

INSPECTION REPORT

SHENLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Shenley

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117150

Headteacher: Mr Michael Youlton

Reporting inspector: John William Paull
22028

Dates of inspection: 30 June - 3 July 2003

Inspection number: 259436

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary with nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	London Road Shenley Radlett Hertfordshire
Postcode:	WD7 9DX
Telephone number:	0192 385 5864
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Beryl Mackay
Date of previous inspection:	15 June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22028	John William Paull	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology Art and design Music Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage Educational inclusion	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9958	Tim Page	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?
8864	Peter Clifton	Team inspector	Science History Special educational needs	How well are pupils taught?
8696	Abul Maula	Team inspector	English English as an additional language Design and technology Geography	
5565	Bimla Thakur	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20009	David Cann	Team inspector	Modern foreign language (Spanish)	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Shenley Primary School in Hertfordshire grew very rapidly just before its last inspection in June 1998. Since then, extensive building works have added new accommodation, which has been settled into very well. Currently, the school has 289 full-time four to 11-year-olds on its roll. A further 40 three- and four-year-olds attend its nursery classes for half day sessions. It is larger than most other primary schools. The large majority of pupils are white, including a few from other European countries. Nevertheless, a wide variety of minority ethnic groups is represented. Several pupils are from mixed backgrounds and a few pupils are from families that originated in the Asian sub-continent. Others originally came from other Asian countries. Other small groups are from Africa and Iraq. Although these groups are numerically small, ten pupils are from homes where English is not the pupils' mother tongue, which is higher than in most schools, and two pupils are at an early stage of acquiring English. The main languages represented are French, Spanish, Kurdish and Tamil. Currently, just over 13 per cent of pupils are known to qualify for free school meals, which is about average. About 19 per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is broadly average. Most of these pupils have learning difficulties with the potential to slow their learning down compared with other pupils. A smaller group includes pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Two pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is below average. The attainment on entry of most pupils is broadly average, although more are above average than below. The socio-economic circumstances of most families in the area are above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Shenley Primary School is a good school with many very good features. It has a 'Charter Mark' that recognises the quality of the service that it provides. This quality is reflected in all its work. It is very well led and the headteacher and senior staff constantly check and monitor the school's performance to ensure that it continues to develop and improve successfully. As a result, the quality of teaching at all stages is good, which leads to generally above average attainment and good achievements for nearly all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. Taken together, these features demonstrate good value for money.

What the school does well

- Overall attainment in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics, exceeds national averages.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- The overall quality of teaching is good through the school, including the nursery and reception unit, which is leading to good learning and acquisition of skills and helping pupils to achieve well.
- Overall provision for pupils' personal development and care is good.
- The quality and range of what is taught are good, enhanced by Spanish and very good extra-curricular activities. What is taught in the nursery and reception unit is also good.
- The school is very well led and managed, so it evaluates its own work accurately and develops and improves it accordingly.

What could be improved

- Attainment in science, so it matches the levels achieved in English and mathematics by the time pupils leave in Year 6.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved well since its inspection of June 1998. It has spread into its extended accommodation successfully, using the opportunities it offers to the benefit of pupils. A good example is how teachers in the nursery and reception unit have opened up the space, so all the children, whatever their age, can use what is available and thereby develop their skills. The school has successfully introduced the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, using the literacy strategy especially well to improve teaching and raise standards. It has used finance from the *New Opportunities Fund* innovatively to raise teachers' knowledge and skills in information and communication technology, so teaching of

this subject is now good, leading to attainment that is frequently above what is nationally expected. Systems of assessment are a lot more secure, so it is easier to check whether pupils are making enough progress and meeting targets and to plan future work accordingly. Several strengths that were reported in 1998, such as pupils' attitudes to their work and behaviour in lessons and around the school, have improved further and are now very good. Attendance, however, has slipped a little in comparison with national figures. Although now average, it was above average previously. Nevertheless, levels of punctuality remain high.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A*	A	A	A
mathematics	A	A	C	B
science	B	A	D	D

Key	
top 5% nationally	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
bottom 5% nationally	E*

Over the past few years, results of Year 6 National Curriculum tests taken together have been consistently high in English and, to a slightly lesser extent, in mathematics. In 2002, owing to a higher proportion of pupils with identified special educational needs, results were not quite as good although, in both subjects, results exceeded those of similar schools and remained well above average in English. Results in science have been lower than in either English or mathematics and, in work seen during the inspection, this pattern is repeated. The overall trend indicated by the school's test results matches the national trend. In all these years, targets set in agreement with the local authority for English and mathematics have been met. The school identified that in its present Year 6 fewer pupils, mostly girls, were reaching higher than expected levels in mathematics and science than in English. Weaker performance at higher levels was also the main reason that results in science dropped below those of similar schools in 2002. Action was taken to improve the performance of these pupils. These procedures have been largely successful as little differences in the achievements of girls and boys were found during the inspection. Work that was seen in pupils' books indicates that standards continue to exceed averages in English and mathematics and have improved in science. Compared with pupils' broadly average starting points, these standards indicate that achievements are good overall. Although science still lags behind, what was seen in pupils' books matched national averages overall. From 2000 to 2002, attainment at the end of Year 2 has exceeded averages, often considerably. Results of current tests and assessments confirm this judgement in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average and children are currently making good progress through the nursery and reception unit, at least matching what is expected. Currently several of reception age are exceeding what is normally found in mathematical development. By Year 6, attainment is generally at least satisfactory in all subjects across the curriculum. It is above normally expected levels in information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology, physical education, singing and Spanish.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good – nearly all pupils come to school willingly and enjoy what they do. They work enthusiastically and try hard for their teachers.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good – pupils behave very sensibly in lessons and around the school. They are polite and helpful, standing back and holding doors for adults and often offering help to their teachers and to visitors alike.
Personal development and relationships	Very good – pupils are tolerant towards each other and know and respect that people of different ethnicity might have different ideas and customs. They co-operate well in lessons and at play. They act as helpers, buddies and monitors.
Attendance	Satisfactory – while it is in line with national figures, it is not as good as at the time of the last inspection. Punctuality, however, remains good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching and learning through the school is good. This quality is found in all stages of education from the nursery and reception unit through to the Year 5/6 classes. It is reflected in the progress of pupils and their achievements by the time they leave the school. It includes different groups of pupils, and especially those with special educational needs. In the nursery and reception unit, good teaching is based on very good leadership, thorough planning and very good teamwork. Teamwork is a strong feature throughout the whole school. Teachers, nursery nurses, teaching assistants and senior staff work very hard to ensure that all pupils benefit. A high proportion of very good teaching also occurs and it is evenly spread through the school from the nursery to Year 5/6 classes. Four examples of excellence were also observed and no teaching was less than satisfactory. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are generally planned well and a particularly high proportion of very good teaching occurs in English and mathematics. Teaching is very good overall in English. As a result, pupils learn the basic skills of reading and writing very thoroughly. Classroom assistants use their day-to-day knowledge of pupils skilfully, particularly enhancing the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers have generally good knowledge of the National Curriculum and use it effectively to plan their teaching. Knowledge and use of teaching methods that work best for children of nursery and reception ages are very good, leading to strong learning of basic skills during educational play. Management of pupils is very good throughout the school, which contributes strongly to pupils' very good attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good – what is taught contains all statutorily required elements of the National Curriculum, enhanced with Spanish, availability of instrumental music lessons and very good extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good – teaching assistants skilfully provide the extra support that pupils need. Teachers, led well by the co-ordinator draw up apt individual plans that are put into practice well, supporting learning and progress very effectively.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional	Satisfactory – teachers are aware of those pupils for whom English is not the mother tongue and they take care to ensure that these pupils

language	understand what to do to make progress. However, experience of and expertise in working with them is limited, so methods of adapting what is taught are rather limited.
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Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall – provision for social development is particularly strong with many opportunities for pupils to collaborate, and to help each other and their teachers. Spiritual development is sound with opportunities to reflect on attributes that make life meaningful and good, although time allocated to religious education is lower than in most schools. Provision for moral and cultural development is good. Ideas of right and wrong are emphasised and multi-cultural issues are taught positively.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good with very good features – procedures for assessing pupils' progress are very thorough and used well for planning. What is required in statements of special educational needs is provided meticulously. Procedures for ensuring safety and welfare are good.

Parents' contributions to the work of the school and their children's education are generally very good and the school provides very good opportunities for parents to find out about their children's progress and school events.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good – the headteacher has a clear vision, directing the school forward and ensuring further improvements. The acting deputy and key managers work supportively with the headteacher, interpreting this vision well. Procedures, organisation and planning for future developments are also strong, ensuring that the school runs effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good – governors know the school well and are involved in its work. They seek information effectively to help them carry out their roles and keep a check on what must be provided statutorily.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good – the headteacher and those with senior leadership responsibilities, with the help of the local authority, evaluate key areas regularly. Improvements in teaching and standards are examples of their effectiveness.
The strategic use of resources	Good – funding and other resources are managed effectively. What is provided for specific reasons is used for the intended purposes. Senior staff and governors know that best value should be sought by using principles such as checking cost against the quality of what is purchased and evaluating outcomes.

The school deploys its sufficient staff very well, often using specialists to good effect. Accommodation is good, including exterior areas that have been developed for particular uses, such as science or children of nursery and reception age. Learning resources are generally of good quality and quantity.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their children like school, which helps their children to be mature and sensible. Teaching is good and their children make good progress. The school expects their children to work hard and behaviour in the school is good. 	<p>A few parents do not feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> well informed about their children's progress. that the school works closely with them. that amounts of homework are correct.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school is well led and managed and they feel comfortable about approaching with questions or concerns. | |
|--|--|

A large majority of parents' views of this good school are positive. Inspectors agree with these positive views. Inspectors found that amounts of homework are about correct and that good quality information is provided frequently and accurately. Furthermore, inspectors found that the school seeks close links with parents. A few parents raised concerns about the quality of teaching in and management of the nursery and reception unit. Inspectors agree that this unit did recently pass through a time of high staff turnover and change. However, teaching and management are currently good and, in some respects, very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. At the time of the last inspection, results of National Curriculum tests were described as not significantly different from the national averages. In the 2002 results, in English, attainment was well above both the average of schools nationally and that for similar schools. In mathematics, although it was not as high in comparison with the national figure, with which it was broadly in line, it was above the average for similar schools. However, in science, it was below average against both of these measures. In making comparisons with the past, it should be remembered that all the national figures have risen since 1998, so standards at the school are higher now, including in science, than they were then. Standards of current work seen in the books of pupils in Year 6 are generally above average in English and mathematics, and around average in science, suggesting that improvements have been maintained. This same Year 6 group attained below average results in the Year 2 National Curriculum tests of 1999, so their current standards provide solid evidence of good overall achievement.
2. In most years, attainment on entry to nursery and reception classes has been around what is usually found. Owing to good teaching in the nursery and reception unit, by the time they begin the National Curriculum in Year 1, a sizeable majority of children match the early learning goals (national descriptions of what children are expected to know and attain at the end of the reception year) in all areas of learning. Several children are currently exceeding these goals. However, both within years, and from one year to another, knowledge and skills range widely, often including a few children who exceed the goals by far, through to others who have a statement of special educational needs that have the potential to affect learning and attainment severely. Children in the present reception year are generally doing well, especially in mathematical development, where their attainment exceeds what is described in the early learning goals for their age.
3. Good teaching and learning continue through Years 1 and 2. In reading and writing, results of Year 2 National Curriculum tests have been either above or well above average in every year after 1999. These standards are reflected in what was seen in the present Year 2. In their books, pupils' work was above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. Early indications of the 2003 test results also suggest that overall attainment remains high and that pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics are good.
4. Over the years, the school's Year 6 results in science have not been as strong as in either English or mathematics. This finding held true even in 2001, when the school's results were particularly good, reaching standards that were well above average in all three subjects. In that year, results in science did not exceed the average for the subject by quite as much as averages in English and mathematics were exceeded. The subject manager for science, together with the headteacher, has worked hard in analysing results to establish reasons. It was found that in science fewer attained levels above the normally expected level for their age, than was the case in the other subjects. Most of these pupils were girls and it was particularly the case in comparison with English. As a result, extra teaching of science was introduced, for pupils in Year 6, in the autumn of 2002. This teaching targeted the work of pupils who fell into the identified underperforming groups. Findings in the inspection are that this approach has begun to have an effect. Little difference was apparent in the work of boys and girls. Furthermore, from a lower overall starting point than that of the previous year, current work is now average in science, rather than below as it was in the 2002 tests. Although this standard of work is closer to that in the other subjects, it does, however, remain a little below it.
5. Literacy and numeracy are used well in other subjects. Pupils of all ages use reading to find information in a range of situations across the curriculum, especially in subjects such as history and geography including from texts, CD-ROM and the Internet. They count and use their knowledge of numbers on appropriate occasions and use measurement in, for example, science, design and technology, and geography. Written work is also used frequently to record

and present findings in other subjects. Much of this writing is well presented and of a high quality. Information and communication technology is used well and frequently in a similar wide range of subjects. Pupils know how to save and retrieve information in files of their own for later use.

6. Standards in all other subjects across the curriculum either match normally expected levels or exceed them. For example, attainment in information and communication technology is generally above what is nationally expected at the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils in older age groups control programs confidently to help them find information and to record it appropriately. They employ word processing, data handling and the Internet, often independently of adults to support their work. They use laptops, PCs and other types of new technology skilfully and routinely. In religious education, attainment is broadly in line with what is described as appropriate in the locally agreed syllabus for the end of Years 2 and 6, although weaknesses were found in the depth of pupils' knowledge. In art and design, design and technology, physical education and Spanish, standards are above what is nationally expected by the time pupils leave in Year 6. At the end of Year 2, standards are above expectations in history. In all other areas and subjects, standards at least match those expected nationally. Taken together, these judgements indicate that pupils' overall achievements are nearly always good.
7. Currently, the progress of groups of pupils of different prior attainments is generally good, with little difference between comparable groups. For example, boys and girls are now achieving at broadly similar rates across the curriculum. The school's system for tracking pupils' progress indicates that nearly all Year 2 pupils identified with higher attainment in 1999 are likely to attain higher than expected levels by the time they leave the school in Year 6. This level of attainment thus corrects the shortfalls indicated in science and, to a lesser extent, mathematics that occurred in the 2002 National Curriculum tests. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements of need, make very good progress, often exceeding expectations in their individual plans. In the case of pupils with English as an additional language, no evidence was found that progress is ever less than satisfactory. However, owing to a lack of specific expertise in meeting their requirements, it is likely that their progress is not as rapid as it might otherwise be. The headteacher is planning to organise training for staff, with the help of the local authority, to ameliorate this situation. Nevertheless, pupils whose English is at an early stage of development quickly acquire sufficient English to make their personal needs known to staff. Other pupils involve them readily in their learning groups and playground games, which helps them to acquire colloquial English and to settle into the routines of school life.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils are keen and eager to come to school and involve themselves in the wide range of activities that are provided. They take pride in the presentation of their work and in the celebration of their achievements. They show willingness to take part in what the school provides, staying after school when necessary. During the week of inspection approximately half of the pupils in the infants and junior sections were engaged in extra-curricular activities, which ranged from breakfast club to country dancing, drama and sports clubs after school. Pupils are involved in a democratically elected school council that provides them with a voice in the running of the school, improving facilities and supporting charities. In the nursery and reception unit, children were happy and cheerful during the school day, co-operating very well with each other. Attainment in personal, social and emotional development closely matches the early learning goals for the vast majority of children. At the meeting, one or two parents expressed the view that their children were not settled in the unit. However, inspectors saw no evidence for such concern. On the contrary, during the inspection, all children moved confidently from group to group; they listened well when asked and were at ease playing educationally and working happily with teachers, nursery nurses and assistants alike.

9. Behaviour both in and out of the classrooms is very good. Pupils are courteous to each other, and to adults. No permanent exclusions have been necessary in recent years, but four boys were briefly excluded last year for not living up to the school's expectations of their behaviour.

10. Relationships are very good, which is an important feature in developing pupils' tolerance of one another and maintaining an atmosphere free of oppressive behaviour. In a Year 5/6 geography lesson, which focused on experimentation to show how water causes erosion, pupils supported each other's learning very sensitively. They made certain that everyone followed the process, including those with a statement of special educational needs. Furthermore, it was clear that the mixed age and ability groups were leading to many similar examples of very good social awareness amongst pupils. In a Year 3/4 class, another group similarly supported an Iraqi refugee in a history lesson. The school acknowledges that rare occasions of bullying or racist name calling arise. However, records of such incidents are kept meticulously and show that such incidents are indeed very rare and are taken very seriously. Pupils who were asked confirmed that bullying is not a difficulty for them.
11. Pupils are given minor responsibilities from an early age. They carry out such duties diligently and responsibly. They are often quick to see when someone needs assistance and, in these circumstances, they lend a hand without being asked. An example occurred when, in the school hall, pupils readily helped another who was moving a trolley full of lunchboxes, recognising that it was precariously balanced. When given the opportunity they accept responsibility for their own learning, which is well illustrated by high quality projects that pupils in Year 5/6 classes undertook on rivers and in much work that is carried out to seek information with new technology.
12. Attendance was above average in the last academic year but has fallen slowly since 1999/2000. This trend has continued into the current year and indications are that attendance is now broadly in line with the national average, rather than above it. Nevertheless, punctuality continues to be good. The school day and lessons within it begin and end on time, with only very few pupils who are late.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. The overall quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory to good since the time of the last inspection. This judgement matches the views of nearly all parents who returned questionnaires. One or two parents who attended the meeting thought that teaching in the nursery and reception unit was less effective. However, this view was not confirmed during the inspection. All staff in this unit taught well and teaching was good in all stages of education. Teaching and support of information and communication technology at this young age group is a considerable strength. Furthermore, this subject is taught well throughout the school and is used effectively by teachers and support assistants to help pupils learn.
14. Four lessons during the inspection were judged to be excellent – three occurred in Year 1/2 classes and one in a Year 3/4 class. Two of these lessons were literacy hours contributing to the overall quality of teaching in English, which is very good overall. The main reason is that teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to plan literacy hours is very good, following the requirements of the national strategy closely. Teachers employ a very good range of methods that engage pupils thoroughly and thereby promote a very high quality of learning. In classes for pupils in Years 1 and 2, for example, this quality resulted in a wide range of adjectives suggested by pupils themselves to improve their descriptions of pirate ships. As a direct result, completed work was generally well above what is normally expected.
15. In mathematics, the overall quality of teaching is good, including one excellent lesson that occurred in a Year 1/2 class. Planning in this lesson was excellent, ensuring that the different needs of individual pupils were fully met. The teacher's expectations of pupils' achievement was high, so tasks were challenging and kept all of them interested and busy, including those with special educational needs. Another strong feature of this lesson was that pupils were very well supported by teaching assistants. The main contributory factor for good quality teaching in mathematics is that teachers provide a clear three-part structure, starting briskly with oral work and mental calculations, followed by well planned tasks that meet the different needs of groups within the classes. The final part of nearly all lessons is equally good, with learning being reviewed, reinforced and developed. Planning for different levels of prior knowledge and

understanding is consistently good. A further factor in this is that pupils are reorganised into classes especially for mathematics, based on their previous attainment (known as sets). However, it does not end here, as work in each set is further adapted to meet pupils' different needs. A high proportion of very good teaching also occurs in mathematics, while examples of satisfactory teaching were also found. What separated the satisfactory teaching from that of higher quality was that ongoing assessment was used less effectively to match work to pupils' needs. As a result, although pupils throughout the school work hard and produce a lot of work, in those lessons where the quality of teaching is not as high, it does not necessarily lead to better achievements.

16. The proportion of good teaching is high and much teaching is very good. This high quality occurs in nearly all subjects of the curriculum and in classes for pupils of all age groups, including children in the nursery and reception unit. Overall, teachers have very good skills of classroom management throughout the school, which contributes a lot to the very good attitudes and behaviour displayed by pupils. Activities provided for the youngest children in the school are purposeful and consistently well planned, which promotes effective learning. Only in religious education does teaching drop to satisfactory overall. Examples of satisfactory teaching also occurred in science lessons. These findings were related to weaknesses in use of time. In religious education, for example, owing to weaker uses of resources, pupils' interest was not fully stimulated, so not as much work was produced. In science, pupils waited too long watching others carrying out tests, measuring or counting. On such occasions, pupils' behaviour was not as strong as at other times, as their usually good concentration wavered.
17. Literacy skills are very effectively taught in a range of situations across the curriculum. Teachers have very good awareness of how to develop language and frequently question pupils about their use of vocabulary. Numeracy is also taught well in a range of situations, such as measurement in design and technology and work with interpreting data and presenting it in science and geography.
18. Teachers' specialist skills are used effectively. For example, a teacher with musical knowledge is timetabled to use her skill in several classes through the school. This arrangement results in consistently good teaching and learning. Her input ensures good planning and increases the subject knowledge of other teachers, as they are involved in her planning and teach the subject in alternate lessons. The subject manager for physical education is also used well in enhancing different physical skills for older pupils in the school. Similarly, good teaching of Spanish occurs in all the Year 5/6 classes.
19. Support assistants frequently work with pupils who have special educational needs and with other lower attaining pupils. Their support is both skilful and effective. It is based on individual education plans that provide valuable information for teachers, assistants and pupils alike. However, teachers and support assistants have less specific expertise in working with pupils for whom English is not the mother tongue. Nevertheless, adults are very aware of these pupils and check that they understand what to do in lessons. As a result, their overall rate of progress never drops to less than satisfactory. The school's nursery nurses are particularly effective in what they do. Their clear questioning, leadership of groups and support of educational play helps children to learn effectively. Recently, the school has taken the opportunity to use their skills as a source of recruitment to teacher training. This good practice has enabled the governors to fill a post that might otherwise have been left vacant.
20. During the inspection, good uses of homework were seen frequently. Much of this work either prepared pupils for what was to occur next in lessons, or it reinforced prior learning. All pupils who were asked think that their homework is reasonable in amount and helps them to make progress. Nearly all pupils agree that their parents usually hear them read at home and are interested in what they do at school.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

21. Both the quality and range of what is taught are good. Planning ensures that it is very relevant to the needs of pupils, and reflects the school's aims and values. All statutory requirements to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are met. All subjects are planned effectively. Teachers base their lesson planning on a two year programme to ensure that in the context of mixed age classes, pupils neither miss nor unnecessarily repeat elements of what is laid down. Nationally recommended schemes of work are employed to support this planning. The nationally required *Curriculum for the Foundation Stage* is used as the basis of planning in the nursery and reception unit. Its recommendations are followed closely and teachers, nursery nurses and assistants plan jointly as a team, ensuring that what is taught is thorough, and of good scope and relevance for the age group. Religious education follows Hertfordshire's agreed syllabus, although time allocated to the subject means that it does not have a sufficiently high profile. The depth of pupils' learning is therefore not as thorough as that found in other subjects. In science, scope exists to improve planning of higher levels of work in scientific enquiry, thereby extending the curriculum for pupils in Years 3 to 6. The school's own evaluation of its work shows that it has already identified this relative shortcoming and that it is planning to rectify it. The curriculum is enhanced through the weekly provision of Spanish for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Generally, the placing of break times, lunchtimes and assemblies are fixed very sensibly within the school day, so time available for lessons is maximised and managed very effectively.
22. Literacy hours have been implemented very effectively, which is reflected in the well above average standards attained in English. Literacy is also promoted very well in other subjects of the curriculum. The National Numeracy Strategy is well embedded in the school's planning and has a good impact on standards in mathematics, which are currently above average in pupils' books. Information and communication technology is planned very effectively. As part of provision in this subject, the school takes part in the nationally known *S.T.E.M. Project*, which is sponsored by the *Science Museum* in London. It is a testimony to the quality of what is taught that the school has achieved several shortlisted entries and this year a group of pupils were placed second in a national category for their age group.
23. There is good improvement overall in the school's curricular provision since the last inspection. The key issues of 1998 have been addressed well. Setting in numeracy lessons helps to meet pupils' individual needs. Gifted and talented pupils are identified, and good practices, such as setting different homework for them and providing additional activities outside of lessons have been introduced to meet their needs. Teachers' planning is monitored well by the headteacher and by subject managers, to ensure that tasks are set at appropriate levels and that pupils are clear about what they are learning.
24. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. The school follows the recommended scheme of work from Hertfordshire and the subject has a high profile. Pupils' questionnaires are used and personal interviews are held with pupils from different age groups to ascertain their views about the school and what should be provided. The school also encourages them to play an active role through its school council, laying a good foundation for future citizenship. Pupils discuss issues, such as the school's dress code, playground facilities, lunchtime arrangements and environmental issues. Their views are taken seriously and acted upon as far as possible. Personal, social and health education forms the main basis for teaching about healthy living, issues of personal safety and sex education, for which the governors' policy meets statutory requirements.
25. The school has a good commitment to equal opportunities and policy for racial equality. Senior staff, class teachers and all other employees work hard to ensure that all pupils are included in what the school provides. Provision for children with special educational needs throughout the school, including those of nursery and reception age, is very good. Targets in pupils' individual education plans are appropriate, specific and clear, and are written in language that pupils themselves can follow. Planned work is adapted well to meet such targets. The work of boys and girls and groups of different ethnicity is monitored to ascertain whether significant differences arise. Staff are sympathetic and supportive of pupils with English as an additional language and

ensure that they make satisfactory progress overall. Although the proportion of pupils whose mother tongue is not English is a little higher than in most schools, it is not high enough to qualify for specialist teaching. A lack of expertise therefore limits the range of available strategies for adapting provision for these pupils.

26. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are very good, which has a positive impact on many subjects, including music, dance, drama, physical education, science and information and communication technology. The majority of parents are pleased with the quality and range of the activities outside of school hours, particularly for older pupils. However, a few parents expressed dissatisfaction. Inspectors agree with the majority. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit from their residential visit to an outdoor centre in Dorset and pupils in Years 3 and 4 are offered a visit to Cuffley camp.
27. The school's curriculum also benefits from good links with the community, including links with the local church, visiting art exhibitions and an artist. Links with the local business community have been particularly useful in providing items of equipment in design and technology and athletics. Links with other educational institutions are sound, such as with early years playgroups and secondary schools, preparing pupils well for the next stage of their education. Curricular links are usefully developed in subjects, such as Spanish, sports and games, and in the performing arts.
28. Provision for the development of pupils' personal development is good. Expectations of how pupils should relate to each other and to adults are high. Children's personal, social and emotional development are well planned and taught in the nursery and reception unit.
29. The provision made for pupils' social development is very good. In lessons, good planning ensures many opportunities for co-operative work and pupils are often encouraged to act supportively towards each other. Younger pupils are paired with older 'buddies', whose role is carefully explained. Opportunities to help in the classroom and around the school are provided and several older pupils willingly take up such situations. A school council provides pupils with a forum where they can talk about issues that concern them and through which they may promote ideas of their own. Relationships are very good, providing many examples for teachers to point out to pupils. Relationships and teamwork between the staff are also strong, providing very good role models for pupils.
30. Provision for pupils' moral and cultural development is good. Clear expectations of good behaviour are communicated explicitly throughout the school and contribute to pupils' often very good behaviour. Rules are applied fairly in the classroom and equally well around the building. Pupils are regularly involved in drafting and reviewing the school rules, so they feel that the rules are their own. The school works hard to develop an open and trusting learning environment, in which pupils feel able express their views and practise right decision-making for themselves. Pupils value rewards that they earn and the public recognition of their efforts in assemblies and in lessons. Stories with morals that involve teaching of right and wrong are employed in assemblies. Singing, music and art from a variety of cultures are used to teach skills in these subjects, so pupils learn to appreciate the richness of what modern multi-ethnic societies can offer. Displays around the school add to this positive climate for cultural learning, as do visits to museums and visiting artists and performers.
31. Opportunities for spiritual development are satisfactory. A respectful atmosphere is created in assemblies, and pupils' good singing contributes to it. Music is played as pupils enter and leave the hall and this music and selected songs fit with a chosen theme. Pupils are encouraged to consider the beauty of the world. In lessons, teachers use appropriate praise frequently, thereby raising pupils' self-esteem. The school's aims and values are also promoted well in lessons across the curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The school is effective in promoting the health, safety and well-being of its pupils. This is similar to the findings of the previous inspection. Staff and governors are fully involved in policy reviews and risk assessments. Equipment checks are carried out regularly, and staff are aware of the school's arrangements for child protection which follow locally agreed procedures.
33. Good procedures are used to monitor attendance. For example, the school secretary telephones enquiries on the first day of absence, if a reason is not known. Weekly analysis of attendance is carried out by the headteacher, and involvement of the educational welfare officer is arranged where particular problems are found or persist. The promotion of good attendance includes the award of a weekly class attendance trophy, and individual attendance certificates for pupils. This celebration of good attendance is also regularly featured in newsletters to parents. Nevertheless, these procedures have not prevented a gradual decline in attendance over the past three years from above average to a level that is now broadly in line with the 2001/2002 national figures.
34. The school has very effective procedures for monitoring and supporting good behaviour. Policies for behaviour, anti-bullying, and anti-racism are fully in place and applied fairly and consistently. Pupils who were asked understood and agreed with these policies, and took pride in being awarded merits and house points. Pupils also agree fully that unacceptable behaviour should be discouraged with a system of sanctions. For example, those asked accepted the school's yellow card warning scheme; being on report for a three week period and detentions during their free time. Pupils' mature attitudes and confident relationships with adults contribute further to a secure learning environment.
35. Assessment procedures are now very good in most subjects and have improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers now use information that is gathered to plan lessons across the curriculum, to set targets for pupils and to adjust their methods. Assessments of pupils with special educational needs are also carried out accurately and precise targets and guidance, based on the information, are written in their individual education plans. Home visits to new children about to enter nursery and reception classes; profiles of children in the nursery and reception unit; assessment on entry to Year 1; National Curriculum tests in Years 2 and 6, and testing in Years 3, 4 and 5 all add to the thorough information that is gathered to check that pupils make the progress that they should.
36. Each term, teachers formally update pupils' records, completing a comprehensive file of pupils' progress. This record is analysed by the headteacher in his role of assessment co-ordinator, and the implications of this analysis are discussed with year group leaders and subject managers. Teachers are then provided with information about the findings, which enables them to modify their lesson planning, and to set the next targets for pupils to continue to raise their achievements.
37. One of the main reasons that teachers support pupils so effectively is because information about progress, attendance, behaviour and personal development is readily made available in this way. It results in an environment where pupils achieve well and are very well behaved.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

38. Nearly all parents hold positive views of the school, as indicated in responses to questionnaires and at the pre-inspection meeting, as they did at the time of the previous inspection. The overwhelming majority of parents say that their children like school. This opinion was confirmed in conversations between inspectors and pupils. Most parents also agreed: that the school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement; that teaching is good; that their children make good progress, and that they find the school approachable when they have questions or concerns. Inspectors agree will all these positive comments.
39. A small proportion of parents thought that the school did not work closely enough with them, including keeping them well informed about their children's progress. Parents' written comments

and subsequent conversations, suggest that this related to a particular age group where matters have improved significantly following recent staff changes. Overall, the good quality of curriculum information and detail included in pupils' annual reports, the accessibility of teachers, and regular consultation meetings suggest that parents are in fact kept very well informed about their children's progress. A small minority of parents disagreed that their children were given the right amount of homework, or that the school provided an interesting range of activities outside lessons. However, neither of these comments have been born out during the inspection. The amount and use of homework is good compared with primary schools nationally, while the range of extra-curricular activities is very good.

40. The quality of information for parents is of high quality. Pupils' annual reports are comprehensive, carry advice and targets for improvement in English and mathematics, and attainment is graded for pupils in Years 2, 4 and 6 so parents can place their children's attainment within a national context. An easy to read fortnightly newsletter and other occasional letters keep parents in touch with what is happening. These letters also celebrate pupils' achievements well. The school has also developed an Internet website that contains considerable useful information and data, as well pages and items by the pupils themselves. It is of high quality.
41. The school has very effective links with parents, including those who have children with special educational needs. Parents are effectively engaged in the education of their children through very informative curricular notes for the term. The home/school agreement is very good as it clearly sets out expectations, sharing the rationale of such a document and placing it in the context of the school's vision statement. Parents' views are widely canvassed through a parents' forum, and at the governors' annual meeting. A particularly effective working relationship with parents revolves around the drive and drop scheme, in which parents take turns to manage the efficient unloading of pupils from up to eighty cars; this provision has had a material impact on the safety of pupils, parents and passers-by alike through the reduction of traffic congestion on the busy road outside.
42. Overall, parents' involvement in the work of the school is good although their understanding of the need for good attendance needs to be reinforced to reverse the falling trend. Parents' help is welcomed in classrooms and, in the nursery and reception unit, several were present during the inspection. Others help with trips to museums and places of interest, and with visits to the local swimming pool. A very active parents' association is evident, which raises significant funds and has recently purchased a television, DVD equipment and a digital camera.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

43. At the time of the last inspection, good leadership and management had ensured that the school made progress during a time of rapid growth and major building works. Since then, the staff and pupils have moved into the major extensions that were erected on the site. Very good leadership has provided imaginative ideas in the use of this new building and a strong direction involving monitoring and evaluation of what is taught and how well it is taught. Uses of such information are managed very effectively, with feedback and advice to members of staff and managers of subjects and aspects. This dissemination of information helps those with delegated duties to carry out their roles effectively. It has also contributed to the maintenance of very good morale and commitment to continued improvement and success. The school's policies are reflected strongly in its practice. Each policy contains a clear outline of aims and principles that reflect the overall mission statement. These aims are based on helping pupils to achieve both academically and personally.
44. Governors carry out their roles well. Each governor is allocated a particular responsibility for a subject or aspect of the school. Governors understand the school's aims and priorities for their area well and know how the staff put them into practice. The chair of governors is a frequent visitor to the school and knows the local community and its characteristics well. This knowledge is shared with senior staff who, alongside the governors, respond to local needs well. For example, a useful breakfast club has been established, as well as a morning drop-off point for pupils who are

brought to school by car. This sensible idea works very effectively. Governors understand the school's main strengths and weaknesses well and fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively.

45. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance are very good and have proven very effective. Since the last inspection, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced and considerable evaluation and development of teaching has taken place in English and mathematics especially. The results of this work have been very effective. Since 1998, the quality of teaching and learning has risen from satisfactory overall to good. The incidence of very good teaching has risen considerably and unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated. Formal appraisal and performance management have been introduced successfully and linked with priorities in overall developmental and action planning. As a result of this very good management, key issues of the last inspection, involving elements of teaching, management of what is taught, assessment and work for children of nursery age have been addressed thoroughly. Shenley Primary is a school that takes evaluation of its own provision very seriously. It carries out a regular cycle of checking and monitoring to establish strengths and weaknesses in provision for itself. It then sets accurate priorities and takes effective action to correct any weaker elements that are identified. Differences in the attainment of girls and boys in science are a recent example. Considerable improvement has also been managed in information and communication technology. Pupils use a broad range of advanced programs in their work and several groups have achieved recognition in the *Science Museum's S.T.E.M. Project*. In recognition of the quality of service that it provides, the school has received a Charter Mark. Procedures to induct staff, including newly qualified teachers are very extensive and, based on the consistently good teaching of recently appointed personnel during the inspection, highly effective. The school's potential to train teachers of its own is also very good.
46. Strategic uses of resources are good. Costs of implementing plans and priorities are worked out carefully and governors keep a check of spending through their finance committee. This committee is chaired very effectively by a governor who has a business background. The school's processes for setting and running its annual budget are robust and monitoring is effective. Adequate funds are made available to introduce new initiatives and to ensure that developments that are introduced can be continued. The day-to-day budget is well managed with the support of a financial officer whose service is purchased from the local authority. When the school receives funds that are earmarked for a specific purpose, senior managers ensure that subsequent spending matches the intended purposes. Funding for special educational needs is accounted for well. The school's latest figure to carry-forward is larger than that of the previous year. However, it includes a sum that is being retained for capital expenditure on the refurbishment of toilet facilities for pupils in Years 3 and 4. New technology is generally used well. For example, the budget, records of assessment and much planning is fully computerised. Nearly all teachers are confident to use computers and new technology in support of their teaching. The headteacher, chair of finance and chair of governors are aware of the link between seeking best value for money and educational standards, ensuring that money is spent wisely. For example, prices are compared before orders are placed. In the case of capital expenditure, governors always seek specialist advice, put work to tender and monitor outcomes. Furthermore, governors have begun to attempt broad planning for three years ahead, which is helping them to use forecasts and to identify trends in spending patterns.
47. Staffing is numerically sufficient to teach the statutory curriculum, including the National Curriculum. However, the overall match of staffing to pupils' needs is very good. It is enhanced because of the effective use of teachers' specialisms in, for example, Spanish, physical education and music, and the quality of support that is provided by teaching assistants and nursery nurses. Accommodation is good and has been used and adapted well to ensure that teaching and learning take place smoothly. Outside areas for environmental work and for young children to play safely and securely are examples. Learning resources are also generally good, including imaginative provision of laptop computers in information and communication technology, other electronic technology, books and artefacts. Resources for children in the nursery and reception unit are also plentiful and of good quality.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. The headteacher, science co-ordinator and governors have already prioritised science as in need of more focus and review. Inspectors agree that this subject should be developed further.
- (1) The headteacher, staff and governors should raise standards in science to match those in mathematics and English, by:
- developing the school's scheme of work, so it supports more effective planning of higher levels of work, especially in scientific enquiry (see paragraphs 4, 16, 21 and 81);
 - raising the profile of science through displays, special events, visits and visitors, including living women scientists to improve girls' attitudes to the subject (see paragraphs 4, 16 and 81).

Other features that governors might wish to include in an action plan

- Raising the profile of religious education (see paragraphs 6, 21, 130 and 131).
- Improving knowledge of the range of methods available for supporting pupils with English as an additional language (see paragraphs 7, 19 and 25).
- Review whether attendance requires a sharper focus, owing to its recent slightly falling trend (see paragraphs 12 and 33).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	60
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	18	30	8	0	0	0
Percentage	7	30	50	13	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	20	289
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	32

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	47

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	12

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	32
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	16	28	44

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	13	16
	Girls	26	26	27
	Total	39	39	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (87)	89 (91)	98 (98)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	16	16
	Girls	26	26	26
	Total	39	42	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (89)	95 (96)	95 (94)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	29	16	45

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	26	25	29
	Girls	14	13	14
	Total	40	38	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 (93)	84 (85)	96 (95)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	25	25
	Girls	11	13	13
	Total	32	38	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (93)	84 (88)	84 (73)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
239	4	0
5	0	0
8	0	0
4	0	0
2	0	0
5	0	0
10	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
8	0	0
1	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.29
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.5
Average class size	26.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	194.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	29.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	10

Financial information

Financial year	2002-3
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	£
Total income	829,958
Total expenditure	797,617
Expenditure per pupil	2,373
Balance brought forward from previous year	10,883
Balance carried forward to next year	43,224

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	309
Number of questionnaires returned	77

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	38	5	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	43	8	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	55	1	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	45	19	6	0
The teaching is good.	51	40	4	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	42	21	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	33	7	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	47	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	47	21	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	39	47	9	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	45	4	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	43	12	3	15

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

49. Currently, 85 children attend the nursery and reception unit. Of these, 40 are of nursery age and attend part-time for either a morning or an afternoon session. Another 45 are of reception age and attend full-time. Children are usually admitted in two main groups in either September or January, depending on their birth dates. What is taught is based on nationally required areas of learning as described in a government publication entitled *The Curriculum for the Foundation Stage*. Young children remain in the unit, following *Stepping Stones* that describe what they should learn in each area, until the end of the summer term after their fifth birthday, when their attainment is measured against early learning goals. After that, they enter the main school where they begin the National Curriculum in Year 1. Planning in the nursery and reception unit is particularly thorough and is based very closely on these *Stepping Stones* and early learning goals, so all the areas of learning are fully provided in a way that ensures a clear development of skills.
50. Although a large majority of children are white, a wide range of ethnic groups is represented. One or two children come from homes where English is not the mother tongue. Attainment on entry is also very varied. A few children are identified as having possible special educational needs and, occasionally, a child is admitted who already possesses a statement of special needs that have the potential to affect learning severely. Each year, a few other pupils who enter are already very confident and articulate. However, the knowledge, skills and understanding of the largest proportion matches what is typically found when children enter nursery classes.
51. The overall quality of teaching is good and includes examples that are very good. This quality represents an improvement since the last inspection, when it was satisfactory for children of nursery age. This high quality is based on very good leadership on the part of the manager of the unit. It is producing very good teamwork amongst all adults and high levels of commitment to meeting children's needs. Teaching and learning of basic skills, effectiveness of methods and management of children in the unit are other very good features. During the inspection, nearly all children were contented, engaged fully in educational play, learning activities or, in the case of those of reception age, well adapted literacy and numeracy sessions that reflected their stage of development. These sessions prepare children well for the full literacy and numeracy hours that they will receive in Year 1.

Personal, social and emotional development

52. Care is taken to assess children's personal, social and emotional development when they enter the unit. Their different pre-school experiences are taken into account and adults work hard to instil a sense of belonging, based on personal care and making children feel comfortable and liked. At first, a few of the children find it hard to sit still and listen, and to take turns. However, good teaching, which emphasises kindness to each other and activities that both entail and require co-operation, soon result in good social attitudes. Many children are already confident when they first arrive, and teachers, assistants and nursery nurses build on these children's readiness to act independently and to accept responsibility, giving them little tasks such as handing out resources or counting the number in their group.
53. As children grow older, more focused learning experiences, such as literacy and numeracy sessions are introduced. Accommodation is used well for these purposes as small quiet rooms and bays are employed. During these sessions, older children are separated from the main area, enabling them to acquire skills of concentration and to provide them with different work and activities that meet their stage of development well. Children thrive well in this mixed age environment, younger ones of nursery age learn from the presence of those of reception age, seeing how they behave and act well and taking their lead. Older children are given opportunities to take responsibility for younger ones and to set a good example. As a result, they develop mature and responsible attitudes. Behaviour throughout the whole unit is often very good, sometimes excellent. Nearly all children are content, secure and enjoy opportunities to move from

group to group, following their planned programme of activities. One day, for example, a nursery aged group began with a story about three bears and then moved on to a planning session at the other end of the unit. They knew exactly where they were going what to do when they got there. They went straight away in a sensible orderly fashion and displayed considerable enthusiasm.

54. All adults teach this area of learning very well. Notes of how children are responding to a good range of learning opportunities are made. These are used to draw up a personal profile, so children's needs are known and their future development can be planned effectively. By the time children begin the National Curriculum in Year 1, nearly all of them meet the early learning goals in this area.

Communication, language and literacy

55. Children make good progress through the stepping stones towards the attainment of the early learning goals in this area of learning. Nearly all children currently of reception age are likely to reach the goals by the time they begin the National Curriculum. Several will exceed them, and only a few will not reach them.
56. Children of nursery age learn to recognise letters and to write them down. During the inspection, all the children were fully absorbed in a theme about *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. They learnt vocabulary related to bears and swapped information and stories about their own teddy bears. Good links to knowledge and understanding of the world were apparent when they heard about where bears come from, and about the history of teddy bears. Nursery aged children look at books, and learn how to handle them correctly, acquiring thorough understanding of how print contains meaning and recognising words and letters in the text. They also begin to acquire knowledge of sounds associated with letters, demonstrating good concentration and listening skills. Most children spoke with confidence and clarity in response to questioning about Goldilocks, showing good recall of the story.
57. The quality of teaching in this area is consistently good. Good planning and very good teaching methods ensure that good learning and progress continue during both nursery and reception years. Assessment is good, so learning opportunities are adapted well to meet different needs, including those of lower attainment and with a statement of special educational needs. Previously acquired skills are developed well. Groups of reception aged children gather together with adults and sit in a circle with books. They listen very attentively as adults read to them. Higher attaining children follow what is read in their own copy and sometimes read words and short sentences for themselves. Writing is beginning to emerge as children make marks on paper; learn to make the shapes of letters, and write familiar words. In a good focused activity, the letter 'l' was related to its sound and children were introduced to several words that had this letter as the initial sound. Higher attaining children go further. For example, during the inspection a few of them wrote down parts of the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* in their own words and others wrote letters to Goldilocks, explaining that she was naughty to eat the bears' porridge. Towards the end of the reception year, nearly all children demonstrated that they are confident in answering adults' questions and supplying relevant anecdotal information of their own.

Mathematical development

58. Nearly all children acquire or exceed the skills described in the early learning goals for mathematical development by the time they enter Year 1. Teaching and learning of this area are good for both nursery and reception aged children. Progress and achievements are usually good. Teachers, nursery nurses and assistants use many incidental opportunities to ask children to count and to raise awareness of shapes in the environment around them. Children are interested in these opportunities and enjoy counting plastic cubes, animals and numbers of other children in their groups. During the inspection, nursery aged children counted and sorted plastic bears into colours and used mathematical comparisons such as "larger than", "one more" and "one less" accurately and with care. They recognise numerals and are beginning to relate them to their meaning as far as ten and sometimes beyond. Many children come to school able to recite numbers in the correct order up to well beyond ten. However, many of

these children do not really understand the nature of the quantities that these words represent. Under these circumstances, teachers are correct in not allowing them to count beyond what they genuinely understand. Systems of assessing pupils' progress are very good and this information is used effectively to ascertain what children should learn and do next.

59. Good teaching continues as children grow older. Those of reception age undertake shortened versions of standard numeracy sessions. These lessons follow the pattern of an oral beginning, followed by a mathematical task or activity that is reinforced in a closing plenary time. It follows the structure that children will meet in numeracy hours in Year 1. Therefore children are prepared well for the next stage of education, while the shorter time that they are required to sit in one place takes account of their age and development well. The skills that they have acquired previously are built on steadily and, as with nursery aged children, they are constantly encouraged to use real situations to apply their developing knowledge and skills. An example of this occurred in the school hall, when during a physical education session, they were asked to count how many children were in each team. Their awareness of shape and space was also focused during this session when they were asked to move in straight lines and circles, and to be aware of how others were moving. Sand and water trays are used well to develop ideas of capacity and weight.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

60. By the time they enter Year 1, nearly all children's attainment matches the early learning goals. Most children enter the unit with general knowledge and curiosity about the world that matches what is usually found for their age. Teaching of this area is consistently good, so learning takes place at a good rate. At first, children are encouraged to talk about what they know of the locality and family life. Good opportunities are taken to explore geographical and historical aspects of the themes that the unit follows. For example, during the inspection, considerable talk about teddy bears took place. Children of nursery age were shown how to compare their bears to see which ones were made recently and which ones were older. In this way, they developed ideas of the passage of time.
61. Older children of reception age continue to develop their general knowledge of the world. They plant seeds, observe how they grow and learn about places near by and far away. Good links with other areas of learning are established when children make models and paint their ideas. Good uses are made of a wide range of construction toys and equipment. For example, children were observed building road layouts and exploring ideas of transport and travel, acquiring and sharing vocabulary. Other children played with floating objects and, when asked by an assistant, gave plausible explanations of why some materials floated when others sank.
62. The unit has a bank of computers. During the inspection, they were almost always in use. Children of all ages demonstrated well developed skills in controlling a mouse to move a cursor about the screen, clicking it appropriately to make relevant programs work.

Physical development

63. Arrangements for children's physical development are very good. An exterior area has suitable fixed apparatus, safer surfacing and space for tricycles and similar large wheeled toys. Very good teaching occurred during a session in this space with both nursery and reception aged children. Teaching reached this high standard because the teacher led children's play and activity, making suggestions that helped them to use the equipment to develop skills of balancing, exercising safely and moving about in different ways. As children develop their control of movement and reach reception age, teaching becomes more focused on particular skills. The school's hall is timetabled regularly for use by children in the unit. In a very good lesson for older children, for example, small games equipment such as bean bags were used well to help them move about with good posture by balancing the bean bags on their heads. Activities of this kind were well planned to develop skills of co-ordination and hone balance and awareness of space.

64. Good skills of hand, eye and finger control are developed with the use of a wide range of small tools, such as scissors, paintbrushes and *klikfix* cubes. By the time children begin the National Curriculum in Year 1, their attainment in this area matches the early learning goals well.

Creative development

65. Children of nursery and reception ages have opportunities through art, music and role-play to develop creative abilities. As a result, most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals in this area; some are currently on course to exceed them, and only a few are below standards that are typically seen.
66. Throughout their time in the unit, children explore colour and texture while painting and creating collages that match the successive themes that are studied. What was seen on display and in samples of work that was provided demonstrated care and skilful use of materials. Children also enjoyed singing simple number songs and chants from memory and responded well to clapping rhythms. In a good lesson outside, they enacted parts of the story of *Goldilocks*, dressing up as characters in the story and presenting them dramatically.

ENGLISH

67. Inspection evidence suggests that pupils' overall attainment in all aspects of English exceeds national averages both at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This finding is broadly consistent with performance in the 2002 National Curriculum tests in which results compared with similar schools were well above average in reading and above average in writing at the end of Year 2, and well above average at the end of Year 6. The number of pupils in Year 2 who attained at a level higher than that normally expected reflected a similar picture in reading, though it was close to average in writing. In Year 6, the number who attained at a higher level than normally expected was well above average. Standards in the current Years 2 and 6 represent considerable improvement since the previous inspection in 1998, which judged attainment to be in line with expectations. Over time, the majority of pupils throughout the school make very good progress and achieve strongly in relation to their prior attainment.
68. Many pupils throughout the school demonstrate a great deal of confidence in speaking and listening. They listen carefully and respond to questions appropriately with higher attaining pupils sustaining concentration well and expressing their point of view convincingly. The majority of older pupils demonstrate well developed listening skills. Many make a good contribution to discussions, varying what they say to take account of others' opinions. Nevertheless, a few lower attaining pupils do not project their voice well when speaking to the whole class or to other larger audiences. Pupils' interest in listening to stories was evident in a Year 1/2 library session. In this lesson, higher attainers were able to suggest a moral to *Edward the Emu*, when it was read to them by their teacher. Skills are developed well and become even more apparent in Year 3/4 classes. For example, in a literacy lesson, pupils showed how involved they were, gasping with disappointment when time ran out and their teacher left their story in suspense until the following day. Pupils are also enthusiastic about activities involving tape recorders and role-play, as was observed in another Year 3/4 lesson, a whole school assembly and an after school drama club.
69. Achievement in reading is a strength of the school. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils show very advanced reading skills. They read with accuracy, fluency and understanding. By the end of Year 6, pupils read independently, often making good predictions about the plot of a story. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate well developed skimming and scanning skills. Pupils gain a great deal from shared, guided and quiet reading sessions and they read a wide variety of texts including poetry. Their research skills are well developed with particular reference to the use of the Internet. They seek and read factual information from an early age. This skill was noted in a Year 1/2 lesson that focused on finding information about animals using an encyclopaedia on CD-ROM.

70. Pupils' writing skills are also developed well. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils often write sustained stories with a clear understanding of setting, characterisation and dialogue. Many pupils pay careful attention to basic elements of grammar and punctuation such as capital letters and speech marks. An emphasis on the use of adjectives led one Year 1/2 class to describe a pirate ship as "...a big scary wooden vessel". Nevertheless, not all pupils are able to express themselves as fluently without the help of learning assistants. Those of below average attainment, including those with special educational needs are supported effectively and thereby produce simple sentences that are correctly punctuated. As they move through the school, pupils are introduced to an increasing range of challenging writing tasks. By the end of Year 6, they write for different purposes such as listing instructions, description, narratives, scripts for drama, letters and poetry. A focus on shared, guided and extended writing has started to pay dividends. Pupils choose and vary their vocabulary to convey meaning clearly in a range of styles and genres. Many develop their ideas coherently, justifying their point of view as part of their persuasive writing. This was observed in a Year 5/6 class, for example, when pupils wrote and responded to an agony aunt. Older pupils in another lesson made notes and then drafted their ideas first as strategies for producing effective writing.
71. Pupils in Year 3/4 classes identify parts of speech. For example, they recognised pronouns and understood their functions. Older pupils in the class demonstrated a clear understanding of how book reviews are written, while others wrote extended stories based on a plan of incidents and used synonyms for "ran" and "said". As might be expected, an increasing number of pupils present their work well as they move through the school. Handwriting and spelling are regularly taught in all classes. However, difficulties in handwriting and spelling persist for some, especially those with identified special educational needs. When this is the case, individual education plans indicate clear targets and support is very good.
72. Teaching and learning are often very good and teaching sometimes has excellent features. Teachers' strong subject knowledge enables them to enhance pupils' learning and participation in activities through effective questioning and intervention. Particularly high standards of teaching are characterised by the creation of a very stimulating environment where everyone's contribution is valued and pupils are made to feel part of a shared learning experience. Most lessons follow the structure recommended in the National Literacy Strategy, which invariably leads to a good pace and balance of activities. Teachers' high expectations contribute much to pupils' good behaviour. On occasions when teaching does not reach this high quality, it is usually because too much time is spent on didactic explanation and direction and pupils' activities are less well thought out and planned. Although rare, these factors have a negative effect on pupils' concentration and interest, so learning is less effective. Ongoing assessment and uses of homework are good, enabling pupils to be aware of their progress. The quality of learning reflected the impact of teaching in the majority of lessons observed. Most pupils in all age groups show very good attitudes to literacy hours. They listen to each other courteously, collaborating well, whenever asked. During written tasks, they concentrate well and try to work neatly and accurately. Younger pupils develop their basic skills well, while older pupils consolidate and extend persuasive, descriptive and empathetic writing skills, together with formal written conventions. Pupils' high levels of motivation and participation were noted on many occasions when they were keen to make their best effort in developing their literacy skills. Pupils with English as an additional language and those having special educational needs develop appropriate skills with good support. No significant gender difference was found in pupils' learning. Pupils are well behaved and enjoy good relationships with one another and with adults.
73. Literacy skills are used effectively across the curriculum. Learning of specialist vocabulary is integral to mathematics and science lessons. Some pupils' accounts of evacuation at the time of war were effectively linked to their work in the literacy hour. The use of information and communication technology within English is having a positive impact on pupils' literacy skills, particularly in drafting and editing. The National Literacy Strategy is well established, but the concluding part of the lesson is not used consistently. Procedures for assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' progress and attainment in most aspects of English are good. Assessment is used positively to identify pupils who will benefit from support for their literacy skills. It is also used to set targets. Teaching and learning are resourced well, which reflects the

very good management of the subject which benefits from ongoing monitoring and evaluation of content and provision.

MATHEMATICS

74. Currently, standards are well above average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. Standards when pupils begin the National Curriculum in Year 1 are rising, which is reflected in the high standard at the end of Year 2. Compared with their starting point, pupils are achieving well and very good improvement has occurred since the last inspection, when standards were reported as not significantly different from national averages. No significant differences between the achievements of boys and girls were found. Very good standards indicated by the Year 2 National Curriculum test results in 2002 are reflected in current work in pupils' books. Most pupils meet nationally expected levels for their age and a high percentage exceed them. Results in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests have remained fairly steady in recent years. In 2002, results were in line with national averages, but above average compared to those of similar schools. The school's forecast and inspection evidence suggest that current standards in Year 6 are above average in most aspects of mathematics, with a good number attaining at a level above that normally expected for their age. The decision to reorganise classes on the basis of their prior attainment in mathematics (known as setting) is having a positive impact on raising standards and in meeting the particular needs of groups and individuals.
75. Progress is good through the school. Furthermore, pupils have good understanding of how well they are getting on, because marking is thorough and conveys this information. By the end of Year 6, pupils explain their own methods of calculation logically. They use all four operations to solve simple word problems, often in their head. However, several are less confident with complex, multi-step problems. They understand that division and subtraction are the opposites of multiplication and addition and they use the terminology "inverse" to explain the relationship. Higher attaining pupils experiment with their own methods of long division, testing the reliability on a calculator. Nearly all pupils use fractions, decimal numbers and percentages, and have a good understanding of the links between them. Higher attaining pupils use decimal numbers to three places and beyond, multiplying and dividing them by 10,000 and 1000. Many pupils calculate perimeter and the area of complex shapes; they recognise parallel and perpendicular lines, and use a protractor to measure angles. Higher attaining pupils construct and interpret co-ordinates in all four quadrants, use pie charts and line graphs. They understand how to recognise "mean", "median" and "mode" from data.
76. By the end of Year 2, pupils add and subtract confidently using two-digit numbers and show a good understanding of numbers to a 100, and many go beyond. They use mental strategies to solve simple word problems – using addition and subtraction, doubling and halving – and they explain their methods and reasoning. When counting in sequences of twos, fives and tens, they recognise patterns in numbers and associate patterns with the times tables. Most recognise and describe common two- and three-dimensional shapes and use standard units of measures for measuring length, mass or capacity in a range of contexts. They sort objects, make lists or tables, and record their results in block graphs. Higher attaining pupils explain simple graphs and charts well for their age, and use appropriate vocabulary.
77. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning are good, including a high proportion of very good teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they are confident in their explanations. They use homework well, both as a means of consolidating what pupils have learnt in class and to extend it. Planning is another very strong element in teaching and it is well informed by teachers' good daily assessments. When teaching does not reach this high standard, it is because the copious amount of work that pupils produce does not lead to higher levels of achievement. On these rare occasions, pupils continue with work that they clearly understand, rather than being moved on by their teacher. Teachers generally expect and gain high standards of work and behaviour. They work hard to meet pupils' individual needs. For example, in an excellent lesson seen in a Year 1/2 class, which was already set by prior attainment, pupils constructed and interpreted a block graph about their birthdays. Excellent planning ensured adaptations of the task that fully met pupils' different needs, including those with special educational needs. Teaching assistants contributed very well to this lesson, using good skills of questioning to focus attention on what was vital for learning to occur. Owing to the level of challenge in the work, pupils were fully occupied and interested and their behaviour was excellent.

Teachers make good use of time, support staff and resources to support pupils of different needs and abilities. This support is successful and contributes well to pupils' good progress and achievements. Those few pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language are dealt with very sensitively, although specific expertise to promote their progress is not as evident as that for pupils with special needs. Nonetheless, all pupils have equal access to the curriculum in mathematics.

78. Literacy skills are taught effectively during numeracy sessions. Pupils' work is neatly presented and they are given appropriate help with new vocabulary. Numeracy skills are applied well in other subjects, particularly in science lessons, where pupils present their investigations in tables and graphs, although data handling in these contexts is not always consistent with the higher levels that pupils attain in mathematics. The use of information and communication technology is good in mathematics. Pupils use laptops and calculators competently and appropriately. Pupils with special educational needs also use computers well to support their learning.
79. The subject is well managed by a knowledgeable subject manager. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced well since the last inspection and includes a good range of learning opportunities in all aspects of mathematics. Regular testing and assessment enable teachers to identify pupils who need additional support and to set suitable targets for improvement. For example, the "booster class" has been successful in raising achievements amongst small groups of carefully targeted pupils. The manager is an experienced co-ordinator, having managed English previously, has received all the necessary support and training from the local advisory service. She supports her colleagues effectively and has confidently led in-service training within the school. Analysis of the results of previous assessment is systematic and thorough, producing a clear view of the subject's strengths and areas where more work is necessary. Her recent report to the governors and subject action plan are very informative and offer a clear programme for developing the subject further. She is keen to be involved in the direct monitoring of teaching but, so far, it has not been possible, owing to other responsibilities.

SCIENCE

80. In 2002, teachers' own assessments of the attainment of Year 2 pupils indicated that standards were average in comparison with all schools nationally. The schools results in the 2002 tests for pupils in Year 6 indicated that just over the average proportion of pupils reached the expected level for their age, whereas the proportion reaching a higher level was below it. When both factors were taken into account, overall results were below the national average. Results in science were not as high as in either mathematics or English.
81. By the end of Year 2, attainment is now above national averages and there are significant numbers of pupils reaching higher levels for their age. By the end of Year 6, attainment is in line with national averages, with more pupils than previously reaching a higher level than that normally expected. Where weaknesses occur, they tend to be in elements of scientific enquiry. For example, by the end of Year 6, work in pupils' books demonstrates that graphical presentation nearly always employs column or block graphs to the exclusion of higher order skills. Line graphs are rarely used to present evidence, whereas it is clear from pupils work in mathematics that several middle and higher attainers are confident in their use. Also, insufficient opportunities arise for pupils to seek patterns in data for themselves and to draw conclusions that are based on their own scientific knowledge and findings. Consequently, opportunities to extend experiments and investigations are sometimes missed.
82. The school identified that some older girls were not making the progress that was predicted for them and has taken appropriate steps to increase their involvement in both lessons and booster classes. In lessons observed during the inspection, no significant difference in participation was noted. Higher attaining girls in Year 6, for example, gave thoughtful responses to questions that required them to apply more advanced thinking.

83. At the previous inspection, results were broadly in line with national averages. However, pupils had too little experience in carrying out investigations. Furthermore, some unsatisfactory teaching was observed and learning materials were only just sufficient. Teaching is now good and standards of attainment have risen through the school, and particularly in Years 1 and 2. Progress since the last inspection is therefore good.
84. In Years 1 and 2, pupils measure and make observations and write the results into tables. They draw simple bar charts. Year 2 pupils sort objects into groups, based on the properties of materials from which they are composed or formed. They recognise objects that occur naturally, separating them from what is manufactured. They write accurately about simple forces, such as “pushes” and “pulls” and talk about the properties of sound. Overall, their progress and achievements are good. By Year 4 further progress has occurred. For example, pupils have developed understanding of how the area of a falling object is linked with air resistance, rather than gravity. They provide thoughtful answers to questions about gravitational attraction applying what they have learnt to new situations. Nearly all Year 6 pupils know about circulation of blood around the body and talk and write about the need for oxygen, linking these ideas to how the heart and lungs working together. Their written work shows thorough understanding of what is taught. Written work is usually of good quality. It is presented well and provides solid evidence that pupils work at a good pace. Marking and verbal feedback are thorough and often provides pupils with insights about their attainment and how well they learn. However, comments about what pupils should do next in order to improve further are less apparent.
85. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Examples of very good teaching and of satisfactory teaching were also observed, and none was unsatisfactory. Teachers plan together effectively and this leads to a consistency of approach. Teachers are good at forming questions that require pupils to explain their thinking. Management of learning is strong. For example, in a Year 1/2 lesson, very good teaching included demonstrations to lower attaining pupils of how the perceived loudness of a sound changes with distance from the source. In a Year 3/4 lesson, a video camera was used to record experimental readings, so accurate timings could be made. Such very good uses of new technology were frequently apparent. In Year 5/6 classes, pupils were expected to work for extended periods to find out about the time it takes for substances to dissolve. What separated the satisfactory teaching from that of higher quality was linked to knowledge of the subject and how to maintain the pace of learning. For example, in a Year 1/2 lesson, pace of learning was adversely affected because of the time pupils waited to explain what they intended to do and to use trundle wheels. In a Year 5/6 lesson, lack of clarity in the teacher’s use of terminology resulted in loss of time when further explanation proved necessary. Later on in the same lesson, a significant number of pupils found it difficult to explain their findings clearly.
86. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They work alongside other pupils confidently during practical sessions, participating appropriately in discussions. When teaching assistants are present, they support pupils well.
87. Pupils behave well and co-operate well with each other in pairs or groups. They get on with tasks independently, nearly always with the minimum of fuss. When asked to plan or organise work for themselves they respond to responsibilities well.
88. Management of the subject is good, offering clear educational direction and support; which have brought about improvements. Monitoring of the subject through teachers’ planning and pupils’ work has been effective and contributed to a well thought out action plan for development. This action plan confirms a strong commitment to improve standards of attainment. Appropriately, plans are in place to include more direct classroom observations. Good displays of work were apparent in the Year 1/2 areas. However, during the inspection, science was not often the subject of displays in other parts of the school. The school’s pond and wild area are rich environments in which to learn about habitats and minibeasts.

ART AND DESIGN

89. At the time of the last inspection, standards in art and design were not judged, although weaknesses in what was taught were identified. Several improvements have been made since 1998 and the curriculum is now broad and involves the use of different media, including paint, clay and new technology. Currently work in Year 2 is broadly in line with what is expected nationally, although it includes several examples of work that is above expected levels. For example, work in ceramics that was carried out with a visiting artist is of a high standard. By

Year 6, attainment has risen to above what is typically found, with many examples of high quality work. Pupils use sketchbooks to plan and experiment with drawings and composition. Many demonstrate considerable awareness of how preliminary work of this kind improves their completed artwork.

90. In Years 1 and 2, three-dimensional work on masks, including appliqué and montage, shows a growing understanding of how different skills and techniques can be combined to produce exciting results. This work also provides evidence of good multi-cultural opportunities. Samples of work from earlier in the year contained evidence of sound uses of the work of artists such as Mondrian. This artist's techniques were clearly pointed out to pupils, who understood how to combine mathematical shapes into interesting patterns and compositions of an abstract nature. Skills are developed well as pupils move on through the school. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, good teaching used pupils' prior knowledge of abstract art to draw out comparisons with other modern and traditional styles. Portraiture by Picasso, and traditional work such as the *Arnolfini* by Jan Van Eyck were used to good effect. Visual elements such as shape, line, artists' intentions and the use of colour were drawn to pupils' attention with the use of knowledgeable questioning. Other examples of good quality work were action statues in the style of Alberto Giacometti. By Year 6, many pupils acquire skills and knowledge that result in numerous works of a quality above that normally expected for their age. Their portraits of personalities such as Tim Henman and Alan Shearer are recognisable; they capture characteristic expressions, and use various techniques such as smudging, hatching, and shading to create three-dimensional effects on flat paper. Clay pottery is well shaped and finished, demonstrating that pupils expect to take care and are not satisfied with their first efforts.
91. Only one lesson was observed, but the good quality of pupils' achievements demonstrates that teaching must be at least good overall, and possibly very good. It was good in the observed lesson with very good features. What was very good included the imaginative use of the work of famous artists and the time that was spent in ensuring that pupils understood the similarities and differences in the techniques and styles that were employed. Teachers make good use of new technology. For example, in conversations with an inspector, teachers and pupils explained how sometimes they project photographic images on to large white sheets of paper and use them to draw and map outlines and colours. Good examples of artwork by pupils in Year 2, generated with the use of computer programs such as *ColourMagic*, formed part of a display. Teachers are clearly confident in the use of such graphical innovation and pupils are skilful in its uses.
92. The subject is well managed. Pupils' work and teachers' plans are monitored to ensure good development of skills. Opportunities to display pupils' work in public places such as a schools' exhibition in Borehamwood are accepted. This provision is good for pupils' personal development. It raises self-esteem, as well as providing a wider audience for their works of art.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

93. Attainment in design and technology is above expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6. This finding represents very good progress since the previous inspection when, although no judgement of attainment was made, several weaknesses in the curriculum were outlined. By the end of Year 2, pupils design and make their own products, often in the arena of food technology. They use their senses to taste, smell and feel different kinds of food, evaluating products including their own work. Work previously undertaken by this age group includes homes, moving images that employ sliders and split pins, plasticene containers and construction with boxes and woodwork. By the

end of Year 6, pupils' use designs of their own to make slippers, employing permanent joining techniques. During this work, design included experimentation and planning, construction of templates and methods of cutting and stitching materials together. Pupils' evaluations of their activity demonstrate a good understanding of the characteristic "design, make and evaluate" components of the subject. Pupils' progress and achievements are now good through the school.

94. Good links with science are established when pupils in Years 5 and 6 generate ideas for pneumatic systems, shelters and fairgrounds. Good links with the world of work were established when pupils in Years 3 and 4 won awards from J. Sainsbury's for designing sandwiches. The school clearly takes such links very seriously as a means to motivate pupils. Examples of well finished vehicles with propellers, designed by a group of pupils in Years 5 and 6, were made in workshops held at the local *Professional Development Centre*.
95. The overall quality of teaching is good. That observed in two lessons, one that included pupils in Years 1 and 2 and the other in a Year 5/6 class demonstrated effective planning, good uses of resources and strong organisation and management rooted in very good, and sometimes excellent subject knowledge. Outstanding teaching strategies included questioning directed at individual pupils, which nonetheless enabled all pupils to learn and sustain concentration and progress. Pupils responded to activities with a great deal of enthusiasm and their attention was drawn to the issues of safety, food hygiene, taking care about how to finish products and paying due attention to detail. The overall impact on learning was characterised by high pupil motivation and involvement in, for example, group discussions about different types of fruit to put in a recipe for a drink, or suitable materials from which to make slippers. Pupils collaborated well in handling ingredients and technology such as a food blender. Older pupils made particular gains in extending sewing skills related to different stitches, including "running" and "blanket" for joining techniques on their slippers. The focus of this lesson enabled nearly all pupils to make very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language made similar progress to all others on these occasions.
96. The subject is generally well managed. The manager is involved with monitoring of teaching and learning and has identified the need to develop the kitchen area to promote food technology further. The planned curriculum is based on nationally recommended guidance, and learning resources are good. Planned links with other subjects include science, art and design, and history. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' multi-cultural awareness. Assessment is focused on the end of topics and themes and is used to see that skills are developed effectively and sequentially

GEOGRAPHY

97. Pupils' attainments in geographical knowledge and skills match national expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6. By the end of Year 2, for example, nearly all pupils recognise leisure facilities in their locality. They plot the location of such facilities on a map, showing a developing understanding of symbols and keys. Younger pupils in Year 1 show their awareness of these facilities through cutting and sticking relevant photographs on to maps. Pupils are aware of some of the important physical and human features of their locality and compare them with the Isle of Struay. Buildings and transport including methods of travelling to school are included in this work. By the end of Year 6, pupils develop a deeper and broader awareness of their environment and demonstrate knowledge of several major issues in their locality. They understand basic facts about the water cycle and have a clear idea of how rivers are formed. They were observed carrying out experiments on how precipitation falls upon a mountain and forms streams and rivulets that join together as tributaries in a river system. They also understand how soil is eroded by rushing water.
98. Good links with history are made in Year 3/4 classes. For example, pupils studied Celtic settlements, and discovered how places like Flicton got their name. Skills of geographical research are developed well during environmental work. For example, pupils carry out surveys on rubbish and litter and link their findings with local arrangements for paper re-cycling. Higher attaining pupils explain their work well, using appropriate vocabulary. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, are involved in similar learning tasks. However, good adaptations of what is taught, such as wider use of drawing to record their work allows them to demonstrate their knowledge effectively, without getting too bogged down in writing. Pupils' map reading skills are developed from ideas of classroom plans and knowledge of the locality.

Nonetheless, this aspect is less developed than other areas of the curriculum and scope exists to spend more time on Ordnance Survey maps.

99. The overall quality of teaching is good. In lessons that were observed it ranged between satisfactory and very good. Planning is good. It includes information about what pupils are expected to know by the end of lessons and this information is shared with pupils. Carefully organised activities and effective use of resources reflect secure subject knowledge. Where teaching is less effective, it is because tasks are not so carefully matched to the full ability range in classes. Nevertheless, generally good teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning, so they acquire skills effectively. Most pupils work well individually as well as in small groups. Consolidation of geographical vocabulary occurs in such topics as "Rivers" and places far away.
100. The subject is satisfactorily managed. The school has adopted a nationally recommended scheme, although formal procedures for assessment that are included in this scheme are not yet in place. Resources are adequate and good opportunities to develop field skills exist when pupils undertake residential school journeys. Good uses of numeracy include bar graphs, charts and numerical tables to present geographical information and findings. Good skills of geographical comparison are developed when pupils study contrasting localities from their own, including the Isle of Struay for Years 1 and 2 and the Indian village of *Chembakolli* in Years 3 and 4.

HISTORY

101. Samples of work in Year 2 and records of work kept by the school indicate that attainment is above national expectations for this age group. Samples of work in Year 6 indicate that attainment is in line with national expectations, although some aspects, such as pupils' knowledge of the order of different historical eras and understanding of change within eras is above what is typically found. In the previous inspection, attainment was in line with national expectations in both age groups, and a few minor weaknesses in resourcing were identified, which have since been improved. Progress in the subject has therefore been good since the last inspection. Pupils' overall achievements are good. Although standards are currently not as high comparatively in Year 6 as in Year 2, it should be remembered that when the present Year 6 pupils were in Year 2, four years ago, standards in the younger age group were not as high as they are now, so, compared with lower starting points, their achievements are often good.
102. Year 2 pupils know about the lives of several famous historical characters. For example, they explained key facts about Florence Nightingale and the improvements that she made in nursing care and practices in hospitals. They develop skills of historical comparison, pointing out how toys from the past differ from modern ones. They use simple timelines effectively and develop good understanding of how people lived in the past.
103. As pupils move on through the school, their skills of historical analysis, knowledge and understanding are developed well. Year 4 pupils study the main events in Boudicca's revolt against the Romans. Higher attaining pupils identify many advantages brought by the Roman, such as new roads and building techniques. Variation in attainment is apparent within the topics covered in Year 6. The study on World War II is generally well covered and indications are that good progress occurs with final attainment above what is typically found. Pupils use timelines well to mark significant events and write about different types of air-raid shelter. They present key facts about important figures such as Winston Churchill and Adolf Hitler. Pupils carry out research of their own using books, CD-ROM and the Internet. Detailed learning is good, including knowledge of rationing, saying why it was necessary at that time, how it was organised and its implications. The topic on music through the ages, however, is covered in less detail and here attainment and progress are simply close to expectations. Overall, writing about history from different viewpoints or giving reasons why things happened are the weaker aspects of attainment, whereas factual knowledge is strong. Many examples of the use of information and communication technology are evident in pupils' work and on display.

104. Teaching was only observed directly in Year 3/4 classes. However, pupils' learning and achievements suggest that the overall quality is good. In the observed lessons, role-play was used effectively to develop pupils' understanding. For example, one pupil playing the role of Boudicca was asked what it felt like when she lost the battle against the Romans. She replied taking on Boudicca's fierce reputation very well. Planning is good. It includes adaptations of work at different levels for different pupils. Teachers have clear expectations about quality and how much pupils are able to write. Homework is used well to support learning. Much work involves opportunities for independent research, using information gleaned from the Internet. Class management is consistently very good, contributing to pupils' high degrees of interest and concentration. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils make good progress in lessons, especially so when supported by teaching assistants. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.
105. Subject management is good. Monitoring of work samples and teachers' planning has been carried out very effectively. Strengths and weaknesses in the subject are clearly identified. Good information about the attainment of individual pupils is kept by teachers individually and is also co-ordinated at whole school level by the headteacher. Priorities for inclusion in the next year's School Improvement Plan are accurately identified and action prescribed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

106. At the time of the last inspection, standards were described as meeting national expectations in the aspects of the subject that were taught. However, the point was made that progress was unsatisfactory because not all the ground expected in the National Curriculum was covered. Considerable improvement has been introduced since then. Attainment is now above what is nationally expected at the end of Years 2 and 6 what is taught fully meets statutory requirements. Computers are used constantly as tools for learning in a wide range of other subjects. Pupils and teachers are confident and competent in their use throughout the school. The school's approach to providing hardware is imaginative and has proved very effective. It has no computer suite – instead, it has added a considerable number of laptops to its stock of classroom computers. Wireless technology to access the Internet is available, so these laptops are moved into pupils' classrooms to teach particular skills. All classes have equal access to this hardware and its use is monitored to ensure that good teaching occurs and produces a good rate of learning.
107. Pupils enter Year 1 from the nursery and reception unit having developed good basic skills with a mouse and understanding of how computers provide them with information and learning opportunities. These skills are developed well. By the end of Year 2, pupils control simple programs themselves, clicking accurately on the correct areas of the screen. Higher attaining pupils are already using a series of buttons on toolbars to achieve a particular result. Simple word processing and programs that help them to draw histograms or to learn mathematical tables are examples of uses computers across the curriculum.
108. Pupils' skills are developed systematically as they grow older. For example, in a very good lesson in a Year 3/4 class, pupils used *ComposeWorld*. This program allows its users to produce electronic music. Boys and girls worked together in mixed age groups. Pupils' willingness to collaborate was very good. They discussed the patterns of available sounds and created their tunes effectively. Higher attaining pupils, often in the older age group, did not dominate the activity. Nevertheless, they gave ideas and explained how to achieve different outcomes, so they were challenged effectively while, at the same time, they passed their skills on. The program allowed each pair to model different approaches and to choose the tune that they preferred. In another part of the room, other pupils worked independently on a history project. They consolidated previously acquired skills, using the classroom computers to access *Verulam Museum: The Website* to download information about the Romans in St Albans. For their age, these pupils were highly skilled in skimming and scrolling pages to find anything that was relevant to their work and saving it into a file.

109. By Year 6, pupils are very confident users of information and communication technology. They understand its purposes and implications for their work and use laptops and PCs routinely and naturally as part of the repertoire of tools and equipment at their disposal. They recognise new technology as a means to seeking information and a tool for recording and presenting their work. They use appropriate versions of programs such as *PowerPoint* or *Information Magic* effectively. Many possess the skills and confidence to experiment with applications, using toolbar buttons and finding ways of controlling programs to achieve the outcomes that they require. Their uses of technical vocabulary are accurate and knowledgeable. During the

inspection, little difference was seen in the skills of different groups of pupils. This finding includes those with special educational needs. Understandably, however, the content of their work across the curriculum, which information and communication technology is used to present, is of a lower standard.

110. Teaching of the subject is consistently good, sometimes very good. Teachers plan effectively and programs that support the work of different age groups through the school are readily available at the right time. Teachers are confident and knowledgeable in the use of these programs. As a result, pupils' skills are developed alongside their daily work in the subjects that programs support. This method works very well. Pupils are enabled to appreciate the technology that they use as having a normal place in what they do, rather than as something that is set apart in a suite. This situation reflects what they will find later on in the outside world of work. It results in a consistently good quality of learning, in which skills are acquired for implicit reason, progressively and naturally.
111. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. A strong vision that fully acknowledges the importance of the subject to pupils' future prospects at work in the adult world ensures that developments in provision are taken very seriously. Opportunities for pupils to design websites and to work on projects from outside the school are taken up. The school's website contains innovative pages produced by pupils themselves, as well as information for parents and the general public. The school has experienced success in its entries in the *S.T.E.M. Project*. Systems of assessment and monitoring of performance are robust and used rigorously.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Spanish

112. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 attain good standards in listening to and understanding Spanish. Their spoken skills are sound and they are developing confidence in using a range of basic vocabulary and simple everyday expressions. Pupils have a weekly lesson which is effective in developing their conversation skills and their understanding of life in Spain. At the last inspection pupils achieved good standards in French. These good levels of achievement have been maintained in the new language studied and the quality of teaching has improved and is now good.
113. Pupils have a good level of understanding when spoken to in Spanish and respond correctly to questions such as, "What is your name?" "How old are you?" and "Where do you live?" They have a good knowledge of numbers, colours and familiar school items such as "pen", "chair" and "table". In the two lessons observed, pupils were learning to tell the time and used phrases well to question one another. They are developing good accents, modelling themselves on the very good spoken Spanish of their teacher. They appreciate the importance of using the correct gender and changing the ending of adjectives in describing masculine and feminine nouns. Pupils are good at recognising written words and phrases and readily explain their meaning. They complete simple worksheets and record new vocabulary in their books, although the main emphasis in learning is rightly on the spoken rather than the written language.
114. Teaching is good. The teacher has excellent subject knowledge and plans her lessons very well. She sets clear objectives for each session and is successful in maintaining pupils' interest and

active participation. She encourages pupils well and speaks in Spanish to praise them and to give them instructions, reinforcing understanding, where necessary, by short English explanations. The teacher is particularly effective in improving pupils' spoken skills through quick-fire questions to individuals and by ensuring all pupils repeat the new phrases to be learnt. However she does not regularly reinforce pupils' knowledge of phrases already learned by requiring them to repeat these as a class or by groups. Very good teaching occurred when pupils were recorded on video, speaking phrases and accompanying them with actions. These were downloaded onto computer and edited by pupils to make an entertaining presentation of

their learning. Pupils developed their language skills well while also extending and applying their learning of information and communication technology. The teacher maintains a close check on pupils' progress and adapts questions and activities well to support those with special educational needs.

115. The teacher co-ordinates the subject well. She has established a valuable contact with a Spanish school which makes a very good contribution to pupils' understanding of a different European culture. Resources are good and well used and the recently acquired computer material offers an exciting new dimension for pupils' learning. The teacher is committed to promoting the school's vision of introducing foreign languages in all classes and is closely involved in a local initiative for this. The vision could be advanced further by providing more signs and displays in different languages, books on Spain in the library and by celebrating the languages of those pupils whose mother tongue is not English.

MUSIC

116. At the time of the last inspection, standards were around nationally expected levels at the end of Years 2 and 6. Current attainment is similar, except that pupils' singing is above standards that are typically found. Throughout the school, pupils sing with enjoyment and employ changes in the tone and quality of their voices that match the mood of the words that they sing. Singing is accurate in tune and rhythm, and older pupils sing parts in harmony and rounds entailing up to four parts. The quality of teaching has improved with the use of a specialist and the elimination, albeit only one lesson, of unsatisfactory teaching that occurred in the 1998 inspection.
117. In Year 2, pupils demonstrated that they could choose instruments to represent a range of different sounds. Teachers read the story *Peace at Last*. Whenever pupils heard words or sentences that implied sounds, they raised a hand and suggested an instrument that would best fit it. Nearly all pupils made plausible suggestions. Gradually a group of performers was formed in this way. Pupils then played their instruments confidently, according to the cues in the story. Their performance met expected levels of attainment closely. They showed awareness of each other's performance and their comments demonstrated that they could appraise whether or not the instruments produced the right sounds. Such skills are developed well as pupils move through the school. Taped examples of work showed that pupils in Years 3 and 4 compose tunes of their own that match criteria that are set. In a good lesson, pupils used simple notation well to record rhythms. When asked, they reproduced these rhythms accurately. By Year 6, pupils compose and perform a variety of simple tunes, using percussion instruments. They co-operate well in ensembles of their own. They listen to and appreciate music of different types and cultures, including African drumming, raps and Indian styles. Further examples of performances on tapes demonstrated a good repertoire of songs from World War II that linked with a topic in history.
118. The overall quality of teaching is good. Good use is made of a specialist who plans pairs of lessons with class teachers. This specialist then teaches the first lesson alongside the class teacher, who teaches the second one during the next week, while the specialist moves to another class before returning. This system works well. It ensures that class teachers acquire good techniques, benefiting from the regular presence of a colleague with expertise. Management of pupils and methods are therefore very good, leading to good acquisition of skills by pupils. For

example, good teaching of pupils in Years 5 and 6 resulted in singing *London's Burning* as a round, to the accompaniment of xylophones, glockenspiels and a variety of small drums.

119. Music has a strong place in the life of the school. During class assemblies pupils often perform songs or compositions of their own. Instrumental lessons in piano, violin and clarinet are available. The quality of instruction in lessons that were observed was consistently good. Opportunities for these pupils to play together in assembly and in concerts for their parents are provided. Music also has a high profile in productions that are staged at Christmas and other times.
120. Music is well managed. Assessment of pupils' performances and monitoring of planning ensure that what is taught now meets the requirements of the National Curriculum – another improvement since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

121. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 is in line with national expectations and above expectations by the end of Year 6. Pupils' achievement is good in all aspects of their work, and their attitudes to the subject are very positive. These findings represent very good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs make good, sometimes very good progress, owing to the additional support they are given by teaching assistants when needed. Pupils with English as an additional language are included well in all activities and also make good progress in this subject.
122. Good opportunities for personal development are built into the programme when pupils in older age groups accept responsibility for setting out equipment in the hall. In gymnastics, pupils in Years 5 and 6 work as a team, share ideas and practise set routines. They choose and apply ideas to the sequences that they create and practise new sequences to good effect. Pupils work hard to improve their performance as they progress. They confidently perform in front of others, while others observe attentively in order to give their well-considered evaluations. Sometimes pupils make written evaluations and these are equally good. All aspects of the subject are addressed in the scheme of work. For example, pupils take part in outdoor and adventurous pursuits, working as a team, practising orienteering skills and locating positions using photographic cues.
123. Pupils in Years 1 to 5 have good opportunities for swimming, using a local pool, where specialist teaching is good. Records indicate that progress is good and that nearly all pupils exceed the government's minimum target for safety (25 metres) by the end of Year 5. Many pupils exceed this target considerably.
124. Games lessons for pupils in Years 1 and 2 were observed. At these age groups, pupils improve their skills well, such as aiming, throwing, striking and scoring, using a range of small equipment, bats and balls. They enjoy these activities immensely. Pupils listen to their teachers' instructions well and they work enthusiastically as members of a group. Pupils appraise each other's work, offering sensible comments. Progress is good, although in the context of mixed ages, little evidence was seen that work is adapted to take account of age and prior attainment.
125. Teaching is good overall, often better for pupils in Years 5 and 6 than in other classes that were observed. A good range of tasks is set, including warm-up activities and with an increasing degree of difficulty as lessons proceed, indicating teachers' good knowledge of the subject and ongoing assessment of pupils' capacities. Teachers give clear explanations of what pupils are expected to be able to do by the end of lessons, which helps to motivate pupils well. In return, pupils take a full part and try hard. Time and resources are used effectively. Health and safety principles are well observed, although, at times, cooling-down activities are foreshortened at the end of lessons. In a good lesson in a Year 3/4 class, a good level of challenge ensured that pupils were fully engaged in activities that entailed opportunities to solve problems. These activities were rotated so that all pupils experienced them all as part of a team. As a result, progress was good, and pupils fully enjoyed the lesson and behaved very well.

126. The subject manager leads the staff enthusiastically and has very good subject knowledge and a clear sense of educational direction. The school is striving to gain awards under the *Healthy Schools* and *Active Mark* initiatives. The subject manager has had considerable impact on raising the profile of physical education. Her expertise is used well in enhancing skills in sports and games, especially in Years 3 to 6. She contributes well to the good planning of the subject and in tracking pupils' progress. Resources are generally good, well organised and replenished on a regular basis. The school has a spacious field for outdoor games and activities, although the hall space is tight for older pupils. The subject makes very good contributions to pupils' personal development, including social skills, self-esteem and moral development in sticking to rules and playing fairly.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

127. Standards in religious education are broadly as expected for pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Standards in religious education have therefore risen and are now broadly satisfactory by the end of Year 6. Improvement in the subject is sound since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make progress in relation to their starting points at similar rates to other pupils.
128. Pupils in Year 1/2 classes listen to stories from the Bible and learn about topics such as "creation". They learn about aspects of Judaism and Islam, through listening to stories read by the specialist teacher. For example, in a lesson, they listened attentively to two stories from the Muslim faith: *The man and the dog* and *The lady and the cat* and learned about the difference between making right and wrong choices. They discussed right and wrong in the light of decisions that were taken by characters in the stories and decided about kind and cruel actions. Thereby they learnt from religion as well as about religion, as required in the local syllabus. Older pupils in the class knew about special books that are used by people of different faiths, and were aware of the importance of these books to the people concerned. Pupils are taught to use appropriate religious terms, but often get mixed up between words that are linked to different religions, partly because of a shortage of time to work at sufficient depth.
129. Pupils in Year 5/6 classes learn about Christianity and other world religions, such as Buddhism and Islam. Their knowledge and understanding of Christianity includes several good ideas about what it means to be a Christian and of the importance of making choices in life that are based on solid principles. They learn about the importance of signs and symbols in religions and make links between the symbolism in, for example, Christianity and Buddhism. They read about famous leaders, past and present, such as Mother Theresa, Dr. Bernardo and Florence Nightingale. They examine individual beliefs, and consider ways in which members of different faiths describe their understanding of God. However, in a lesson in a Year 3/4 class about Sikhism, while pupils developed a sound understanding of some customs and practices of Sikh people living in England, including the function of a Gurdwarra, insufficient artefacts and visual aids restricted the depth at which learning took place.
130. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, including significant strengths, but also a few important weaknesses. Literacy skills are used and taught well to read and understand religious texts and stories. Good opportunities for speaking and listening occur when pupils discuss different practices from the major world religions. Lessons are generally introduced well by sharing the main ideas that are to be learnt. Good written activities include the use of worksheets that are produced by teachers or photocopied from other sources. These materials often contain adaptations for pupils at different levels of prior attainment. However, concluding parts of lessons that were observed did not always allow pupils to assess their learning for themselves. For example, few opportunities arose for them to say what they had learnt from aspects of the religion that was the focus of the lesson, or to draw useful comparisons with incidents in their own lives. Such weaknesses stemmed from lack of depth in what was taught, leading to insufficient bases for pupils to make such comparisons and links meaningfully. The range of books and suitable artefacts used to exemplify custom and religious practice was limited in lessons, which also

reduced the depth of learning that occurred. Fewer uses of information and communication technology were seen than was the case in many other subjects. However, management of pupils was generally good and, in nearly all lessons, pupils were very well behaved. Furthermore, pupils have positive attitudes to learning about religion and demonstrate very positive views of people from different backgrounds from their own.

131. The relatively new subject manager works on a part-time basis and teaches the subject in all classes. This arrangement helps to release class teachers for discharging other duties. The subject manager is aware of the lack of appropriate depth in what has been taught and has prepared an action plan to remedy it. Time allocated to religious education is a little low for a subject that carries its important national profile. Training opportunities are also being explored to develop teachers' knowledge of the subject.