information is not analysed sufficiently in order to feed into plans for improvement and so is not being used as effectively as it could be.
60. The school has also made a start on evaluating the data related to pupils' achievements in statutory tests. In mathematics, with support from a governor, this has been done extremely well. In English and science, the analysis is not so thorough and has not fed into plans for improvement in the same way as the mathematics analysis.

Subject co-ordinator roles

61. Overall, the part that subject co-ordinators play in improving provision and standards in their areas of responsibility is satisfactory. It is good in some subjects, notably the Foundation Stage, ICT and PE. In some subjects, the subject leader is new to the role and so has not yet had time to get to grips with what needs improving. In science and RE, leadership is poor. The subject co-ordinators offer good support, but do not have a clear enough picture of the strengths and weaknesses and so do not have a clear action plan for improvement. There is no clear expectation from the headteacher that subject co-ordinators should have an action plan clearly linked to raising standards. Generally, subject co-ordinators' action plans are linked very closely to resourcing issues rather than what needs to be done to raise standards.

The work of governors

62. Governors are very supportive of the school, but do not always provide sufficient challenge, especially in relation to raising standards. They fulfil their duties through work on committees and visits to the school. They use their talents and expertise well in the best interest of the pupils. This is particularly evident in the good handbook for governors that has been produced and in the excellent work of one governor in analysing mathematics performance data. Most are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. All statutory requirements are met. Overall, their contribution is sound.

Financial management

63. Budget planning has improved since the last inspection and the school's budget now balances. As the table below shows, there is a six per cent carry forward from last year.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	534,753
Total expenditure	530,326
Expenditure per pupil	2,791

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	28,014
Balance carried forward to the next	32,441

64. The school has planned this to cushion the school against possible redundancy as a consequence of the falling roll. The school wisely allocates a high proportion of its budget to staffing costs to maintain a good ratio of adults to pupils. The school has not yet analysed the impact of a falling role on the budget beyond the next year. The school is aware of the principles of best value, but these do not sufficiently underpin the financial management of the school.

Day-to-day management

65. The administrative staff are welcoming and helpful to parents, staff, pupils and visitors and deal very effectively with routine enquiries and tasks. The office is well organised and this contributes to the smooth running of the school.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

66. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Children are prepared well for transfer to Year 1. All children achieve well because the teaching is good, and the activities planned provide a wide range of interesting and engaging tasks. There is a strong and cohesive staff team who share planning and assessment tasks. The classes are small and this means that children are given good individual and small group support. The accommodation is very good overall and includes two classroom bases and an outside area. The outside area is not immediately accessible from the reception classroom, but staff make good arrangements to ensure that this does not prevent children from using it fully.
67. Children start school in the nursery class in the term after their fourth birthdays. They attend mornings only and most have two terms in this class before moving on to the reception class. At this stage, children who are five between September and February start in the reception class on a full-time basis at the beginning of the autumn term, with children who are five between February and August starting after Christmas. The majority of children have attended some form of pre-school provision. The school would like to admit younger children into the nursery and there is certainly space to do so. At the moment, the size of the lavatories and the lack of a shower means that the accommodation is not suitable for three-year-olds. At the time of the inspection, some of the nursery children had only been in school a few days.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have settled into school very well and are happy and confident.
- Staff establish clear routines for children so that they feel secure.
- Staff provide very positive encouragement for children to foster their self-esteem.
- Good opportunities are provided for children to work independently and with their friends.
- There are good procedures to help children to settle into school.

Commentary

68. Teaching and learning in this area are very good. Most children are well set to reach the goals expected for their age by the end of the reception year, with a few still needing a good deal of adult support. Children have settled very well into school and clearly enjoy themselves. Their smooth transition into life in the nursery class has been eased by home visits. This helps children to form a relationship with the school staff within the security of their own homes. There is also a very good adult-child ratio in both the nursery and reception classes and so staff and children get to know each other quickly. Staff provide excellent role models for children in their positive and calm approach and consequently children feel safe and secure. Children feel that they are doing well and are proud of what they accomplish. Clear routines have been established and so children know exactly what is expected of them. Sometimes, staff have to remind children about their expectations, such as not running inside the building, but children respond immediately. Most children have formed very good relationships with staff and other children. They play happily alongside each other in the nursery and are beginning to work together more in the reception class. Many children spend a sustained period on a chosen activity and concentrate well. Older children work well independently. Most clearly know the difference between right and wrong and behave very well.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are encouraged effectively to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- Activities planned are interesting and capture children's imaginations.
- There is a good emphasis on the teaching of phonic skills.
- There are good opportunities for children to work in the writing corner.
- Staff try to involve parents in helping their children at home.
- There is good focused support for individual children.

Commentary

69. All children achieve well in this area because of good teaching. Some children are well set to reach the goals expected for them by the end of the year, but others are behind in the development of their early reading and writing skills. Staff place an important emphasis on helping children to develop their speaking and listening skills. They engage them in conversation and encourage them to speak at length. In whole-group sessions, all are involved in the question and answer sessions and older children are beginning to respond confidently in a large group. In one session seen, children in the reception were asked to talk about what made them happy or sad. The activity was well structured, but children found it hard to express themselves fluently. Quite a few children have difficulty in pronouncing words correctly. Staff place a good emphasis on encouraging children to enjoy books and stories. This is evident in the lively 'Elmer' displays in the entrance area. Classrooms have a good range of books and places where children can sit and browse. Staff read stories regularly to the children, who are also encouraged to take books home to share with parents and carers. Children are beginning to develop an understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds. Staff regularly teach 'sounds' to children and try to make this interesting and relevant. A highlight of work on the 's' sound, for example, is the visit of the Year 6 class snake. Staff remind children of what they have learnt by lively displays of sounds, although in the reception class there is no alphabet on view. The very good child-to-staff ratio means that adults spend time sharing books with individuals, which helps them with the development of their early reading skills. Children are encouraged to write and writing areas in classrooms provide good opportunities for children to do so. Most of the older children attempt to write their names. Good opportunities are taken to make the writing tasks relevant. Following the visit of the writer Denis Bond, for example, children made a book called 'The Goley Giraffe'.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning for the development of children's mathematical skills is carefully matched to their individual needs.
- Children experience a good balance of structured activities and independent play.
- There is good use of singing rhymes and games to help children to learn about number.
- Staff take opportunities to develop children's mathematical language and understanding through a wide range of activities.

Commentary

70. Children achieve well in this area of learning because of good quality teaching. Some children are on line to reach the goals expected for them by the end of the year. Others will not reach them, in spite of the good progress made. Work is planned well and children work at a range of interesting practical tasks and activities to help them to develop their understanding. In the reception class, for example, work was related effectively to an 'Old Bear' story and children learnt about the relationship between ordinal and cardinal numbers. At the start of the session, few children understood that 'one' was related to 'first', but by the end some children were beginning to grasp the concept. Singing games are used well and in the nursery children enjoyed counting their fingers while they sang a rhyme. Staff plan a wide range of activities for children to work on. These are matched well to their learning needs. Good steps are taken to develop children's skills whenever the opportunity arises.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are interested in this area because staff base their planning on children's own experiences.
- Good use is made of the outside area to help children to develop their understanding.
- Children in the reception class are taught ICT skills effectively.

Commentary

71. Teaching and learning are good in this area, although not all children are on line to reach the levels expected of them by the end of the reception year. One of the main strengths in this area is the planning, with rich and varied opportunities for children to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Daily discussions about the date and weather, for example, help children to understand about the passing of time and the changing seasons. Role-play areas reinforce what children have learnt in other sessions. The reception area is a baby clinic at the moment and children enjoy caring for and treating the 'babies'. Staff use the outside area well. Children care for plants, dig for worms and take advantage of the changing weather. In one session, for example, the classroom assistant helped children to see what the wind does. They flew streamers and painted water onto walls to see how quickly it dried. This emphasis on learning through first-hand experience is a strong feature of work in this area. Photographs of work in the nursery and reception classes show that children enjoy some interesting and exciting work. This includes duck spotting by the river and celebrating Hanukkah and Chinese New Year. Children are also learning to use computers and good use is made of the computer suite to teach reception children basic skills.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's achievements in this area are above average.
- Staff provide a good range of activities for children to develop their physical skills.
- Good use is made of the outside area, school playground and hall to help children to move forward.

Commentary

72. Children achieve well in this area of learning because of good teaching. Most children are on line to reach the goals expected by the end of the year with some exceeding these. Work is planned well and children have opportunities to use various area of the school in order to develop their skills. Good use is made of the hall, the outside area and the larger playground, where children can ride wheeled toys. There are also good opportunities for children to work with tools and construction toys to help them to develop their manual skills.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All aspects of children's creative development are provided for well.
- The classrooms are well resourced, especially for imaginative play and work in the area of art and design.

Commentary

73. Children achieve well because of good teaching. Some are well set to reach the levels expected by the end of the reception year, with others finding it harder to use their imaginations. The role-play areas in the classrooms are well equipped and children enjoy playing in them. Staff give children the time to play independently. In one session in the nursery, for example, a girl was fully involved in an extended role-play with a small cuddly dog, clearly acting out a story from her imagination. There are well organised practical areas where children can select from a variety of materials and tools to make pictures and models. Focused teaching of specific skills has led to some interesting work with paper weaving, printing, Rangoli patterns and paintings of 'Ginger'.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although standards in English are below average, they are rising.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and work together well across the whole school.
- Teachers plan interesting tasks that enable pupils to approach their work in different ways, such as in drama, debate and presentations.
- Very good lessons were seen in Years 1 and 6.
- Higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough.
- Marking is unsatisfactory across the school and pupils do not know how to improve their work.
- The development of writing in subjects other than English is ad hoc and not organised sufficiently well to impact positively on improvement.

Commentary

74. Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress in this area since the last inspection. There have been improvements in planning with the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, those learning English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups, achieve satisfactorily. There is scope to challenge higher attaining pupils more effectively.

75. Standards are rising steadily in English, but not fast enough to make a significant difference when compared with other schools. Current standards are below average. The school has tried various strategies to improve pupils' progress. At the moment, it is focusing attention on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Staff feel, quite rightly, that if pupils are confident in spoken language then they will be able to tackle reading and writing tasks more effectively. One of the key factors in the slow improvement is the pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning, which has been successfully fostered by the staff.
76. The standard of speaking and listening across the school is average. Pupils are encouraged to speak and listen effectively. Teachers encourage pupils to explain ideas in full sentences, to query things and to question statements. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, a pupil taking the Stork's side of the story in Aesop's fable *'The Fox and the Stork'* commented *'I'm teaching him a lesson – it's not my problem whether he can eat his meal or not!'* They are developing their oral skills well. At the moment, there is no clear framework for teachers to use in order to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills across subjects or from one year to the next.
77. Reading is not a particular focus for improvement this year, although staff are always striving to raise standards. Standards of reading overall are below average, although they are improving. Pupils read with enthusiasm, discuss stories and characters well, although lower attaining pupils have few strategies for working out what unknown words say. Most older pupils do not yet use the skills of skimming text for answers, or scanning pages for evidence to support a statement. They have some difficulty when it comes to predicting what might happen next in a story. The school library is a stimulating environment, based on underwater scenes. The selection of books is good; pupils report that there are interesting and challenging books to be found there, but it is not used to its full potential. Staff feel that it is important that individual pupils share books with an adult and encourage them to take books home to read with their parents and carers. Volunteers from local businesses also come regularly into school and have a very positive impact on pupils' progress and enjoyment.
78. Pupils' standards of writing are below average, although again, signs are promising for higher standards in the future. Older pupils write on a wide range of subjects, in a neat style and with a widening vocabulary. Marking does not give pupils clear evaluation on how they are achieving and advice on what they need to do next to improve further. Often, a tick seems to be sufficient, and in the middle juniors, books remain unmarked for unacceptably long periods of time. The most effective marking, although this could be better too, occurs in the younger junior class. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are starting to improve their styles because teachers direct their activities to raising the profile of writing. However, there is no consistent teaching approach to improving writing across all subjects. Opportunities are missed to ensure pupils receive consistent support to improve their writing in other subjects as well as English.
79. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Teachers plan interesting work that enables pupils to approach their work creatively, for example, 'hot-seating' their class teacher and a fellow pupil to improve their questioning skills further. Very good lessons were observed in Years 1 and 6. These were very good because pupils were involved for the whole lesson, were challenged and shown how to improve during the lesson. They were excited, motivated and busy for the whole lesson. In some lessons, teachers talked for too long, pupils became bored for periods of time, and opportunities were lost to challenge pupils and expect much more from them. Although teachers plan different activities for pupils of differing abilities, often they do not support lower attaining pupils enough to ensure they succeed. Teachers do not give enough structured work to these pupils to ensure they succeed as often as possible at their tasks, and make better progress within their own capabilities. When pupils with special educational needs are supported by the teacher or classroom assistant, they learn more effectively. Often, higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently. They mark time and are not told what they need to do to improve. Teachers provide various displays to help pupils with their spelling and writing, but there is a very visible lack of pupils' own writing on display in all parts of the school.

80. The subject co-ordinator provides satisfactory, enthusiastic leadership. She offers sound support to staff on a day-to-day basis. She does not assess the impact of new initiatives on standards rigorously enough. In the past, the school has used various 'catch-up' strategies, but these are not a feature of the work at the moment and opportunities are being lost to support the pupils who need extra help. The school does not analyse assessment information sufficiently in order to tease out what needs improving.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

81. Teachers exploit opportunities to use English in other areas of the curriculum, but there is no overall plan to develop speaking and listening, reading or writing in other subjects. Opportunities to improve pupils' skills systematically are therefore missed. The lessons seen where English was being linked to other subjects worked well.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- There has been recent improvement in standards.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- More able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.
- Monitoring of the subject by the co-ordinator and link governor is good.
- Marking is variable and pupils' involvement in self-assessment is not consistently developed.
- The use of ICT to support learning is still at an early stage of development.
- The use of numeracy skills is not consistently or systematically planned across curriculum.

Commentary

82. Standards are improving and are currently below average in Year 2 and just below average in Year 6. Pupils throughout the school make steady progress and achieve satisfactorily. Many pupils of average ability and those with special educational needs receive considerable support from teachers and the well-briefed teaching assistants. This helps to mitigate the effects of their often limited literacy skills. Opportunities to challenge more able pupils are often not exploited since the focus of the teaching and support is often on average and less able pupils. In the lessons seen, different tasks were usually set for different ability groups. However, work in pupils' books shows that often all abilities are set the same task and more able pupils are not suitably extended. All groups, including pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language or from minority ethnic backgrounds, achieve similarly. Boys and girls respond and achieve equally well.
83. In recent years, standards in Year 2 and Year 6 have reflected the composition of the cohort with a distortion in Year 6 from the inclusion of pupils from the moderate learning unit. Most pupils enter Year 1 with below average mathematical understanding. This continues to be a problem as they move through the school. Oral starter sessions are not often rapid fire and intensive enough to develop and encourage the speed of pupils' calculations. Mental strategies such as doubling are introduced, but pupils' lack of secure recall of number facts limits their ability to use them. Many pupils in Year 2 counted on their fingers instead of using the demonstrated method. In Year 3, where standards are higher, pupils are still resorting to counting methods rather than using the nearest 10 when finding the difference between two numbers. By Year 6, pupils can largely calculate areas of regular rectangles but only a very few could use this knowledge to work out the area of a right-angled triangle.

84. Pupils maintain concentration well during introductions, eagerly respond to teachers' questions and persevere with tasks. Pupils develop increasing awareness of methods for recording and displaying data and learn to apply number skills to work on measurement. ICT is sometimes used to develop the speed and accuracy of calculations. Use of the ICT suite allowed Year 5 pupils to see the effect of rotation on regular and irregular two-dimensional shapes. However, the initial introduction was hampered by pupils' limited recall of the properties of polygons. The use of ICT in the subject is still at an early stage of development. This is an improvement since the last inspection when ICT was not used.
85. Overall, teaching is satisfactory with good features in a Year 6 lesson characterised by a strong sense of purpose, clear view of learning objectives, brisk pace and strong emphasis on correct terminology. Although the purpose of the lesson is shared with pupils at the outset, introductions are rarely brisk enough and end sessions often too brief and rushed. Resources such as whiteboards are not sufficiently used to engage and involve pupils in learning or check their understanding. Marking is variable and does not often help pupils to improve. The presentation of work varies between classes. As pupils' involvement in self-assessment is at an early stage of development, they do not have a clear view of how they are doing.
86. Provision in the subject has improved since the last inspection with the adoption of the Numeracy Strategy as the basis for planning and the recent introduction of a commercial scheme. In-service training has helped develop a more consistent approach to teaching and the development of pupils' number skills. The co-ordinator provides sound leadership. Careful analysis of national test results by the link governor and effective monitoring by the co-ordinator has highlighted the need to raise standards and identified the need for greater emphasis on problem solving.

Mathematics across the curriculum

87. Pupils' opportunities to use mathematical skills in subjects such as geography, science and design and technology are largely dependent on teachers identifying suitable tasks. They are not yet systematically identified in the planning for these subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have been very low in Year 6 national tests for several years.
- The evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment data is not used effectively to plan for improvement.
- There is insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils and not enough help for lower attaining pupils.
- Staff plan interesting tasks.
- One teacher has outstanding subject expertise in relation to natural science.
- The subject leader is not providing strong enough leadership to raise standards.
- Resources for natural science are good.
- The marking of pupils' work is unsatisfactory and does not help them to improve.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to help pupils to move forward.

Commentary

88. Overall, although standards have improved in line with the national trend since the last inspection, progress has not been good enough. This is because the leadership of this area is poor. There has not been a rigorous evaluation of what is going on in classes, or of test results, to tease out the strengths in the subject and what needs improving. There is no plan

for improvement for the current year. In the light of the low standards in Year 6 tests, this is clearly unsatisfactory.

89. Most pupils make steady progress, but do not move forward fast enough to catch up or exceed the levels expected for their age. Higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged, although they are interested in what they learn and are positive about their work.
90. In spite of this the school is in a good position to move forward because there are some clear strengths in science. These compensate to some extent for some of the weaknesses in provision. Work in natural science is very good, for example. One of the teachers has considerable expertise and experience in this area and in the past has led the work in an environmental centre and at a zoo. His classroom is a cross between a natural history museum and a reptile house and he shares his enthusiasm and knowledge with staff and pupils alike. In one session seen, his class was entranced by an illustrated lecture on how living creatures adapt to their environment. There are also good facilities on the school site for environmental work, including a well-managed pond.
91. There are also some strengths in the teaching across the school. Tasks planned are often imaginative and interesting and so pupils enjoy science. Parents also commented on the interesting work that their children undertake. There is a good emphasis on experimental and investigative work and in lessons seen pupils tackled their work sensibly and methodically. In Year 2, for example, pupils worked on the link between forces and squashing, stretching, twisting and turning. In Year 4, pupils discovered why the sense of touch is not an accurate way of judging temperature.
92. There are several factors that have slowed progress. One of the most significant is the planning of activities and tasks. Pupils' work shows that, in most lessons, all pupils work on the same task and are required to record this in the same way. Higher attaining pupils are expected to produce more, but not to tackle a more challenging extension to the activity. Often lower attaining pupils struggle with the written recording of what they have done and do not finish the task. In lessons seen, it was evident that staff try to challenge and support pupils, but not always successfully. Pupils are not grouped according to ability and this makes it difficult to provide focused help.
93. Marking is unsatisfactory overall. It does not provide pupils with a clear picture of whether they have understood what was being taught or what they need to do to improve. It is better in the younger pupils' classes and not so helpful from Year 4 onwards. There is almost no evidence of ICT being used to support work in science and limited use is made of possibilities to extend pupils' numeracy skills through science. Generally, teaching is stronger in Years 1 to 3, and in Year 6. In Years 4 and 5, not enough is expected of pupils.
94. The subject co-ordinator is well qualified and provides informal support for colleagues. She has undertaken some monitoring, but this is not used as the basis for a clear plan for improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Improvement in resources and planning of the curriculum since last inspection.
- Development of teachers' knowledge and expertise has been good.
- Pupils' good attitudes and enthusiasm for the subject.
- The enthusiasm and expertise of the co-ordinator and the support provided for colleagues.
- The need for closer monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure consistent approach to the use of ICT across all classes and raise standards further.

- There is not enough use of ICT to support learning in other subjects.

Commentary

95. Since the last inspection, resources have improved considerably and training for teaching and support staff has improved subject knowledge and confidence. This is beginning to improve standards, although they are still below the expected level in Years 2 and 6. The well-equipped ICT suite now provides all pupils with regular opportunities for class sessions. In some aspects of ICT, pupils are attaining standards that meet nationally expected levels, for example, the use of a paint program to produce a picture in the style of Jackson Pollock by a group of Year 2 pupils. The recent acquisition of a class set of computer tablets and two interactive whiteboards means that the school can use ICT in classrooms and make greater use of ICT to extend and support learning in other subjects.
96. Examples of pupils' work and discussions with them show they are learning to use ICT for word processing, graphics, the Internet and being introduced to data handling, control, monitoring and modelling. Use of national guidance as the basis for planning and the purchase of additional software are ensuring that pupils now experience all the expected strands of the subject. Conversations with pupils and teachers' planning confirm increasing use is being made of ICT in whole-class sessions linked to learning in other subjects. A good example of this was the use in Year 4 of a shape program to investigate rotation of two-dimensional shapes that allowed them to test their predictions.
97. Pupils use ICT enthusiastically and clearly enjoy their ICT lessons. They work well with partners or individually to complete tasks and show increasing confidence and expertise. All, including pupils with special educational needs and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, are making sound progress and satisfactorily complete tasks because of the careful support they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants.
98. In the sessions seen, satisfactory teaching ensured that pupils were suitably introduced to the activities and given opportunities for hands-on practice. This was most successful when a clear introduction and demonstration using the digital projector was followed by pupils working independently at the computers, as in a Year 1 class experimenting with elements of a paint program by changing colours and techniques. A step-by-step approach to the use of a data-handling package with a Year 5 group meant that, although all successfully entered and manipulated the same data, learning moved forward at a uniform rate.
99. The enthusiastic co-ordinator provides good leadership in the subject, manages developments well and provides good support and guidance for colleagues. The detailed subject action plan provides a clear vision for continuing development of the subject and includes monitoring of pupils' work to ensure a consistent approach and to raise standards. It does not, however, set clear targets for raising pupils' attainment.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

100. The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is being developed and supporting software purchased for all subjects. Pupils confirm they are making increasing use of the ICT suite to undertake tasks and carry out research in subjects such as English, mathematics, geography, history and science, although there are few examples in their books. Wider and consistent use is not yet a feature, although greater whole-class access should be possible with the new equipment.

HUMANITIES

101. Work was sampled in history and geography and one lesson seen in geography. It is not possible therefore to reach overall judgements about provision in these subjects. Pupils' work

and teachers' planning indicate that the expected areas are being covered in both subjects. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding is stronger in some areas than others and overall standards in both subjects are below those expected.

102. In **geography**, good use is made of the locality to support and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils in Year 1 locate features on a street plan to develop a sense of their immediate area. In Year 2, pupils compare Tocuaro in Mexico with their own experience in order to recognise simple differences, such as the houses having only one storey because of earthquakes. Pupils' ability to record is limited but their understanding of the wider world is beginning to be developed. Older pupils study Chesham in more detail, visiting the town and investigating the arguments for and against the bypass. In a Year 5 lesson, with the guidance of their teacher, pupils use co-ordinates on local maps to identify features they recognise, particularly those relating to water. However, their recall and understanding of the water cycle is more limited. Pupils in Year 6 can name some of the features of rivers and have carried out their own research into another country. Overall, pupils' knowledge of their own locality is more developed than their understanding of geographical features, the wider world and the effect of nature and man on the environment.
103. In **history**, pupils are learning to place events in the correct historical order and recognise differences and similarities between the present and past. Year 1 pupils compare old and modern toys. Year 2 learn about significant events such as the Great Fire of London and compare modern nursing and hospitals with conditions at the time of Florence Nightingale. Year 6 pupils recall learning about the working conditions of Victorian children, visiting an open-air museum and the recent study of World War II. Pupils' books largely contain worksheets and there is little indication that pupils have sufficient opportunity to develop the skills of research and enquiry or consider the benefit and reliability of different sources. Resources have been improved since the last inspection and the school has access to the museum and library service.
104. In **religious education**, a small sample of pupils' work would suggest that by the end of Year 6, attainment is below average when compared to the expectations of the local syllabus for religious education. The samples of work from pupils in each year group reflect a broad link to the local requirements, more so in Years 3 to 6. One satisfactory lesson was observed in the infants where resources were used appropriately to support pupils' comments about the natural elements of our world. In discussions with pupils, their knowledge and understanding are sketchy. Teachers' marking is unhelpful in assessing pupils' progress. In some classes, work is often unmarked for long periods. Pupils have experienced visits to places of worship. During the inspection, they learned more about Islam from a visiting speaker in assembly. Pupils have some opportunities to visit a church at Christmas, and learn about the religious significance of important events, for example, Harvest and rites of passage for different religious groups. Leadership and management are poor. There is no clear vision for improvement, no development plan that focuses on raising attainment, and no appropriate assessments of pupil progress to ensure continuity of knowledge, skills and understanding. The subject co-ordinator does not keep clear records to note her work in school.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

105. Work was sampled in art and design, design and technology, music and PE. Only one lesson was seen in music and PE and none in art and design or design and technology. It is therefore not possible to make a firm judgement about provision, although limited evidence suggests that it is satisfactory overall and good in PE. In addition to observing lessons, inspectors spoke to co-ordinators about their work, spoke to pupils and looked at their work.
106. In **art and design**, pupils' work shows that standards are broadly average. Most work seen was related to developing pupils' drawing and painting skills. Work on display in Year 2 indicates a rich experience for these pupils. In this class pupils had painted in the style of Jackson Pollock, whose work had also been an inspiration for some computer-generated

pictures. Good links had been made with a science topic and pupils had used colour blending well to represent fire. A good use of colour was also evident in Year 6 paintings of trees. In Year 6, pupils had worked hard on some observational drawings, but generally sketchbooks are under-used. Planning has improved since the last inspection with the adoption of national guidelines. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 are keeping records of pupils' progress, but in Years 3 to 6 there is no clear assessment of pupils' progress made. The subject co-ordinator is very new and has not yet established her role. Consequently, she has not got a clear view of standards and provision. She is enthusiastic and recently organised a whole school art competition in association with a local secondary school. The school is fortunate in having a dedicated art room. Resources are satisfactory.

107. There was very limited evidence of work in **design and technology**. This is because pupils take their work home when it is completed. From the work seen, it is apparent that standards are broadly average in developing ideas, planning and making products, with less evidence of pupils making any evaluation of what they have done. In some work seen, expectations of written work were not high enough. Planning has improved since the last inspection with the adoption of national guidelines. Pupils are clearly interested and enthusiastic about what they do. This is because teachers plan engaging tasks. In Year 5, as part of their work on textiles, for example, pupils were asked to design a present for a person. This involved a design, a template, a sampler for stitches and making the product. This was evaluated with a record made of the work on a digital camera. The subject co-ordinator is new and has not yet established her role or had the opportunity to monitor standards and work in classrooms. The accommodation is good, with a practical room and access to kitchen facilities. Resources are adequate for the topic studied. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.
108. There is insufficient evidence to judge the quality of teaching or standards of attainment in **music**. A sampling of teachers' planning, discussions with pupils and the co-ordinator, one lesson observation in an infant class and attendance at daily assembly reflects a subject that is being developed. There are opportunities for pupils to learn recorder in school; some learn violin from a visiting teacher. The teaching of tabla is on hold whilst a new teacher is found to visit the school. From attendance at assemblies, it is clear that the quality of singing is above average. Pupils sang firstly in four parts very tunefully, then sang another song in three parts. The subject leader, taking the lesson, led confidently and challenged pupils to sing as well as they could. She succeeded. A good lesson was observed in the infants. It was well planned, pupils tried hard but found keeping to a regular pulse beat quite difficult. A small number of pupils (about 20, on average) attend an annual music festival where they sing together with other schools; some pupils play their instruments. This enhances pupils' experiences of live performance. Immediately after the inspection, pupils are to experience a day of African drumming – experiences like these can only enrich the curriculum and enthuse pupils in music. Resources are satisfactory, an improvement since the last inspection. There is a dedicated room in school for music teaching and learning. The co-ordinator is well organised, manages the subject well. Her development plan lacks reference to raising achievement further, although it details how new resources will be provided during the year.
109. In **physical education**, limited evidence suggests that provision is good and has been maintained well since the last inspection. Evidence includes video material of lessons, discussions with the co-ordinator, awareness of after school clubs, scrutiny of planning and schemes of work and one observation of a Year 6 lesson. PE is rightly seen as a strength of the school. Standards are above average by Year 6. The wide variety of after school clubs reflects the value the school places on the subject. Swimming is above average, again a result of the school's commitment to ensure pupils have wide opportunities. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection. This was a good lesson that clearly showed how effectively pupils worked together to raise their, and each other's, standards. Teaching points brought out the best in pupil performance, and good progress was made during the lesson as pupils refined and improved their activities. Planning is good. The football team has been very successful in recent years; tag rugby and netball teams have also enjoyed success. Clearly,

pupils enjoy the competitive nature of sport at the school, and are very enthusiastic about the provision available to them. The subject co-ordinator provides effective, enthusiastic leadership. He leads by example and ensures that all teachers have adequate resources to plan and teach PE in their age group. The dance curriculum is due for development and the co-ordinator is well prepared to take this further.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

110. There is insufficient evidence to judge the overall quality of teaching or standards of attainment. A sampling of planning, displays, discussions with pupils and the co-ordinator and an observation of one junior class lesson reflect a strong position from which the school can develop its work further. The range of work on display includes good examples of pupils' thinking about relationships and behaviour; discussions with pupils revealed a caring and committed acceptance of the school's 'Golden Rules' and the way in which 'Golden Time' works. Their work in class and school councils is important to them and they feel that they make a difference because of what they do in partnership with staff. This contributes effectively to pupils' understanding of citizenship. Pupils regularly raise funds for those less fortunate than themselves; older pupils certainly recognise that it is right and proper that they should. Involvement in the annual Chesham Peace Challenge ensures that pupils continue to think about the wider issues of living at peace with local, national and international communities. Programmes to develop drugs, alcohol and sex education are either in place or being improved. The newly appointed co-ordinator has sound ideas to develop the subject further. In the one very good junior lesson observed, pupils confidently discussed their feelings with each other, and really enjoyed opportunities to do so. The Pyramid Club for pupils in Year 3 aims to develop self-esteem and confidence. It is run in partnership with a local college, and is proving effective.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	4

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	5
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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