

INSPECTION REPORT

WHEATFIELDS JUNIOR SCHOOL

St Albans

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117212

Headteacher: Mrs C A Stewart

Lead inspector: Mrs A M Grainger

Dates of inspection: 5th - 7th July 2004

Inspection number: 258393

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Junior
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 7 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 367

School address: Downes Road
St Albans
Hertfordshire
Postcode: AL4 9NT

Telephone number: (01727) 757 444
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr M Breen

Date of previous 4th - 8th May 1998
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in Marshalswick on the northern side of St Albans. The area is relatively advantaged and most of the housing is owner-occupied. Not all the pupils live in the immediate area: some travel from further afield. Almost all have attended the neighbouring Wheatfields Infants' School before starting in Year 3.

With 200 boys and 167 girls on roll, the school is above average in size and has three classes in each year group. There are more boys than girls in all the year groups. Most pupils are of white British heritage and a small number are from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. Although several pupils have English as an additional language, only one pupil is at an early stage of learning English. Six per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is well below average. Most pupils' special educational needs relate to either specific or moderate learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (0.3 per cent) is well below average. Attainment on entry to the school is above average.

In 2003, the school gained Inspectors in People status and the Healthy Schools award. It is involved in the Safer Routes to Schools initiative and pioneered the 'walking bus' to encourage pupils to travel to school safely and healthily.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20782	Mrs A M Grainger	Lead inspector	Art and design Music Physical education English as an additional language
9970	Mr E J Acaster	Lay inspector	
19817	Mrs J A Dowsett	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Special educational needs
23385	Ms S Gerred	Team inspector	English Modern foreign languages (French) Religious education
22028	Mr J W Paull	Team Inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Wheatfields Junior School provides a good education for its pupils. The school does many significant things very well although there are some areas requiring improvement. Pupils' overall achievement is good because the teaching and the range of learning opportunities meet their needs well in most subjects. The school is very well led, effectively managed, and gives good value for money.

THE SCHOOL'S MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ARE:

- The good achievement of pupils and standards that are well above the level expected nationally in many subjects, including English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- The good quality of teaching and the effective range of learning opportunities that together are the main factors in pupils' good achievement.
- The development of pupils as mature, polite and responsible individuals who show very good initiative and consideration for others.
- The lack of challenge in the work in religious education, geography and history that results in only just adequate achievement and standards that are lower than in other subjects.
- Not enough use of pupils' very good ICT skills to support their work in other subjects.
- Marking that does not always show pupils clearly enough how they can improve.
- The very effective teamwork of the headteacher and deputy.

Improvement since the school was last inspected in May 1998 is good. The school has been very successful in raising pupils' attainment in ICT and music, although further work remains to be done in religious education and geography. Policies and long-term plans of work are now in place for all subjects. The information provided to parents on homework is better than it was. Statutory requirements are now met for the information included in the governors' annual report to parents, the registration of attendance and the appraisal of teachers. The strengths found at the last inspection have been maintained. Many have been built on further, such as the provision for pupils' personal development. There have been good improvements to the accommodation.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Pupils' achievement is good. Standards are well above the level expected nationally at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics, science, ICT, and in the creative and practical subjects. All groups of pupils achieve equally well, including the few who have English as an additional

language. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them.

In the humanities, standards are lower than in other subjects but are at the level expected in Year 6. Although achievement is just satisfactory in these subjects, insufficiently challenging work means that pupils do not do as well as they should, particularly in religious education and geography.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. Particularly outstanding features are the development of pupils' awareness of the responsibilities of living in a community and the extent to which they are involved in improving the school. Almost all pupils have very positive attitudes to school, behave very well and are friendly, polite and courteous. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in the excellent attendance level, which was in the top five per cent of schools nationally last year, and in very good punctuality.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education, including the teaching provided by the school, is good. The result is that pupils make good progress as they move up through the school and they achieve well in most subjects. The teachers' expectations of the standards all pupils are capable of attaining are appropriately high, and work is mainly matched well to pupils' differing needs. It is only in the humanities, and particularly in religious education and geography, that work is not varied well enough to provide differing levels of challenge and activities are insufficiently demanding for many pupils. Although there are some examples of good marking of pupils' work, this is not consistent and pupils are not always given enough guidance about how to improve.

A very good variety of activities additional to lessons enriches the curriculum. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs, sporting and musical activities. Visits to places of interest, including residential journeys, and visitors to school motivate pupils and add a stimulating additional dimension to the opportunities for learning. Homework is used very well to support and add to the work done in school.

Good care for pupils' personal welfare helps them to feel secure and confident and able to learn without anxiety. They also learn well because they know that they are valued and that their opinions matter. Pupils have a real voice in the school and are involved in its development.

A good partnership with parents and very good links with other schools contribute strongly to the quality of education provided.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is very good and the management is good. The headteacher and deputy are a very strong team. They are very focused on improving the quality of provision and providing pupils with an increasingly rich and stimulating range of learning opportunities. The roles of subject co-ordinators and staff with other responsibilities are developing well, with good leadership and management of many subjects and aspects of the school's work. Although the professional leaders and staff team have high aspirations for the school, the evaluation of the school's effectiveness is not always sharp enough. Hence, the provision and pupils' achievement in the humanities are not as good as in other areas.

There have been many recent changes in the membership of the governing body. Governance is developing well and is satisfactory. Governors are becoming increasingly aware of their responsibility to challenge as well as to support senior managers. All statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Overall, parents are pleased with all aspects of the education provided for their children. Although a few parents do not feel well enough informed about how well their children are doing, the school has recently reviewed and changed the format of pupils' annual reports. The quality of information in these reports is now good. Pupils are very happy at school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE ARE:

- Ensure that work in the humanities is sufficiently challenging so that pupils' achievement is improved and standards are raised.
- Make more use of pupils' very good ICT skills to support their work in other subjects.
- Make sure that marking gives clear guidance to pupils about how to improve.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

Pupils' achievement is good. Standards presently in Year 6 are well above the level expected nationally in many subjects.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards are well above the level expected in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 6.
- Pupils do well in the creative, practical and aesthetic subjects.
- Achievement is only just adequate in the humanities, and standards in these subjects are only just at the expected level.
- Pupils do not apply their very good ICT skills well enough across the other subjects.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 do very well in learning French.

COMMENTARY

1. Pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003 were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Compared with the performance of other schools whose pupils had similar attainment at the end of Year 2, pupils' results were above average. These results are just as high as they were at the last inspection. With the exception of science in 2001, the results have been maintained at a level at least above the national average in all the intervening years. The rate of improvement in the school's results has been the same as in other schools nationally.
2. Standards of schoolwork in the present Year 6 show that the very good performance of pupils in the 2003 tests has been sustained. Although boys and girls have achieved equally well over the years in mathematics and science, girls have done better than boys in the English tests. The school's unconfirmed test results for 2004 show that the gap has been closed and that boys are now doing as well as girls. Across the range of their schoolwork in English, mathematics and science, all groups of pupils achieve equally well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them. Those who are gifted or talented also do well.
3. Pupils' achievement is good not only in English, mathematics and science, but also in ICT and in the creative, practical and aesthetic subjects. In ICT, art and design and music, standards are well above the level expected when pupils reach the end of Year 6 and better than at the last inspection. In the aspects of work seen in design and technology, standards are also very good and pupils achieve well. The main causes of good achievement are effective teaching and a stimulating and imaginative range of learning opportunities well matched to pupils' needs. Linked to the good provision, there is strong leadership and management in these areas, which is continually bringing about improvement. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 make very good progress in learning French. They continue to reach a good level of competence in spoken and written French by the time they leave the school.

4. In religious education, standards are at the level set by the locally agreed syllabus. In geography and history, standards are also as expected at this age. However, pupils' achievement in these subjects is only just adequate and has not improved since the last inspection. Indeed, history standards are lower now. Achievement is restricted in these subjects by teaching and learning opportunities that are only just satisfactory. The coverage of the curriculum is patchy, inconsistent and thin. Pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are developed to an only just acceptable level as they move up through the school. These subjects have not been a sufficient priority for the school since the last inspection.
5. Pupils' use of language, literacy and mathematics skills across the subjects is satisfactory overall. There are examples of these key skills being used well, for example, when writing reports on investigations in science or when planning and making products in design and technology. However, this is not consistent and, for example, there is little use of pupils' literacy skills in religious education. Although ICT skills are used and developed well in specific lessons in the computer room, pupils do not sufficiently apply their very good ICT skills at other times. This is because they are not given enough opportunities to do so and there is minimal use of classroom computers.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.9 (28.7)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	29.0 (29.0)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.6 (29.6)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 99 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good, as is their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is excellent and punctuality is very good.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The school is very effective in promoting harmonious and supportive relationships and in using these to foster very good personal development.
- There is exceptional provision to support pupils in becoming active and responsible members of the school community.
- Expectations of very good attendance and punctuality are made crystal clear and are respected by pupils and parents.
- There are some missed opportunities to promote awareness of a modern multicultural society.

COMMENTARY

6. Led by the headteacher, and supported by the very positive and encouraging attitudes shown by staff, the school successfully maintains an ethos of high expectations of pupils' behaviour and personal development. Pupils throughout the school respond positively to these expectations. Behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school, and no

pupil has been excluded from school since the last inspection. Instances of bullying are rare and are not tolerated by the school. There is very good racial harmony.

7. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and to learning and are confident that they are gaining a significant amount from being at the school. This, coupled with much friendliness and sincerity, results in a very high level of mutual respect and confidence between pupils and staff. Parents say that their children like their school life very much. Many pupils take advantage of the wide range of activities additional to day-by-day lessons, and parents also appreciate the contribution that these make to their children's personal development.
8. Activities in lessons often involve pupils in sharing tasks together in pairs or groups. Pupils enjoy and gain confidence from this sociable approach to learning in which everyone is included. A very happy and helpful spirit is characteristic around the school. Pupils are also frequently encouraged to reflect on their experiences during lessons and assemblies, and to give consideration to others. As a result, their spiritual development is promoted very well. Reflection on how well they are doing in lessons, individually and as a class, together with evaluation of responses to activities such as residential visits, very successfully helps pupils to become aware of their inner resourcefulness.
9. There are exceptional opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to have involvement in a responsible way in the running of the school. For example, pupils wishing to become library monitors have to apply in writing and set out why they should be selected. They are required to obtain an adult sponsor and attend for interview if short-listed. Similarly, pupils wishing to be class delegates on the School Council have to write and deliver an election speech before their classmates vote in a booth. The School Council is very effective in giving pupils a voice in the school. It considers suggestions put forward by other pupils and has monitors who, for instance, have health and safety responsibilities for cloakrooms. Thus, personal development, through practical citizenship, is very well promoted, and the school's curriculum supports this well.
10. Whilst the opportunities in lessons contribute effectively to all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the school does not fully use opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of the rich diversity of a modern multicultural society in subjects such as art and design and music. Pupils do not visit places of worship such as mosques, synagogues and temples as part of their work in religious education, although representatives of faith communities talk to pupils in lessons and during assemblies. Assemblies contribute well to this particular aspect of personal development.

Example of outstanding practice

An excellent feature is the development of pupils' enterprise, sense of responsibility and their involvement in improving and running the school community.

Building from a basis of much decision-making, joint working and co-operation in lessons, pupils are encouraged to take an active part in making their school a better place, and are supported in doing so. When setting up the School Council, the headteacher gave it an agenda of things pupils could assist with round the school as well as considering problems and ideas suggested by members themselves. A competition was held for pupils to make improvements to the reading and homework diaries and was judged by the council. The gardening club needed tools, so pupils organised a bring and buy sale. Consideration of the indoor environment led to the establishment of health and safety monitors for cloakroom areas, with criteria for ensuring that the areas met health and safety requirements. At the suggestion of the council, the class winning the best-kept cloakroom is rewarded with extra playtime. The council has considered the school's website, and is to examine the governing body's annual report to parents! Pupils feel a real sense of empowerment, ownership of, and pride in their school. There is general keenness to undertake the exceptionally wide range of opportunities to assist in the school and monitor the quality of its provision.

ATTENDANCE

11. As pupils enjoy school life so much, and parents are pleased with what the school provides, the attendance rate last school year was in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The high level of attendance has been maintained this year. Parents are strongly dissuaded from taking their children out of school on holidays in term time. Arrangements for monitoring and chasing up absences and lateness are also highly effective.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.5	School data	0.0
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 overall quality of education is good. Teaching and the range of learning opportunities meet pupils' needs well in most subjects. The level of care for pupils and the partnership with parents support learning well and the links with other schools make a very good contribution.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching, pupils' learning and assessment are good. They help pupils to achieve well.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teaching is effective and is a main reason why pupils do well in many subjects, including English, mathematics, science and ICT.
- Teachers motivate and interest pupils in the creative, practical and aesthetic subjects.
- Teaching does not provide enough challenge for pupils in the humanities subjects and is not as well tuned to pupils' needs as it is in other subjects.
- Not enough use is made of classroom computers to support pupils' learning.

- Marking is inconsistent and does not always give sufficient guidance to pupils about how they can improve.
- French is taught very well in Years 5 and 6.

COMMENTARY

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	11 (30%)	13 (35%)	11 (30%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

- The overall good quality of teaching found at the last inspection has been maintained. Pupils achieve well in many subjects because teaching and learning are effective owing to the teachers' high expectations of the standards that all pupils are capable of attaining. For the most part, work is well matched to pupils' needs, although there are occasions when it is not well enough adjusted to provide pupils of differing capability with varied levels of challenge.
- The teaching of mathematics to pupils in Years 4 to 6 in classes based on their prior attainment ensures a mainly good match of teaching to needs. This arrangement gives particularly effective support to those who are lower attaining or who have special educational needs. Teaching in small groups taken out of class makes a good contribution to the learning of pupils with special educational needs in English. In the creative, practical and aesthetic subjects, tasks are sufficiently 'open ended' to allow the most capable pupils to respond at a higher level and support is provided for those who need extra help. However, the absence of established assessment procedures in these subjects prevents teachers from even more effectively providing pupils with varied levels of challenge.
- Pupils and activities are managed very well. In particular, efficient organisation helps practical activities to proceed smoothly, for example, in science and music lessons. Clear instruction and communication to pupils of the purpose of each lesson also help pupils to learn well. In a Year 5 art and design lesson, for instance, all pupils achieved success when working in a photographic process for the first time because of very good organisation and precise step-by-step instruction.
- Teachers involve pupils well in evaluating their own learning and reflecting on the quality of their work. This is often successfully promoted through either discussion in pairs or activities that involve pupils in checking each other's recorded work. This focus on self-evaluation gives pupils a clear understanding of how well they are doing and helps to move learning on at a good pace. Well-focused questions challenge pupils to deeper levels of thinking, as in some mathematics lessons. Very good attitudes and an eagerness to succeed are established through teaching that is interesting and stimulating, particularly in science, ICT and the practical, creative and aesthetic subjects. Problem solving related to real-life situations involves pupils very well in mathematics lessons.
- In lessons in which teaching and learning are very good, which occur across most year groups and mainly in English, mathematics, science and ICT, there is particularly lively

presentation. In a Year 5 English lesson, for example, role-play activities not only captured pupils' interest but also developed their understanding of characterisation and the difference between direct and indirect speech. Teaching is very good in French because activities make learning fun and the teacher has a very good level of fluency in this language. It is also in the most effective lessons that pupils are most thoroughly involved in evaluating how well they are doing. In one very successful ICT lesson in Year 4, pupils evaluated the teaching as well as their learning.

17. In contrast to the situation in other subjects, teaching does not challenge pupils well enough in the humanities. Teaching in the humanities has not developed at the same rate as in other subjects since the last inspection. There is too much use of undemanding worksheets that do not get pupils to think enough for themselves. Overall, teachers' subject knowledge is less secure in the humanities than in other subjects. There is little variation of work to meet pupils' differing needs.
18. The marking of pupils' work across many subjects is inconsistent and, often, there is not enough advice to pupils about how to improve their work. This is the case even in subjects in which teaching and assessment are good overall. In English there are not enough references in marking to pupils' targets. The result is that there are missed opportunities to improve the standard of writing at an even better pace, even though there is discussion of targets during timetabled 'target time'. Nevertheless, there is some helpful marking that gives pupils questions to think about in order to move learning on. Marking in the humanities subjects tends to focus too much on literacy skills and so does not do enough to help pupils to develop their subject-related knowledge, understanding and skills.
19. Although teachers develop pupils' ICT skills well in lessons in the computer room, they do not use ICT enough to support pupils' learning in other lessons. Computers in classrooms are rarely used, even though pupils have very good skills and capacity to work on programs independently. The use of support staff to assist pupils' learning is inconsistent, particularly in whole-class sessions. However, in most classes teachers and teaching assistants liaise well.

THE CURRICULUM

The quality and range of learning opportunities are good overall. Opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum are very good. The accommodation gives very good support to the curriculum and resources to support pupils' learning are satisfactory overall.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Good learning opportunities in English, mathematics, science, ICT and most other subjects contribute to pupils' good achievement.
- In the humanities subjects, learning opportunities are patchy and inconsistent, which means that pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- Not enough use is made of pupils' very good ICT skills in lessons across the subjects and classroom computers are not used efficiently.
- There is very good enrichment of the curriculum through extra-curricular activities, visits out of school and visitors who talk to pupils.

COMMENTARY

20. The curriculum meets pupils' needs well in English, mathematics, science, ICT, the creative, practical and aesthetic subjects, and French. This is a significant factor in pupils' good achievement. In religious education, geography and history, pupils' needs are met satisfactorily overall but there are areas requiring improvement in order to raise standards. Policies are now in place for all subjects, rectifying a weakness found at the last inspection.
21. The learning opportunities in English and mathematics are based effectively on well-adapted national strategies. The practice of grouping pupils by their prior attainment in Years 4 to 6 for mathematics, with an additional teacher used to create a fourth group in Years 5 and 6, helps teachers to adjust the content of the National Numeracy Strategy to match pupils' differing capabilities. Effective opportunities are provided for speaking, listening, reading and writing in English and in some other subjects, particularly in science and history. This use of language and literacy skills in other subjects contributes to pupils' good progress in the development of key skills in English. There is inconsistency, however, in how well literacy skills are promoted through other subjects such as in religious education. The setting aside of some time twice each week as 'target time' in English is proving successful in concentrating pupils' attention on aspects of their writing that need improvement and plays a key role in pupils' good achievement.
22. In science, there is good attention to practical and investigative work and this contributes very well to the standards attained. Pupils not only develop their skills in scientific enquiry effectively, but they apply and develop their scientific knowledge and understanding well. Practical activities in many subjects, not only in science, are particularly successful in enthusing pupils and promoting very good attitudes.
23. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills when working in the well-equipped computer room in specific timetabled lessons. Standards have risen as a result. However, not enough use is made of computers in classrooms to reinforce and extend work, and the use of ICT in other subjects is not well enough developed. There are missed opportunities to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding in other subjects through ICT-related tasks.
24. In the humanities subjects, and particularly in religious education and geography, coverage of the curriculum is patchy and inconsistent. It is thin at times. This means that pupils do not develop skills and understanding in sufficient depth to enable them to attain standards beyond those expected nationally for their age. This is a concern because the pupils are capable of doing better than they are. The provision in these subjects has not developed at a good enough rate since the last inspection.
25. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs is good overall. Apart from in the humanities subjects, activities are usually adjusted or support is given when necessary. There is some good one-to-one and small group assistance in English and mathematics. Teachers and teaching assistants work together well in most classes to provide activities that are related to the short-term targets in the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs.
26. There continues to be very good extra-curricular enrichment of the curriculum. Pupils have opportunities to attend after-school and lunchtime clubs in an extensive range of areas, including some not found often in primary schools, such as golf and yoga. Music, drama, environment, gardening and French clubs are offered as well as activities in a

wide variety of sports. All of these activities are very well attended. They motivate and interest pupils and help to develop positive attitudes to school and to learning. Visits to places of interest, a choice of residential journeys in this country or abroad, and a wealth of visitors, such as authors, poets and artists, add an additional dimension to the curriculum in a range of subjects. Homework is now used very well to support pupils' learning. The inconsistencies in the use of homework found at the last inspection have been rectified.

27. Good improvements to the accommodation mean that pupils are now taught in one building. The accommodation offers a very good range of facilities including an assembly hall and a separate sports hall and dining room. Various additional rooms for study as well as a large library, ICT suite and music practice rooms support learning very well. External accommodation provides very good facilities for outdoor study and play, contributing very effectively to the science, mathematics and physical education curriculum. Resources are good in several subjects but they are barely adequate in history. Overall, the resources give satisfactory support to the curriculum.

CARE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

There is good provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Pupils are given good support, advice and guidance, and the school is very effective in seeking and acting on their views.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils are consulted well. Their views are valued and they have a real voice in the school.
- Almost all pupils feel very comfortable with the way in which they are included, encouraged and supported.
- Arrangements for settling pupils in when they start at the school are very good.
- The care for pupils' health and safety is good.
- A few aspects of care and welfare require improvement, although the provision is generally good.

COMMENTARY

28. As at the last inspection, the school provides a very supportive and positive environment in which each individual pupil is helped to flourish. Staff are very committed to pupils' personal wellbeing as well as to their academic development. They know their pupils very well, are alert to their personal needs, and provide them with opportunities and encouragement to consider their experiences and to make choices. Thus pupils are frequently challenged in a friendly way, and the overall quality of support and advice they receive based on teachers' monitoring is good.
29. Pupils' opinions and contributions to school life are valued greatly. They are used to having responsibilities within school and its grounds. The School Council is an effective means of gaining pupils' views and of involving them in improving the school. There are good additional arrangements for canvassing pupils' views, including through a questionnaire.
30. The arrangements for settling pupils into school and preparing them for entry to Year 3 are very good. Pupils in the adjoining infants' school, even in the Nursery, are used to

seeing the junior pupils in helpful, caring and supportive roles. Junior pupils assist those in the infants' school, for example, through play activities and helping them with reading. The infant pupils make a number of visits to the junior school, for example, to see performances and also for a day in the summer term, which they spend with their new class teachers. Equally effective support is given to pupils who enter the school at a later stage than the start of Year 3.

31. Care, welfare, health and safety arrangements are good overall. The school and its grounds are well kept and very pleasant, with alert supervision for pupils as they play as well as in lessons. Child protection procedures are well established and follow local requirements. The school has obtained 'Healthy Schools' accreditation and pioneered a 'walking bus' for the healthy and safe transport of pupils to and from school. Much detailed attention is given to risk assessment. Electrical and fire checks are in order. All staff are trained in emergency first aid every two years.
32. A few details of school practice have been drawn to the headteacher's attention as being potentially hazardous or inappropriate. Although pupils who are unwell in school have a careful eye kept on them, they are not afforded the necessary privacy or a pleasant place to sit. Not all minor incidents are recorded as they should be, although more serious ones are and head bumps are always reported to parents.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

The school has a good partnership with parents. It has very good involvement with other schools and links with the community are satisfactory.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Parents support the school and work very closely with it to help their children to achieve well.
- Relationships with other schools enhance the learning opportunities and contribute very effectively to pupils' personal development.
- Pupils' annual reports, although recently improved, do not clearly specify how well pupils are doing in terms of the standard expected for their age.

COMMENTARY

33. Parents continue to think very well of the school. They are particularly pleased that their children are expected to work hard but that they also enjoy their school life and have access to a very good range of activities. Most parents appreciate the approachability and friendliness of staff and value the school's strong, purposeful leadership. As a result, almost all parents respond very well to the school's expectations, such as in the key matter of attendance. Several help directly in school life. The parent-teacher association's support for the school is very effective.
34. The school provides its parents with a good standard of information overall. The prospectus and governors' annual report now comply fully with statutory requirements and both have been made very attractive and informative. Parents and pupils are very pleased with how well they are received and involved when their children join the school. Newsletters keep parents adequately updated on events and activities. Each year group also issues information at the start of every term to tell parents what is to be taught, and many parents respond to the suggestions the school makes as to how they might assist

their children. Parents are now better informed about, and happier with, the homework provision.

35. Information regarding pupils' progress is good. Consultation evenings take place each term. Parents may keep track of their children's progress through the homework logs, which are signed weekly. Teachers are readily available to meet with parents informally. Pupils' annual written academic reports are thorough, and their presentation has been made considerably clearer this year by the use of a tabular format. Targets in core subjects are given. This new style goes some way towards meeting the wishes of the small minority of parents who would like to be better informed about their children's progress. However, reports do not make clear enough how well pupils are doing in relation to the expectation for their age. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are well consulted and informed.
36. Links with other schools are very good. A particularly close relationship with the neighbouring infant school has developed. These links make a considerable contribution to pupils' personal development. Year 3 pupils, for example, support children in the Nursery. Links with the nearby secondary school are extensive. These prepare pupils well for their move to secondary education and enhance the curriculum. Year 6 pupils, for example, participate in musical productions with secondary pupils. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 gain a great deal from the French lessons taught by a secondary school teacher. Pupils also work with the pupils from a local special school. 'Beacon group' arrangements through the headteacher have significantly promoted school improvements.
37. Community links are satisfactory and as found in most primary schools. For example, pupils have experience of local charities, churches and sporting fixtures. Parents from other faiths have brought their traditions to life in the school by talking to pupils in lessons and during assemblies. However, the exploration of modern cultural diversity is relatively underdeveloped in terms of community links.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school is very good, because of the effectiveness of the headteacher and the deputy. Management is good and governance is satisfactory.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The headteacher and deputy work very well together.
- Leadership and management are good in many subjects, and this is reflected in pupils' good achievement.
- Effective action is taken to develop the overall quality of teaching and to achieve strong teamwork among staff, including through delegation.
- Not enough priority has been given to leading and managing the humanities subjects and improving the provision.

COMMENTARY

38. As at the last inspection, the headteacher gives very effective leadership for the school. A considerable strength is the extent to which the headteacher develops teamwork within the staff and delegates responsibility to others for the benefit of the pupils. This focus on involvement of others successfully gives a clear and corporate direction for the school. As a result, the whole staff is committed to providing pupils with a stimulating and interesting

education as well as aiming for them to perform well in the National Curriculum tests in Year 6. This commitment is evident in the good provision in many subjects, the very good range of activities additional to lessons, the attention to pupils' personal development, and the extent to which pupils have a voice in the school and are given responsibility.

39. One particularly effective example of successful delegation is the role of the deputy. The deputy is deployed in such a way that his significant strengths as a teacher benefit the whole school. He is very active in working alongside teachers to review and develop areas such as provision in the visual arts. He plays a substantial role in bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching. He coaches any teacher whose practice is identified as having weaknesses, team teaches to share expertise and develop it in others, and also teaches example lessons. The deputy puts into practice the enthusiasm he and the headteacher share for the development of the curriculum. This is a significant force in moving the school forward.
40. The roles of subject co-ordinators and co-ordinators for aspects such as special educational needs are developing well overall. There is good leadership and management of all subjects in which pupils achieve well, and this is an important factor in pupils' good achievement. Many subject leaders are actively involved in developing provision, for example, by working alongside colleagues in lessons or having their own teaching observed.
41. The humanities subjects have not received the same level of attention as other areas of the curriculum since the last inspection, although their present leadership and management are adequate. The subject leaders are keen to take their areas forward. The geography co-ordinator, for example, has already worked with the deputy to review provision and has identified what improvements are needed. Nevertheless, it is a concern that geography and religious education were identified as subjects with less effective provision at the last inspection and, six years later, this is still the case.
42. There are some features of management that reduce it to a good rather than very good level, even though leadership is very good overall. Whilst good systems are in place to help the subject leaders review their areas, there is not always a sharp enough evaluation of how provision contributes to the standards in each of the subjects. The school has capable pupils but questioning of how well the school adds value in all the areas of its provision is not always rigorous enough. Once weaknesses are identified they are not always followed up fully. The school is aware, for instance, that marking needs improvement and some action has been taken, but the inconsistencies in practice have still to be corrected. Many subject and aspect development plans lack clear timescales.
43. There have been many recent changes on the governing body and almost all governors have been involved in the school only during the present school year. Only the chair of governors is long serving. However, the newly formed governing body has developed its role well and is starting to challenge as well as to support senior staff. Satisfactory systems are in place to support the governing body in carrying out its responsibilities. Governors ensure that statutory requirements are met.
44. Financial management is good because it is closely linked to the main school improvement plan and reflects the major educational priorities. The large surplus carried forward at the end of the last financial year is fully justified by monies having been set aside for building works and other projected expenditures. These funds are now being

put to use to further improve the facilities for pupils. Staff teams compete to obtain their own devolved financial resources. The governors' finance committee plays an active part in considering the overall budget, and monitors outcomes carefully. Day-by-day administration is efficient. Overall, senior staff and governors give good attention to whether the school provides best value for pupils and their parents.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,022,993
Total expenditure	1,142,000
Expenditure per pupil	3,145

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	230,250
Balance carried forward to the next year	111,243

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards are well above the level expected nationally in Year 6.
- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and challenging learning opportunities.
- There are missed opportunities for the use of literacy skills in some subjects.
- Marking is not always closely enough linked to pupils' targets to guide them to improve.
- The co-ordinator provides very good leadership and management and is firmly focused on improving provision.

COMMENTARY

45. Pupils' results in the end of Year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2003 were well above the national average, as they were at the last inspection. They were above average when compared with the results achieved by other schools whose pupils had attained similarly at the end of Year 2. The upward trend in the school's results since the last inspection has been much the same as found nationally. Although the girls have done better than boys in the tests over the years, the school's unconfirmed results for 2004 show that the gap between boys and girls has been closed.
46. Standards in the present Year 6 are well above the level expected nationally in speaking, listening, reading and writing. All groups of pupils achieve well because teaching and the learning opportunities are good in most classes across all year groups. Class teaching is very effectively supported by the use of specialist visitors, including poets and other authors. These challenging learning opportunities support pupils in developing a very good understanding of different forms of poetry and of how language can be used to create atmosphere and communicate meaning.
47. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and lessons are carefully planned. In most cases, groups of pupils of different capability, including those who are the most able, have work that is matched to their needs and is suitably challenging. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them. This is because their needs are met well, particularly in teaching in small groups when taken out of class or when teaching assistants are used specifically to provide targeted support. However, there are occasions when support staff are present in lessons, but not used well enough to support pupils' learning.
48. There are examples of very good teaching. In Year 5, for example, very effective use was made of role-play to develop understanding of characterisation and the difference between direct and indirect speech. Lively and stimulating activities captured pupils' imagination and prepared them very successfully for a written task.

49. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to write for a variety of purposes and introduce them to a wide range of texts. There is the right balance between creative and non-fiction writing, and topics ensure that both girls and boys are motivated equally. Teachers manage pupils and activities very well and communicate the purpose of lessons clearly to pupils. In most lessons, teachers give pupils opportunities to discuss with a partner their responses to questions and to develop their own and each other's work. This method gives pupils time to reflect before responding. It helps them to clarify and evaluate their own and others' work and to become 'critical friends' to each other to support learning. The process of drafting and editing work, individually or with a partner, leads to 'polished' final pieces of writing of a very good standard.
50. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and most provide useful comments that help pupils to improve their work. They often ask questions to move learning on and pupils of all abilities often take action in response to make their writing better. Teachers refer to and remind pupils' of their writing targets when marking work undertaken during timetabled 'target time.' However, reference to targets when work is marked at other times is inconsistent. As a result, there are some missed opportunities to develop even higher standards of writing and to move learning on more quickly.
51. The leadership and management of English are very good. In his role as the co-ordinator, the deputy head has a very secure understanding of what makes effective teaching and works closely with teachers to help them to improve. He has introduced a range of strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning and is taking the necessary action to build on the present strengths in provision and to correct the weaknesses. The success of action taken so far can be seen in the improved attainment this year of boys in particular. The strengths found at the last inspection have been maintained and built on further.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

52. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to use and develop their language and literacy skills in other subjects. Pupils write at length in history, often using ICT skills, and also write well in science. Through this writing they deepen their knowledge and understanding in these other subjects as well as improving their writing skills. However, opportunities for writing across subjects are inconsistent and are minimal in religious education. As a result, there are some missed opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills and to enhance their learning in other subjects.

FRENCH

Provision in French was sampled.

53. A teacher from a local secondary school teaches French to pupils in Years 5 and 6 for one hour each week. Pupils in Year 4 have an opportunity to learn French at a lunchtime club. The good picture found at the last inspection has been maintained. Pupils achieve very well and their competence is good.
54. By the time they leave the school, many pupils speak words, phrases and short sentences confidently and with good pronunciation. Many ask and answer questions in French about a range of topics, and are able to follow classroom instructions and to count

to 100. The strongest emphasis is given to oral French and pupils are not introduced to text before being very familiar with the spoken word. This works very well. Pupils are developing a good basic awareness of the French culture and have the opportunity in Year 6 to participate in a residential visit in France. This contributes well to their cultural development in addition to providing a very good opportunity for the application of what has been learnt in school.

55. Teaching and learning were very good in a lesson in Year 6. The teacher spoke French fluently and delivered a lively lesson that captured pupils' interest and made learning fun. The activities, which involved asking and answering questions about the weather, moved forward at a very brisk pace. These included a wide variety of games, quizzes, and a song that instantly captured pupils' interest because the tune was that of a well-known football chant. As a result of this very effective teaching, pupils are well prepared for their transition to secondary education.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards in Year 6 are well above national expectations and pupils achieve well.
- Work is not always matched closely enough to pupils' needs, even though teaching and assessment are good overall.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to mathematics and work very hard in lessons.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Homework is used very well to support learning.
- Marking is inconsistent and does not always tell pupils clearly enough how to improve.

COMMENTARY

56. In the 2003 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 6, the school's results were well above the national average. The results were above average when compared with the performance of other schools whose pupils had similar attainment at the end of Year 2. These results match those at the last inspection. In the current Year 6, standards are well above national expectations across all strands of mathematics. Year 6 pupils mentally identify sequences of decimal numbers, including negative numbers, and use the four operations effectively to calculate a given target. However, pupils' quick mental recall of number facts is less secure than their paper and pencil methods.
57. All groups of pupils, including those who are the most capable, achieve well as a result of effective teaching that motivates and challenges them. They settle very quickly and diligently to their tasks and produce a substantial amount of well-presented written work. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by the arrangement of teaching them in classes based on prior attainment in Years 4, 5 and 6. This arrangement, which also involves the deputy in teaching mathematics in these year groups, includes the provision of a fourth class. The smaller class sizes that result help teachers to meet the range of pupils' needs in each year group. However, the use of teaching assistants is not consistently effective in all parts of lessons. The result is that there are sometimes missed opportunities to support the learning of particular groups of pupils.

58. Teaching and learning are good overall. There are examples of very effective teaching and learning. Teachers' clear plans include a focus on presenting mathematics to pupils in a way that is related to real-life situations. Pupils understand and respond to these situations well. Teachers use well-focused questions to challenge pupils, including the most capable. Homework is used more consistently than at the last inspection and very successfully to support learning. Although the use of assessment is good overall, in some lessons work is not closely enough matched to pupils' differing needs. On such occasions, there are tasks that are too difficult for some pupils and a lack of challenge for others.
59. Approaches to marking are inconsistent. Better marking is characterised by accurate comments that reward pupils' successes. Nevertheless, there is insufficient guidance to pupils on how they can improve. Pupils are assessed each term, and their attainment is recorded by the assessment co-ordinator. This data is used to set school targets and group pupils into classes in Years 4 to 6. However, there is insufficient emphasis on the rigorous tracking of each individual pupil's progress over time. The mathematics co-ordinator has plans to introduce a target system in the next academic year that should help teachers, pupils and parents to focus more closely on individual needs.
60. Mathematics is well led and managed. The subject co-ordinator knows the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainment across the school through the analysis of test papers. An informal action plan identifies appropriate strategies to raise standards but methods for checking the effectiveness of these initiatives on learning lack rigour. These shortcomings in management prevent it from being better than good overall. They also prevent the school from ensuring that pupils' achievement is even better than it is at present. There has been satisfactory improvement in the mathematics provision since the last inspection. The strengths found at that time have been maintained.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. Pupils use mathematics well in some other subjects. They develop their appreciation of the practical uses of mathematics in science, art and design, geography and design and technology. However, the systematic planning of such opportunities is not established. The school recognises that this area needs development, particularly in the exploration of mathematics using ICT. Present links between mathematics and ICT are underdeveloped.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards are well above the level expected nationally and pupils achieve well.
- Teachers are particularly effective in developing pupils' skills of scientific testing, observation and enquiry.
- Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to carry out experiments, and they work together very sensibly.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are used well to record, research, analyse and present scientific findings.
- Not enough use is made of pupils' very good ICT skills to support learning.

- Leadership and management are good and result in some successful developments of provision.

COMMENTARY

62. The results of Year 6 pupils in the 2003 National Curriculum tests were well above the national average. They were above average when compared with those of schools whose pupils had attained similarly at the end of Year 2. The 2003 results are much the same as at the last inspection. Whilst they have been maintained at a level above the national average in most of the intervening years, they dipped to an average level in 2001. However, the school diagnosed the reasons for this and there has been considerable and sustained improvement since then. The unconfirmed results for 2004 show that the very strong picture seen in 2003 has been maintained. Pupils' schoolwork shows standards presently in Year 6 as well above the level expected at this age. All groups of pupils, including the most capable ones and those who have special educational needs, achieve well.
63. A higher-than-usual proportion of pupils in Year 6 reaches at least the expected depth of knowledge for their age, and many go further. The main reason for pupils' good achievement and the standards attained is that skills in scientific enquiry and observation are a strong focus in nearly all lessons. As a result, pupils gain first-hand experiences of scientific facts in all strands of the subject. This good practical emphasis in teaching helps pupils to remember what they see and find out. It also means that they acquire a particularly good understanding of the nature of scientific testing, methodology and how to analyse results thoughtfully and carefully. Teachers are particularly good at setting up situations that help pupils to design and work out their own ideas and experiments. This ensures that the most capable pupils are consistently challenged.
64. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The good teaching leads to pupils' attitudes towards science thriving. Teachers also have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and sociability. As a result, pupils nearly always co-operate effectively and behave very sensibly as they undertake investigations. They concentrate thoroughly and work together well, collaborating and sharing ideas to deepen their scientific knowledge and understanding.
65. At the start of each science lesson, teachers explain what they will expect pupils to know by the end of it. This good practice contributes well to the quality of learning as it offers pupils insights into what are the most important points of what is to be taught. In a very successful Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils were clear about the knowledge of taste buds to be developed and also why they were devising a test to investigate taste. Teachers assess pupils' progress well. They use the information from their assessments to adapt their planning and teaching to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs. Full account is taken of the needs of the few pupils with English as an additional language. The right level of challenge is provided for the more capable pupils.
66. Skills in literacy are used well in the teaching and learning of science. Teachers show pupils how to write up accounts of science experiments using the correct terminology, based on good factual writing. This practice includes pupils of lower prior attainment well. For example, in a lesson in which teaching and learning were very good in Year 6, worksheets of good quality were used to support the lower-attaining pupils, including

those with special educational needs. These sheets helped pupils to organise their writing and to include salient points. Pupils of higher attainment were provided with more challenging tasks to communicate their findings and report on how they carried out their tests.

67. Numeracy skills are also applied and developed effectively. Many examples of graphs, tables and charts are seen in the presentation of scientific results. A particularly good use of skills acquired during the study of shape and space was observed in Year 6. Pupils used symbols to indicate direction in space and marked similar sizes of angles to explain how light reflects from mirrors. However, classroom computers are not always used often enough in lessons, which limits opportunities for recording and using data. Overall, apart from some activities in lessons in the computer room, not enough use is made of ICT to support learning in science.
68. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator is well aware of the need to keep standards under constant review and to develop and improve teaching and learning. For example, after the dip in the results in 2001, a stronger emphasis was placed on practical teaching and improving pupils' learning of investigative and observational skills in scientific enquiry. All the strengths found at the last inspection have been maintained.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards are well above those expected nationally and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and the range of learning opportunities are good and include very good features.
- The subject is well managed and has improved very well.
- Pupils show considerable interest in ICT, take care of equipment, and co-operate with each other and their teachers very well.
- The computer room is used very efficiently to support learning.
- Computers in the classrooms are not used enough and this results in too little use of pupils' very good skills outside the lessons in the computer room.

COMMENTARY

69. By Year 6, overall standards are well above the expected level and many pupils are working at a level beyond that usually found at this age. Pupils' achievement is good and all pupils, including those who are the most capable, are given the right level of challenge. For example, pupils' use of the Internet is particularly sophisticated. In a Year 4 lesson, all pupils in the class used the mouse confidently to click on the correct toolbars and buttons to access and open e-mails. They learnt successfully to receive a message and to reply with an attachment. By Year 6, pupils have a particularly good understanding of how to employ keywords to initiate searches for relevant websites in order to undertake research.
70. Standards now are much better than at the last inspection, when they were no higher than the expected level. Raising standards in ICT was identified as an issue for the school to

work on. This improvement has been achieved through the professional development of staff and training of those teachers who lacked confidence and expertise. Good management of the subject, including the establishment of a well-resourced computer room, has resulted in issues from the last inspection being addressed effectively.

71. The co-ordinators are knowledgeable and analytic in their approach. They check planning and the provision carefully to evaluate what action is needed to develop the subject further. For example, they are aware that pupils who have access to a computer at home make faster progress than those who do not. Because of this, pupils who do not have a computer at home are given priority for membership of an after-school computer club. Currently, the co-ordinators are introducing more rigorous means of assessing all pupils' achievements and progress.
72. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Good teaching in specific ICT lessons is the main factor in pupils' good achievement. Yearly and termly planning ensures that pupils receive a broad curriculum that is taught in considerable depth. Teachers use the long-term plan of work well to prepare their lessons. Programs for pupils with special educational needs are used effectively to help pupils improve skills in English, as well as in the use of new technology.
73. What characterised an example of very good teaching, observed in Year 4, was the particularly effective opportunity for pupils to evaluate not only their learning but also how well the teaching met their needs. Pupils explained which of two programs had worked best, stating the relevant attributes of each in helping them to understand how to use computers to control other devices. Pupils responded very positively to this opportunity, offering good reasoned comments about the quality of teaching and how the programs helped them to acquire skills and knowledge effectively.
74. Pupils have very good attitudes to ICT activities. They co-operate with each other and with their teachers, behaving very well and treating computers and other equipment with care. As a result, time in lessons in the computer room is used very well for learning, with little or no waste.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

75. The computer suite is used efficiently and effectively. All classes are timetabled to use it at least once each week. Skills and techniques that include aspects of other subjects are addressed. In this way pupils acquire knowledge of how to use ICT in a wide range of situations, including in work in other subjects. For example, activities in the computer room link with work in science, design and technology, mathematics and word processing in writing. However, classroom computers are not used with the same efficiency. In many lessons in classrooms, computers are not in use at all, which represents inefficiency in the use of expensive equipment. This shortcoming also means that pupils do not practise skills as frequently as they should. There are missed opportunities for pupils to use their very good ICT skills to develop knowledge and understanding in other subjects. The school recognises that this aspect of provision is in need of improvement and some ways of achieving this are already under consideration.

HUMANITIES

HISTORY

Provision in history was sampled through an analysis of pupils' work, scrutiny of documentation, and discussion with pupils and staff. Not enough evidence was gathered to make a secure judgement on the overall quality of provision.

76. Standards are at the level expected nationally in Year 6 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils develop a sense of chronology and engage satisfactorily in historical enquiry through their study of a range of topics including the Ancient Greek, Roman and Tudor periods, Britain since the 1930s and local history. There is good enrichment of the curriculum through role-play days and visits, for example, to Sulgrave Manor and Verulamium. The work in pupils' books indicates that teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and that pupils are provided with varied and interesting activities. Work is consistently well presented, although this is often because it is a second draft.
77. Although there is evidence that aspects of provision are satisfactory, and that there are some good features, it is also clear that there are areas requiring improvement. The marking of pupils' work frequently focuses on literacy objectives rather than on historical skills and facts, which restricts pupils' understanding of how they can develop their skills and understanding in history. There is an over-reliance on undemanding worksheets in some classes, which limits opportunities for independent and longer pieces of writing, although there is some good writing in some classes. Whilst more capable pupils sometimes carry out extended research, work is often the same for all pupils in a class regardless of their differing capabilities. All these factors contribute to standards not being better than they are and being lower than in many other subjects. They also result in too little challenge for the most capable pupils in particular.
78. Assessment procedures are insufficient at present to support teachers in their assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. Resources are only just adequate for the size of the school, although supplemented through the local education authority loan system. The subject has not developed adequately since the last inspection and has not been given sufficient priority.

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography is **satisfactory** but there are weaknesses.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils' achievements are only just satisfactory because work is not always sufficiently challenging or adjusted to meet their needs.
- The most capable pupils in particular could do better.
- The curriculum is not well enough focused on the progressive development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Field trips in all year groups provide good enrichment.
- Pupils present their work well.

COMMENTARY

79. In Year 6, standards in geography are at the level expected nationally. Few pupils reach higher standards. Year 6 pupils have adequate geographical knowledge. They know, for example, that Snowdonia is mountainous, quiet and a long way from the nearest town. They compare Snowdonia with St Albans. Pupils have personal views, although these are not always explored as a class. They believe, for example, that St Albans is getting busier with more tourists and that there is a need for more car parks. Pupils throughout the school present their work well. However, Year 6 pupils do not record enough work for their age and capability in all units studied, which limits their achievement, particularly that of the most capable pupils. Pupils' achievement is only just satisfactory because work is insufficiently matched to their capabilities. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
80. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but there are features requiring improvement. Teachers' plans show an appropriate emphasis on geographical enquiry and activities are chosen to interest and motivate pupils, including through good homework provision. As a result, pupils are interested and respond well. However, not all teachers' subject knowledge is secure. Because work is not consistently matched to pupils' differing capabilities, there are times when it is too difficult for some and insufficiently challenging for others. The use of undemanding worksheets for recording work limits pupils' independence and writing. In addition, in the follow-up to field studies for Year 6 the content of much writing focuses on personal and social development rather than on geography. Marking of work is inconsistent. The best marking gives positive comments on the geographical content. However, pupils are not given enough guidance on how to improve their work. The marking of topic work after it is fully completed means pupils do not have an opportunity to address any weaknesses.
81. The curriculum, including the sequencing of units, does not focus enough on the progressive acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding as pupils move up through the school. A strength is the range of visits and field studies to venues such as Wales and France. These additional opportunities provide good enrichment and help to bring geography to life. Effective links are made to other subjects, particularly English and ICT. However, the geographical focus is not consistently emphasised. For example, pupils' exciting, good quality tourist information leaflets produced using computers were evaluated against literacy and design objectives rather than on geographical content.
82. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and committed to improving standards. She has revised the termly planning to ensure a focus on enquiry skills and has improved the resources. However, resources are only just adequate overall and there are shortfalls in maps and photographs for some units. Assessment is at an early stage of development, with systems only recently implemented in Year 6. There is insufficient assessment of pupils' work against national expectations. There is a lack of rigour in the current programme of monitoring, with too little evaluation of how initiatives contribute to the effectiveness of teaching and pupils' learning. The subject co-ordinator's informal action plan recognises these issues as areas for further development.
83. Despite being an area identified for improvement at the last inspection, the subject has not been a priority for the school until fairly recently. The pace of improvement since the last inspection has been too slow and not enough action has been taken to develop the provision over the last six years.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory** but there are weaknesses.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Coverage of the curriculum is patchy, inconsistent, and thin at times. As a result, pupils are not challenged enough.
- Assemblies make a good contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious festivals and celebrations.
- The use of visitors brings religion to life and helps pupils to see how faith plays an important part in many people's lives.
- There are missed opportunities to develop pupils' skills in ICT and literacy.

COMMENTARY

84. Standards in Year 6 are at the level expected by the locally agreed syllabus, as at the last inspection. Pupils' achievement is just adequate but, given their capabilities, ought to be much better. The most capable pupils in particular are working at a lower level than they should be. Pupils' knowledge and understanding about the faiths they study are at the expected level and help them adequately to understand the significance of faith. By Year 6, pupils have a secure understanding of the key aspects of world religions, such as belief in God and rules for living. They appreciate the opportunities to talk about their own faiths and show good respect and tolerance for the values and beliefs of others.
85. Assemblies are used well to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious festivals and celebrations such as Harvest, Diwali, Succot and Eid. Good use is made of parents and other visitors such as the local vicar and a Hindu priest to talk about specific aspects of faith and religion, both in lessons and in school assemblies. By these means, pupils' understanding is effectively reinforced, learning is brought to life and pupils are helped to see that religion plays an important part in the lives of people around them.
86. The overall quality of teaching and the curriculum is adequate and promotes learning that is just satisfactory. There are aspects of the provision requiring improvement. Coverage of the curriculum is patchy and inconsistent. At times it is too thin. This means that pupils are not challenged enough. As a result, they do not develop knowledge and understanding in sufficient depth to attain standards at a higher level than that expected by the locally agreed syllabus, even though many are capable of doing so. Although visits to local churches enhance the study of Christianity satisfactorily, there are few opportunities for pupils to visit other places of worship such as a mosque, synagogue or temple when studying other world religions.
87. There are missed opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills as well as to use writing as a means of deepening knowledge and understanding of religious education. In all year groups, there is too little use of ICT, for example, to draft and present work or to gain information through research.
88. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and keen to raise standards in the subject. She has been successful in organising a programme of visiting speakers to support teaching and learning. She has satisfactorily

undertaken some checking of pupils' work and teachers' planning. However, she recognises that monitoring and evaluation of the learning opportunities, particularly through lesson observations, are areas requiring further development. This is essential if there is to be a sharp enough focus on identifying the most important things to do to raise standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been too slow.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Provision in design and technology and physical education was sampled through lesson observations, an analysis of pupils' work, scrutiny of documentation and discussion with staff. Not enough evidence was gathered to make secure overall judgements on the quality of provision in these subjects.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

89. Examples of pupils' products, designs and evaluations show standards well above those expected at this age, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The models, products and artefacts are nearly always finished well with good attention to appearance as well as function. A good variety of materials is used. For example, Year 6 pupils make wooden bird boxes, cardboard and recycled objects are produced in other years, and fabrics are used in Year 4. Good joining techniques are apparent and include 'Jinks-joints' (a method of joining wooden struts with triangular pieces of card), sewing, screwing and gluing. Pupils' designs and evaluations are clearly recorded, using drawings and written accounts or labels as appropriate. Good links are made with mathematics, including examples of measurements and quantities of components.
90. Teaching and learning in the one lesson observed, in Year 4, were good. This lesson focused on the evaluation of purses and wallets that pupils had already made. The teacher very effectively got pupils to think about the real situation of what they would look for if they were buying similar items in a shop. In this way, pupils were able to understand clearly that, in design and technology, evaluation is about fitness of items for purpose. Pupils also recognised that, in certain circumstances, it is important for products to look attractive as well as being strong. Pupils raised ideas about the quality of their stitching, the colours of the felt and whether their purses would hold their money safely, even if turned upside-down.
91. The available evidence of provision indicates that the subject is well managed. Planning for design and technology comprehensively covers the subject's characteristic pattern of designing an artefact, making it so that it reflects the design, and evaluating both its manufacture and suitability for purpose. All the indications are that the strengths found at the last inspection have been maintained.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

92. In the one lesson observed, in Year 5, almost all pupils demonstrated good skills in catching a ball. They applied these skills well when working in pairs and in small groups. They responded to activities with sportsmanlike behaviour and eagerly worked to improve their skills. Pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships contributed much to their learning and the amount of work that they covered. Pupils have a good awareness of the effect of exercise on the body. They understand well the reasons for

warming up before and cooling down after exercise. Almost all pupils successfully swim the required 25 metres unaided by the end of Year 6.

93. A good range of activities is planned for pupils' physical education, covering all the required aspects of the subject and introducing pupils to a variety of team games. Teaching and learning were good in the lesson observed, taken by the school's sports coach. A wide range of additional activities is available to pupils to enhance the opportunities provided in the day-by-day lessons, and the school has been successful in a variety of sporting competitions. The accommodation gives very good support to the curriculum. The school has a sports hall, a good-sized school hall, and extensive outdoor hard and grassed areas. There are good additional opportunities for talented pupils.
94. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and gives effective support to colleagues to help them to develop confidence and competence in aspects of physical education. The new sports coach has, for example, observed a series of lessons led by the co-ordinator to help him develop awareness of how effective lessons should be structured. In his turn, the coach has worked with the school's less experienced staff to help them to develop their skills. The commitment of the co-ordinator to ensuring that the school makes good provision for its pupils is evident in her work for the school's submission for the Gold Active Mark.

ART AND DESIGN

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

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils achieve well and standards in Year 6 are well above the level expected nationally.
- Effective teaching promotes the good development of skills and pupils' understanding of processes and techniques.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning.
- Pupils' art logbooks are not marked regularly to give feedback on how work can be improved.
- Art and design is not used fully to develop pupils' awareness of other cultures.
- The co-ordinators are effective in developing provision and are clear about the action needed to bring about further improvement.

COMMENTARY

95. The standard of pupils' work in art and design is well above the level expected nationally in Year 6 and achievement is good. All groups of pupils make good progress in developing skills and a wide range of techniques as they move up through the school. They very competently work in a variety of materials in two and three dimensions. Skills in painting and drawing are particularly well developed because the school has rightly given much emphasis to these key areas. By Year 6, pupils produce still life paintings in watercolour to a high standard. Much observational drawing is very detailed. Pupils' studies of footwear in pencil, for example, are not only detailed but also show a strong command of shading techniques. Through their study of the styles of famous artists, pupils develop good awareness of a range of approaches, particularly in two-dimensional artwork.

96. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and clear understanding of the processes and techniques that they want pupils to develop. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, the deputy head and class teacher worked very effectively together to provide clear step-by-step instruction. As a result, all the pupils in the class were successful in using a photographic process for the first time and creating sun prints. In a Year 3 lesson, methodical and clear instruction helped pupils to move on at a good rate in designs of repeating patterns to decorate a sculpture.
97. Teachers have high expectations of the standards that all pupils are capable of attaining. They provide learning opportunities that are not only stimulating and interesting, but are also challenging. All pupils are given encouragement and helped to succeed. Pupils with special educational needs, or those who may find an activity difficult, are given additional help. Most projects are sufficiently 'open ended' to allow the more capable and talented pupils to work at a higher level. However, procedures are not in place to precisely assess the level at which groups of pupils are working and to help teachers to set activities with differing degrees of challenge. Art logbooks are used well for investigation and experimentation, and also as a record of work done, but are not regularly marked to give pupils individual feedback about what they need to do next to improve.
98. The range of learning opportunities is rich and varied. It is enhanced through visits out of school and work with visiting artists. There are examples of the work of local artists displayed alongside that of pupils. In addition to celebrating pupils' successes, the displays do much to make the school an attractive and pleasant environment. Although there are many strengths in the provision, there are few opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support and develop their work. Work in art and design contributes significantly to pupils' cultural development, but it is not used fully to increase pupils' awareness of the rich diversity of a modern multicultural society.
99. Leadership and management are good. The two co-ordinators are effective in developing the confidence and expertise of colleagues. A review of the curriculum has been successful in ensuring that skills are progressively built over the years, particularly in painting and drawing. Many ambitious new developments are planned, such as the creation of a sculpture trail in the outdoor environmental area. The co-ordinators provide a clear educational direction for the subject and provide a good example in their own teaching. All the strengths found at the last inspection have been maintained and built on further and standards have risen as a result.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Pupils' achievement is good and standards are well above the level expected nationally in Year 6.
- Teaching is good and activities in lessons interest and motivate pupils.
- There is very good enrichment through opportunities additional to day-by-day lessons.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning.
- Music is not used fully to develop pupils' awareness of other cultures.
- The co-ordinator sets a good example for others and provides a clear educational direction.

COMMENTARY

100. Standards in music are well above the level expected nationally in Year 6, and pupils' achievement is good. This is because teaching is effective and ensures that pupils learn well. A wide range of activities additional to lessons provides extra challenge for pupils, including those who are talented musically. As at the last inspection, music plays a significant part in the life of the school. The strengths found at that time have been maintained and developed, and standards have risen.
101. Pupils in all year groups sing clearly, tunefully, expressively and with enthusiasm. The whole school sings well in unison during assemblies. Pupils in Year 6 successfully evaluate their singing and identify how they can improve it. They also competently write lyrics and review them to evaluate how they might be improved. One class has created a song, 'Wheatfields School', specially for the leavers' assembly and based on the Abba song, 'Waterloo'. Pupils have a very good sense of rhythm and timing when performing together. They very confidently perform an individual rhythm with awareness of the pattern of a larger class composition. Understanding of musical vocabulary is well developed.
102. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and organise pupils and activities well so that no time is lost. Opportunities are provided for pupils to continually evaluate how well they are doing. This helps pupils to identify what they need to do better as a class and individually, so their learning moves on at a good pace. However, the lack of established assessment procedures means that teachers do not significantly vary the level of challenge in activities to meet pupils' differing needs. Often, all pupils start at the same point in a lesson, and continue throughout the lesson at the same rate, and this limits how well the most capable pupils can move on. Nevertheless, there are some satisfactory opportunities for pupils learning an instrument to use their expertise in whole-class lessons. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, pupils played their instruments as part of small group compositions to illustrate an extract from a story.
103. Take-up by pupils of the good range of instrumental lessons is high. A third of pupils learn to play musical instruments and many of these are involved in the wind band, strings orchestra. A string quartet and improvisation group give additional challenge to more capable and talented pupils. Year 6 pupils participate in musical productions with pupils from the nearby secondary school. Pupils are regularly involved in local music festivals. Annual school productions link music with dance and drama. Although there are many

significant strengths in the provision, there is little use of ICT to support pupils' learning. Whilst music makes a considerable contribution to pupils' cultural development it is not used fully to develop their awareness of the rich diversity of a modern multicultural society.

104. Leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator is a good example in his music teaching. He gives good support to colleagues by working alongside them on a one-to-one basis. He is aware of the main areas in which improvement is required and is, for example, presently trialling assessment procedures across the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in this area was sampled. Two lessons were observed but not enough evidence was gathered to make a secure judgement about overall provision.

105. The school sees pupils' personal development as an important part of its work. Its caring atmosphere supports pupils' personal development well. The range of opportunities for personal, social and health education is good. The school has participated in the Hertfordshire Healthy Schools Project, which included work on diet, health, sex and relationships education, the dangers of drugs misuse and personal safety as well as emotional health and wellbeing.
106. The school helps pupils to develop a safe and healthy life-style, gain confidence and develop good relationships. There are good contributions from outside agencies, such as the school nurse and visiting theatre companies. Pupils' involvement with the School Council provides a good opportunity for them to experience democracy at first hand and to feel valued as school citizens. Citizenship and a sense of responsibility are further developed through the very good opportunities for pupils to work with younger children at the adjoining Wheatfields Nursery and Infants' school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

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

Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	1
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

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