

INSPECTION REPORT

WESTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Weston

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117413

Headteacher: Mrs Kathy Willett

Lead inspector: Mr Fred Riches

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 24th September 2003

Inspection number: 258139

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	117
School address:	Maiden Street Weston Hitchin Hertfordshire
Postcode:	SG4 7AG
Telephone number:	(01462) 790317
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Cherry
Date of previous inspection:	19 th October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Weston Primary School is Church of England Controlled. It takes boys and girls from age three to 11. Pupils come from Weston and surrounding villages, including the outskirts of Baldock. There are currently 117 pupils on roll, with a fairly even balance of boys and girls. There are 16 part-time pupils in the Nursery and eight full-time in the Reception year. The socio-economic background of pupils is above average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Children's attainment on entry to the school is above average. The pupil turnover is low. Almost all pupils are of white UK heritage, with a very small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. All pupils have English as their first language. The number of pupils with special educational needs is below average. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school has won several national awards in recent years. It won the Healthy Schools Award in 2002, the Schools Achievement in both 2001 and 2002 and the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23235	Fred Riches	Lead inspector	Mathematics, science, information and communication technology, citizenship, design and technology, music, religious education, English as an additional language.
9748	Clifford Hayes	Lay inspector	
24022	Julia Lawson	Team inspector	English, art and design, geography, history, physical education, Foundation Stage, Special Educational Needs.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective school. Pupils of all abilities achieve very successfully. Standards are high. Inspirational leadership, efficient management systems and a rich curriculum underpin effective teaching. **The school gives very good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- very good leadership and management by the headteacher and deputy motivate an efficient, highly committed staff team;
- pupils of all abilities achieve very well overall, reaching particularly high standards in mathematics and science by age 11;
- very good resources and staff expertise in information and communication technology (ICT) result in very good achievement;
- pupils' very positive attitudes stem from very good arrangements for their personal development;
- good teaching overall, with a high proportion of very good teaching;
- a broad, interesting and relevant curriculum enriched by many stimulating additional activities;
- current topic organisation makes planning and teaching difficult for Years 1 and 2 *;
- proposed action in the school development action does not measure the benefit for pupils and longer-term vision and strategies are not recorded; and
- the school does not have agreed, efficient day-to-day assessment systems in place *.

Asterisked items are already recognised in the current year's development plan.

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have been much higher in most years and all aspects of the school's provision show improvement or maintained high quality. Although the formally recorded school development plan lacks a long-term view and measurable targets related to pupils, it is clear from action over recent years that the headteacher shows imaginative vision and has been very well supported by staff, governors, parents and the community. There has been excellent improvement in resource provision for ICT, teacher's confidence and expertise and pupils' achievement in this subject. These were the key issues to address from the last inspection. They were all unsatisfactory and are now all very good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A*	A	C	D
Mathematics	A*	A	A	A
Science	A*	A	B	C

Key: A - very high; A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average*

Pupils achieve very well overall during their time at Weston. Children achieve well in Nursery and Reception overall. Almost all children reach the goals expected by the end of their reception year and several exceed these in all six areas of learning. Pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. Standards in the current Year 2 are average overall in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve very well in most subjects, including English, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education. Standards in the current Year 6 are well above average in mathematics, science and reading and above average in writing. This is due to very good teaching and a rich curriculum. Pupils, parents and staff also regard achievement in physical education as very good, but the inspection was unable to observe and verify this.

The table shows that Year 6 standards have been mainly high in recent years. Weston's' results from 2003 tests show standards higher in English than in 2002, slightly lower in mathematics and higher in science. Year 2 standards have been consistently high in mathematics in recent years, but variable in other subjects. Fluctuations year on year are to do with the nature of the year group. This is common to small schools, where each pupil represents a large percentage score. In 2002, English was below similar schools because of special needs factors in the year group. Comparisons with national norms need careful interpretation in the light of the school's knowledge of individual pupils.

Pupils show very positive personal qualities as a result of the school's very good provision for their moral and social development and good provision for their spiritual and cultural development. Pupils show care for each other and respect and tolerance of each other's views. They readily accept responsibility. Older pupils show initiative and develop effective independent study skills. The new school council members show a particularly mature approach to their responsible role. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are very good, as a result of the school's consistent procedures and the positive role models provided by staff. Attendance is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. It offers a stimulating, broad and balanced curriculum, enriched by visits and many additional activities. **The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.** Very good teaching in the nursery and Years 3 to 6 promotes very successful learning. Good teaching for reception children promotes good learning habits. The organisation of curriculum themes is not so well managed for pupils in Years 1 and 2, with the result that some aspects of teaching are not as effective as in the rest of the school. Nevertheless teaching for these pupils is satisfactory. The quality of assessment of pupils' work is good. Teachers predict and check pupils' progress very effectively from term-to-term and year-to-year. Day-to-day assessment and marking is not as consistently efficient or effective as it could be. The school has plans to address this. The school provides very good care, support and guidance for all pupils. Its partnership with parents is very good. These very positive aspects of provision contribute significantly to pupils' positive attitudes to school and to their high achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher shows energy and drive, which motivates staff. All staff share high aspirations for pupils. Strong, supportive leadership from both headteacher and deputy create high staff morale and promote very positive attitudes and high achievement among pupils. Efficient management systems, together with excellent day-to-day administration, enable teachers to focus on teaching. Subject co-ordination roles are developing. The example set by the ICT co-ordinator is excellent. The school has identified accurately its priorities for improvement in the current year, but action planned does not show clearly how pupils will benefit. The headteacher's imagination and vision, clearly shown in developments since her arrival at the school, are not fully reflected in a shared record of strategy beyond the current year. Governors know the school well. Several visit regularly to help monitor provision. They give good support to the school, particularly with budget planning.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils express very positive views about the school. The inspection corroborates these. A few parents feel information about pupils' progress and homework is unclear. The inspection finds that the school provides clear information on homework and very good opportunities to discuss progress. Annual reports on pupils' progress are clear and comprehensive, but do not always clarify how well children are doing in comparison with national expectations.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve curriculum organisation and teaching arrangements for Years 1 and 2;
- set measurable outcomes and add a strategic element to the school improvement plan; and
- improve day-to-day assessment and marking.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is very good overall. It is very good in the nursery, good in reception, satisfactory through Years 1 and 2 and very good from Years 3 to 6. Boys and girls do equally well. Standards reached by pupils currently in the oldest class (Years 5 and 6) are well above average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very high standards in mathematics and science following very good achievement in these subjects;
- above average standards in English, with particularly strong achievement in reading;
- very good achievement in ICT;
- good achievement in all other National Curriculum subjects and religious education throughout Years 3 to 6;
- very good achievement in the nursery; and
- while there are no significant weaknesses, curriculum organisation and teaching for Years 1 and 2, with a split year group following different themes, results in achievement that is satisfactory, but not as strong as elsewhere in the school.

Commentary

1. Pupils of all abilities achieve very well overall during their time at Weston. This is particularly due to a very good start to school and the consistently high quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6. Observation of pupils' active learning, through listening, discussion, practical activities and recording in lessons, examples of pupils' work from the whole of the previous year and displays throughout the school all verify the positive picture shown in the school's progress tracking documents.
2. Attainment on entry to the school is above average in most years, although this varies from year to year. Children achieve very well overall during their time in the nursery and reception years. Achievement is very good in the nursery and good in the reception year, where children share a class with some Year 1 pupils. Almost all children reach the early learning goals before the end of their reception year in all six areas of learning¹.
3. Standards in Year 2 are average overall in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The year group shares a class with some Year 1 pupils. The class contains pupils of widely varying ability, including both higher attainers and those with special educational needs. Pupils' achievement in these and all other subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education is satisfactory.
4. Standards in the current Year 6 are well above average in mathematics, science and reading. They are above average in writing. Pupils achieve very well in these core subjects, especially as a result of the very good teaching throughout Years 3 to 6. Older pupils also achieve very well in the other subjects seen during inspection, including ICT, which had been a weakness at the time of the last inspection. Pupils achieve equally well in design and technology, geography, history, music and religious education. This high achievement is due to the consistently high quality of teaching, as well as to the raised profile of these subjects through additional pursuits, visits and focus weeks. Though no physical education lessons with older

¹ *Early learning goals* are set for the six areas of learning that make up the *Foundation Stage* curriculum. These are 'Personal, social and emotional development', 'communication, language and literacy', 'mathematical development', 'knowledge and understanding of the world', 'creative development' and 'physical development'. The *Foundation Stage* includes nursery and reception years. The goals are set as standards to be reached by most children before starting Year 1.

pupils were observed, it is clear from certificates, reports, photographic evidence and discussions with pupils, parents and staff that achievement in the gymnastic, games and outdoor pursuit aspects of this subject is equally high. This is in no small measure due to the school's well-considered deployment of a sports coach (see leadership and management section) both during and after school hours. Standards seen in art and design are in line with those expected for pupils' ages.

5. The most recent sets of published results, showing comparisons with national averages and similar schools to Weston, are already a year old. The summer 2003 statistics will not be published until after the current inspection. The school's results in national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 show variations annually. These are related to factors particular to each year group. This is common for small schools, where each pupil counts for several percentage points. A few extra higher attainers or a few extra pupils with special educational needs make a big difference to comparative statistics.
6. The following table shows statistics from 2002, with those from 2001 in brackets. In 2002, the school's performance in mathematics was well above the national average and well above that of similar schools. In reading and writing it was below average and well below that of similar schools. This was due to the special educational needs of pupils in the year group concerned, who receive additional support to promote their learning in speaking, reading and writing. In 2003, a much higher proportion of Year 2 pupils reached level 2, the standard for seven-year-olds, and more reached the higher level 3, so the school's performance will appear better. However, the year-on-year variations in small schools like Weston are not significant in themselves. Pupils' individual scores are tracked carefully though and the school uses these well to predict at the start of each year the standards each pupil should reach by the end of the year.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	15.1 (17.8)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	14.1 (16.2)	14.4 (14.3)
Mathematics	18.4 (19.9)	16.5 (16.2)

There were 14 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. In the following table, Year 6 standards in 2002 were well above average and well above those of similar schools in mathematics, above average and in line with similar schools in science and average in English, but below those of similar schools. As with the Year 2 results, fluctuations year-on-year are to do with the nature of the year group. Analysis of the standards of all year groups currently in the school shows wide variations.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.0 (29.7)	27.0 (27.0)
Mathematics	29.6 (29.2)	26.7 (26.6)
Science	29.1 (30.8)	28.3 (28.3)

There were 15 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

8. Results from summer 2003 show a higher proportion reaching the standard Level 4 and the higher Level 5 in English than in 2002. A smaller proportion reached each Level in mathematics. A similar proportion reached Level 4 in science, but a very high proportion, almost three-quarters of the year group, reached standards above those for their age.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils behave very well and form very positive relationships. They are confident and show very good attitudes to school and to learning. Older pupils in particular gladly accept responsibilities and show considerable initiative. These positive personal qualities stem from the school's very good provision for pupils' personal development. Attendance is very good and punctuality is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very positive attitudes to school, showing a desire to learn, willingness to take responsibility and readiness to show initiative, especially among older pupils;
- very good relationships with staff and other pupils;
- very good behaviour in lessons, around the school and at play;
- very good moral and social development and awareness of good citizenship;
- good spiritual and cultural development, including improving focus on raising pupils' awareness of the multicultural and multi-faith nature of the United Kingdom;
- very positive pupil views of the school; and
- very good attendance and punctuality.

Commentary

9. The school, with very good support from parents, promotes attendance and punctuality exceptionally well, resulting in attendance levels much higher than the national average and almost no lateness.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	3.6
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.5

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

10. Nursery and reception children show good levels of personal, social and emotional development. Behaviour is very good in all age groups. Pupils form very good relationships with staff and other pupils. They collaborate well in group or paired activities, in lessons and at play. They are friendly, confident and articulate and have very positive attitudes towards learning. They willingly accept responsibility. No bullying or other forms of discrimination were seen during the inspection. Pupils show keenness in lessons and participate well in out-of-class activities. These attitudes, together with very high attendance, contribute substantially to high standards and very good achievement. The school facilitates this by the positive way in which it promotes good behaviour, treats pupils with respect, sets high expectations, provides opportunities to take responsibility, shows pupils that they are cared for and that staff regard them as important. The two exclusions shown in the following table were justified.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
No ethnic group recorded

No. of pupils on roll
104
1
1
25

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
2	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

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

11. The role models provided by the staff and their consistent rewarding of positive behaviour patterns through regular comment and weekly awards result in pupils knowing right from wrong, being eager to accept responsibilities and collaborating well. The school provides many opportunities for pupils' social development, for example, participation in village activities, charitable work and a new - but already flourishing - School Council. To all of these, pupils respond very well. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good. The choice of international figures such as Mother Theresa, Gandhi and Nelson Mandela to highlight personal qualities during assemblies, together with several displays throughout the school showing religious activities, raises pupils' awareness in a very positive way of issues to do with race, religion and culture. Pupils have very upbeat views of the school, which was clearly evident in discussions as well as in the results of a formal questionnaire. These positive opinions are fully justified.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very effective education for its pupils. The school offers a rich, stimulating, broad and balanced curriculum. Teaching and learning are particularly strong in the nursery and in Years 3 to 6. Staff work extremely well as a team to provide very good care, support and guidance for all pupils. The school's partnership with parents is very good. While there are no areas of significant weakness, the use of curriculum themes to stimulate pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding is not so well managed for pupils in Years 1 and 2 as for the rest of the school. The school already recognises planning and organisation for this group of pupils as a priority for development.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is very good in the nursery, good in the reception year, satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Years 3 to 6. The quality of assessment of pupils' work is good overall. It is good in the Foundation Stage and Years 3 to 6. It is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching promotes very successful learning in all subjects seen in Years 3 to 6;
- very good teaching promotes very successful learning in the nursery;
- the use of common tracking procedures throughout the school to predict and check pupils' progress is very effective;
- good teaching for reception children promotes good learning habits;
- marking is currently not as consistently efficient or effective as it could be; and
- some aspects of lesson management are not as efficient as they could be for Years 1 and 2.

Commentary

12. The teaching and support staff work very well as a team. This is very much due to the highly effective leadership of the headteacher and deputy, both through informal support and through the formal challenge of annual performance management reviews.
13. Common strengths in teaching across the school include conscientious and effective planning and preparation, together with the use of a variety of teaching strategies and very good use of resources. All teachers have positive relationships with their classes. Pupils of all ages feel their teachers expect them to work hard and know they will receive help if they need it. They see their teachers as fair and find lessons interesting and fun.²
14. The sharing of learning objectives³ with pupils at the start of each lesson is routine throughout the school and effective. The use of the end of the lesson to summarise what has been learnt,

² This information comes from over 100 pupil questionnaires completed before the inspection.

³ 'Learning objectives' can best be described as 'what the teacher wants the pupils to learn in the lesson'. They may include gains in knowledge, understanding and/or skills. In the best learning, pupils know what they are trying to learn and by the end of the lesson have a clear picture of how much progress they have made towards

though present in the best lessons, is not common practice. Where teachers help pupils see what they have achieved, this moves learning forward very successfully. Where the summary review is omitted, this limits pupils' awareness of what they have learnt.

15. Teaching in the nursery is of consistently high quality and for reception pupils it is consistently good. Teachers understand the needs of young children and offer a structured balance of chosen and directed activities. The play activities have a purpose, so that teachers and assistants can encourage talking and thinking alongside the range of planned opportunities. The nursery teacher provides an excellent indoor and outdoor environment, offering stimulating play and learning opportunities. Children learn very successfully in both indoor and outdoor environments as a result of the adult observation and comment alongside their activities. Activities for reception children are also structured very carefully and the teachers' and assistants' warm relationships with children in both nursery and reception areas promote good learning.
16. The demands on the reception teacher in a class with Year 1 pupils and those on the Class 2 teacher, with a mix of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils, are difficult to balance. The use of different curriculum themes in the two classes does not support the teachers in addressing the very different needs of pupils through joint planning. Year 1 pupils need support in both classes to develop early writing and recording skills, while Year 2 pupils need greater challenge to improve their levels of independence, quality of presentation and the range of recording opportunities. The whole school staff is rightly addressing the teaching and curriculum planning issues involved as a main priority in its current year's improvement plan. Amid the common strengths listed above, aspects of teaching for Years 1 and 2 are not so strong as in other parts of the school. Class management, match of tasks to pupils' wide abilities and the pace and challenge of teaching are usually satisfactory, but occasionally need greater attention for pupils to achieve as well as they should.
17. One particularly effective element of teaching throughout the main school building is the use of radio microphones by all teachers. The sound system creates excellent acoustics in all classrooms. It enables all teachers to be heard clearly throughout each room without raising their voices and is also used effectively to help pupils read to the class or lead particular discussion points.
18. In the best lessons, teachers present ideas imaginatively and use their voices and faces expressively to present information, ask questions and encourage pupil comment and participation. This encourages very good learning, as pupils try to express their understanding or views in religious education or their mental strategies in mathematics lessons, for example and communicate these to the teacher and class. The teachers' enthusiastic approach puts across their interest in the subject matter, stimulating pupils' interest in turn. In the teaching in Years 3 to 6, a common strength is the setting of challenging tasks to pupils of all abilities, ensuring equality of opportunity for all. Pupils respond very well to this, aware of their teachers' high expectations and wanting to meet them. Teaching assistants give very good support to pupils with special educational needs within the class in these situations, questioning and prompting in small group situations to help move pupils' thinking forward or improve their recording. They also give good support to pupils in highly structured small group settings to strengthen and consolidate basic literacy and numeracy skills. Parent volunteers also contributed very effectively in two lessons observed. Following prior briefing with the teacher, in each situation, the parent was able to play a full part in supporting groups with the pre-arranged activity, considering carefully the selection of materials for a sound insulation experiment, for example. Higher attainers respond particularly well to their teachers' recognition of their abilities, setting out to show that they can meet the challenge set. The use of homework in Years 3 to 6 is also very effective in raising standards, particularly in pupils'

this. This is because the teacher shares the objectives at the start of the lesson and uses the end of the lesson to review what they have achieved and whether they have learnt what they set out to learn.

research, ICT and independent learning skills, as they complete projects over a period of time in order to present them to the class at school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 25 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	9	12	3	1	0	0

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

19. All teachers use assessment information well to organise pupils into ability groups for literacy and numeracy lessons and to predict the rate of progress expected in these subjects and science over the school year. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 use daily assessment very successfully to challenge and support pupils. Teachers in the nursery and reception use the Foundation Stage Assessment Profile⁴ very well to keep track of how well children are achieving in all areas of learning. Marking in pupils' exercise books is of varied quality and effectiveness. Written comments for older and more able pupils are effective, but not always an efficient way of responding to younger pupils or those of lower ability. Some recorded work, particularly by younger pupils, does not show sufficient improvement in presentation, as a result of either spoken or written comment by the teacher. The school has rightly set day-to-day assessment as a priority for attention in its development planning for the autumn term.
20. There has been good improvement in teaching since the last inspection, especially in ICT, where teachers previously lacked knowledge, skills and confidence. Teachers' command of the subject is now excellent and the regular deployment of a technician to work alongside teachers further enriches the learning opportunities. As a result, pupils are very enthusiastic and their learning in this subject is now very good.

The curriculum

Provision for the curriculum is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very broad curriculum is planned for all pupils, particularly for those in the Foundation Stage and Years 3 to 6, with good curriculum continuity for nursery and reception children;
- very good use is made of outside expertise to support pupils' learning in art and design, music and physical education;
- very good provision for outdoor play in the Foundation Stage;
- very good identification, monitoring and review of pupils with special educational needs;
- an outstanding range of extra-curricular opportunities;
- excellent opportunities for all children to experience learning outside the classroom;
- very good ICT resources, with the computer suite very well used;
- resources and accommodation are very good overall;
- current curriculum organisation creates barriers to planning for Year 1 teachers;
- the school has rightly focused on Years 1 and 2 making them a top priority for development; and
- not all teachers make reference to special educational needs provision in planning.

Commentary

21. The curriculum is very good. It is lively and exciting and fulfils all statutory requirements. All National Curriculum subjects and religious education are well planned, with good emphasis on English, mathematics and science. The balance of subjects is good. The arts, humanities

⁴ The *Foundation Stage Assessment Profile* has been introduced as a nationally agreed procedure for checking children's progress through the six areas of learning.

and physical activities are not neglected. For example, there are 'focus weeks' in art, artists who support school projects, visits to bring history, geography and religious education alive and a sports coach to promote high standards in physical education. Teachers plan for a structured programme of work in all subjects. This mostly meets the needs of both year groups in their classes.

22. A focus for inspection was the school's curriculum organisation for Year 1 pupils, the only year group split between two classes. The school has taken considerable care in allocating pupils to the two classes concerned and in ensuring that Year 1 pupils in both classes follow plans of work suited to their abilities. This includes arrangements for individual pupils to exchange classes where appropriate. However, the school's planned rotation of themes involves younger Year 1 pupils working in different contexts to the older group in the next class. This makes joint planning and assessment difficult for the two teachers and creates difficulties in checking how well each group of pupils is doing. While the curriculum in the rest of the school supports teachers' planning and organisation, for this year group, it creates barriers that need to be overcome. In some lessons the work planned for the class with pupils in Years 1 and 2 does not meet the needs of Year 1 pupils. An overuse of worksheets, for example, is one outcome of the current curriculum and teaching plan for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils in the same class. The school has rightly set the improvement of educational provision for Years 1 and 2 as the top priority in its current development plan.
23. The school has made excellent progress in its provision for ICT. The curriculum for each class is extremely well planned and the new suite is very well organised, enabling children to learn about the subject in its many contexts.
24. There is very good provision for children in the Foundation Stage. The curriculum is interesting and relevant to children's needs. It is very well planned to ensure that children constantly reinforce and extend their learning. For example, they learn about transport from role-play in the garage, from well-chosen books and through positional language using cars and roadways. This learning is enhanced through visits from fire fighters, from journeys on trains and through opportunities to re-enact these experiences in creative and imaginative activities. Improved links with the reception class include shared planning and some shared outdoor teaching time. The school has worked hard to improve the outdoor provision for nursery and reception children since the last inspection. It also provides excellent resources in the nursery. Both settings provide a wealth of learning opportunities.
25. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and ensures full access to the curriculum. Teaching assistants support pupils very well. They understand their needs and monitor their progress both within the classroom setting and in small groups withdrawn to focus on early literacy programmes. Very good individual education plans clearly outline the provision for each pupil and staff work hard to ensure that their needs are being met, although not all class teachers identify this provision in their weekly plans. All staff are experienced in delivering the curriculum support required and as a result pupils achieve as well as they can.
26. The extensive range of lunchtime and after-school activities is an outstanding strength of the school. Specialist coaching in football and inter-school competitions are very well supported. The choir performs at school events and participates in countywide functions, such as singing at St Alban's Abbey.
27. The school makes excellent use of the immediate locality and places further afield to enrich the curriculum and enhance pupils' learning. The youngest children visit the zoo and conduct traffic surveys in the safety of the village setting. Pupils in Years 1 and Reception re-enact a wedding at the local church and explore mini-beasts at a field centre. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 participate in orienteering and experience a range of outdoor activities during residential visits. This wealth of curriculum opportunity makes learning enjoyable for pupils of all ages.
28. Personal, social and health education is very good. This is because staff plan a range of opportunities for pupils' development in this area. They make effective use of 'circle time' to

talk about different social issues such as friendship and community responsibility. The provision for drugs awareness and for the teaching of sex and relationships education for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is good.

29. The school is generously staffed and there is a good balance between experienced and recently qualified teachers. The school benefits from a higher than average number of teaching assistants, who have clearly-defined roles in the classroom. They also make a valuable contribution by supporting children with special educational needs. Very good resources meet the demands of the curriculum and are very well used by staff to enhance pupils' learning.
30. The newly-refurbished accommodation and outdoor areas are safe and very attractive. There is adequate space for children to play and sit quietly on both paved and grassed areas and there is a range of outdoor play equipment, which is well used at lunchtimes. Classrooms are bright and attractive with a range of stimulating displays. Pupils benefit from classroom water supplies and from the excellent microphone systems, which allow every child to hear within the classroom.

Care, guidance and support

The health, safety and welfare of pupils are very well provided for. Individual and groups of pupils receive very good personal support and academic advice and guidance. Their views on the school are valued, regularly sought and, where possible, acted upon.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and support staff know pupils well and offer very good care and guidance;
- academic support is well targeted at individual needs;
- very effective procedures for supporting pupils with Special Educational Needs;
- very good systems for involving pupils in the school's planning and self-evaluation;
- health and safety and child protection procedures are effective; and
- Weston achieved the Healthy Schools Award in 2001.

Commentary

31. The high level of concern the school has for its pupils is evident in the measures in operation to promote safety, security, health, care and protection and general well-being. Pupils enjoy very good relationships with their teachers and with other school staff, who all contribute to the support they receive. Pupils receive very good academic advice and guidance based on effective assessment practices. Lesson plans make reference to specific tasks for individuals and groups, which are suited to their particular needs. Procedures, planning, guidance and monitoring for the support of pupils with special educational needs are all very good, underlining the school's commitment to inclusion. The views of pupils are important to the school. Every pupil in the main school can contribute suggestions about the school, which are debated by a School Council representing each class. This activity is taken very seriously by the school and by pupils. Actions are taken wherever possible. The questionnaire survey of pupils' views to assess its own provision resulted in a very high return and very positive feedback from pupils of all ages. Almost every pupil felt there was an adult they could go to if they felt worried.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a very good partnership with parents, who contribute in many ways to children's high achievements. Relationships with the local community are of a very high quality. The school enjoys very good links with other Hertfordshire schools and with the local education authority.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents and the local community make a positive contribution to the curriculum;
- the school's links with parents are effective, with swift response to any concerns;
- parents have positive views of the school;

- reporting on pupils' achievement and standards needs sharpening a little; and
- links with other schools and arrangements for induction and transfer are very good.

Commentary

32. The school enjoys very good support from parents, who contribute to many curriculum subjects and show considerable interest in their children's homework. There is an active Friends of Weston, which gives the school considerable financial support, for example, in its contribution to the new computer suite.
33. Weston is a small community, so parents' views are generally well known by the school. Parents' concerns are swiftly dealt with and teachers are always available for informal discussion. Within the very positive views of the school expressed by parents (both at the inspection meeting and through questionnaire replies) was a small level of concern regarding information about pupils' progress and homework. The school provides parents with very good information about general school issues and about curriculum content and homework. Parents receive three formal opportunities annually to discuss progress, which is well above statutory requirements. Annual pupil reports are comprehensive and teachers take great care to provide parents with a good diagnosis of pupils' abilities. However, the reports do not always give parents sufficient information to know how their children are doing in comparison with national expectations. The school makes good provision for homework overall and very good provision for pupils in Years 3 to 6. The inspection confirms the positive views expressed in all other areas.
34. There are very good links with the local community, which provides curriculum support through speakers and visits to local buildings.
35. There are very good arrangements for the acceptance of new pupils. Links with other schools are also very good, particularly through sporting and musical events for pupils and joint staff development opportunities for small schools arranged by the local education authority.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

This aspect of the school's work is very good. Both leadership and management are very good and are supported by good governance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteachers' leadership, with strong support from the deputy, motivates staff and ensures high aspirations for pupils;
- the headteacher and deputy have introduced efficient management systems, which support teachers in focusing on teaching;
- subject leadership and co-ordination in ICT is excellent;
- well-chosen priorities for improvement focus on the school's needs for the current year;
- action points in the development plan lack measurable outcomes that show benefit to pupils;
- the development plan does not put across a long-term strategy and vision;
- the governing body knows the school well, is involved in monitoring and gives good support to the school; and
- budget planning and management are very good, as is day-to-day administration.

Commentary

36. The headteachers' leadership is very good, as is the leadership of other key staff. The headteacher motivates, supports and inspires a hardworking staff team, who all contribute to the school's strongly inclusive ethos, where everyone matters and aspirations are high. Headteacher and deputy have developed effective management systems, including excellent strategies for managing workload and very good procedures for tracking pupils' progress, monitoring the quality of teaching and reviewing the performance of all staff. They analyse information from assessments and tests carefully and share this information with class

teachers to ensure that pupils are supported and challenged well. The deputy manages the provision for pupils with special educational needs very effectively and has created common assessment folders for all classes, increasing staff efficiency.

37. School development planning features well-chosen priorities and focuses very well on the school's needs for the current year, particularly curriculum organisation and management for pupils in reception and Years 1 and 2. The process of planning involves staff, governors and parents. In future it is set to involve pupils more, through the recently elected School Council.
38. Action planned for English and mathematics includes clear reference to the intended effect for the benefit of pupils. Action plans for other subjects and aspects of improvement planning lack measurable outcomes that show the intended benefit to pupils. A review of the school's very good improvements over the past three years shows the headteacher's drive, vision and clear sense of direction, but the current year's recorded plan does not put across a long-term strategy and vision to be shared by staff, pupils, governors and parents. The school's development of ICT since the last inspection is excellent. Staff expertise, resources and pupil achievement were unsatisfactory at the last inspection. They are now all very good. This is a result of the extremely successful combined efforts of the subject co-ordinator, headteacher and deputy.
39. The governing body gives good support. Most governors visit regularly and are involved in monitoring arrangements agreed with staff. Performance management targets for the headteacher are clearly linked to priorities for school development. Governing body procedures are efficient. The governors ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements. They are fully involved in budget planning and management. Together with the headteacher, they ensure that the school seeks to provide best value, by comparing results with Hertfordshire and similar schools, setting challenging targets for pupils, consulting widely during decision-making and looking for competitive prices for accommodation, grounds, resource and staffing development.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	351,421
Total expenditure	343,005
Expenditure per pupil	2,719

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	13,089
Balance carried forward to the next	21,505

40. Financial control and the budgeting process are very effective and support the school's curriculum priorities. Day-to-day administration is excellent.
41. The headteacher provides an example of excellent practice in the measures introduced to relieve staff of stress by providing time for curriculum management and easing workload. These offer imaginative interpretation and implementation of the government's Workforce Reform initiative.

EXAMPLE OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

The implementation of Workforce Remodelling has resulted in raised standards, better teaching, particularly in PE and ICT, increased management time and reduced stress.

- The school engages a sports coach to complement PE teaching, giving each class teacher a guaranteed hour to perform other duties.
- The headteacher relieves the deputy and subject co-ordinators to allow time for planning, monitoring and review, releases teachers to mark assessment tests and arranges for many clubs to be run by non-teachers.
- A designated teaching assistant supports display and filing after school.

- An ICT technician troubleshoots and supports teaching.

A direct impact of the initiatives on pupils has been to raise standards in PE and ICT. The measures empower staff to perform their managerial, planning or assessment responsibilities effectively. They reduce stress, enabling teachers to spend less personal time on administration, leaving energy for imaginative teaching.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good** overall. There is very good provision in personal and physical development and in the range of opportunities for learning about the world.

42. Children enter nursery with attainment that is mainly above average in all areas of learning. They make very good progress in the nursery and good progress in the reception year. Children of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve well because the curriculum is well planned to build on skills, knowledge and understanding consistently and because adult support is well organised. The curriculum is enhanced through a range of visits and visitors. Children meet fire fighters, conduct a traffic survey in the village and are planning a train journey as part of their topic on transport. These experiences provide children with opportunities to meet and interact with different people and to explore the environment beyond their immediate locality. The school has worked hard and very successfully to improve outdoor learning opportunities for nursery and reception children since the last inspection. Children also benefit from improved links between the nursery and the reception class. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator supports the work of her colleagues in the reception class effectively and has rightly identified assessment as an area for development this year.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good;
- children exceed standards for their age by the end of the reception year;
- children are encouraged to learn independently and use their environment with confidence;
- good opportunities for nursery and reception children to integrate with one another; and
- a range of well-planned opportunities for visitors and visits.

Commentary

43. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in the nursery. Staff work hard to develop children's independence by providing well planned activities, secure routines and good support. As a result, children use both their indoor and outdoor environments with confidence, they choose their own areas to work in and select their own equipment, displaying good levels of independence. Several good examples of this were found in the nursery, where children were observed freely accessing the wealth of activities available. All children are familiar with the routines, which enable most nursery children to come to school happily and settle quickly and confidently. In reception children greet the teacher in different languages and respond well to the range of afternoon activities, accessing the outdoor environment with confidence and great enthusiasm. In both classes children are provided with opportunities to work together. They make good progress and achieve well in this area. In the nursery, children share snack-time, they co-operate in using clay and play imaginatively. They benefit from shared story times and from caring and sensitive staff who make good use of their time to join in with their activities.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good;
- staff use every opportunity to develop and extend children's language skills and as a result they make very good progress in spoken communication;
- well chosen books and stories sustain children's interest and their enjoyment of books; and

- parents support their children's reading at home.

Commentary

44. Teaching and learning are good. Children respond very well to stories, eagerly participating and reacting by laughing or joining in with repetitive elements. This is a result of good teaching. Children enjoy planned opportunities to share books both in school and with an adult at home. Well-chosen books that relate to their topic work hold children's interest and teachers develop their understanding through questioning and discussion. Children listen well to stories and to class and group discussions because they are interested in the chosen topic. Staff are enthusiastic and challenge children with well-directed questions. Nursery staff make time for children to talk. During their daily snack, they make conversation as they eat; in role-play they book cars into the garage; during outdoor play children are introduced to the vocabulary of direction. Children confidently talk in class discussions because staff have created an environment which values their contributions and where they feel safe and secure. Reception children speak clearly. They respond using full sentences and good detail. There was no opportunity to observe children's writing in nursery, although provision is made in role-play and staff plan for children to experience writing for different purposes. In reception, children hold their pencils correctly and are learning to form recognisable letters because they are well supported by appropriate tasks and levels of support. Children achieve well overall.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good;
- good use of adults to support small group teaching and ensure understanding; and
- wide range of activities reinforce learning and help children to make good progress in this area.

Commentary

45. Teaching and learning are good. In nursery, staff plan for a range of activities to help children learn about positions. They use cars and roadways, follow directional instructions from one another and manoeuvre their outside equipment along a particular route. As a result of this good provision and teaching, all children are making good progress with higher attaining reception children distinguishing between left and right. Children achieve well and by the end of their reception year exceed the expectations for their age. This is because staff make effective use of their time to target small groups for focused work, which enables them to respond to individual needs and to ensure understanding. The nursery nurse works very effectively alongside children stimulating discussion. In reception, children use precise vocabulary relating to length in response to well-phrased questions and prompting by the teacher. They learn to compare long and short items through practical explorations and because there are good explanations from the teacher.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good;
- very good use of visitors and visits to support learning;
- a range of very good activities to extend children's understanding;
- very good use of ICT facilities ensures children achieve very well in this area; and
- children learn from first hand the needs of other living things.

Commentary

46. Provision in this area of learning was sampled. Teaching is very good. The environment is full of opportunities for children to learn about the world in which they live. As a result of the stimulating provision, children achieve very well in this area. They look after pets and learn

about their needs, use the immediate environment to identify traffic and talk to fire fighters to find out more about their role. In the nursery, children collect, touch and compare seasonal objects and compare the properties of clay and sand. In reception, children experiment in water. All children benefit from the school's computer facilities and from the expertise of knowledgeable staff. They manipulate the mouse to complete simple programs and in reception, children have individual help to explore font size and colour and to add borders around their names. Children design plans for vehicles by observing the features of a car and use a range of tools to manipulate dough and to cut and paste.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good;
- very good opportunities for outdoor play for nursery and reception children;
- very good resources - particularly for nursery; and
- well planned activities to extend children's learning.

Commentary

47. Children make very good progress in this area because they have a wealth of learning opportunities to balance, swing and slide. They travel through tunnels, climb on tyres and negotiate pathways. Resources are excellent for supporting children's physical development. They manipulate trikes, scooters and cars and throw balls at targets. During games, reception children refine their ball skills of throwing, catching and aiming, because the teacher demonstrates good techniques and provides different opportunities for children to practise and consolidate their skills. Overall, teaching is very good in this area and all children achieve as well as they can.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching stimulates children's imagination through first hand observations;
- good opportunities for role-play in the nursery;
- wide range of resources;
- insufficient structure for older reception children to extend role-play; and
- very good specialist teaching of music.

Commentary

48. It was not possible to make a judgement about the teaching and learning in all aspects of this area. However, examples seen show good teaching and learning. Children achieve well. They engage in imaginative play with one another in the garage because this relates well to their topic on transport; they are well motivated and eager to use the stimulating resources. During outside play, children re-enact crossing the road, using the zebra crossing and lollipop person to help. There were no opportunities to observe reception children playing imaginatively, but the indoor and outdoor provision requires additional challenge to direct their play and further develop their imagination. Very good teaching in music means that all children enjoy contributing and joining in with these lively and stimulating sessions. They are appropriately well linked to the school's topic and this adds to the excitement and interest shown by children.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good achievement results in high standards in reading by Year 6;
- good achievement results in above average standards in writing by Year 6;
- assessment is used well to track pupils' achievement;
- the school has worked hard and successfully to improve some aspects of provision, in particular, boys' reading and writing;
- good weekly planning identifies the learning needs of all pupils;
- teachers plan interesting work that enables pupils to record in different ways;
- good support for pupils with special educational needs through a range of programmes and from small group teaching;
- additional time allocated to guided reading allows for more focused support;
- marking is not consistent and does not identify areas for further development;
- some provision is unsuitable for Year 1 pupils; and
- some missed opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their speaking and listening skills.

Commentary

49. Standards in national tests have fluctuated in recent years but have generally been high. In the current Year 2, standards are average overall and in Year 6 they are above average. Given the good standards at the start of Year 1, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. The school works hard to monitor the standards reached by all pupils in the school to ensure that they are making appropriate progress. Staff are developing systems to ensure more detailed tracking and analysis of pupils' progress in all aspects of English. Procedures for recording day-to-day assessments and marking are also the focus for development. Currently, pupils have insufficient knowledge of what they need to do to improve further.
50. 'Boys' writing' was an area of focus for the inspection. Work in books and in lessons shows that boys achieve as well as they can in writing. The school has given very close attention to this area and has introduced resources and planning suggestions to motivate boys in their writing. This is particularly successful when writing is linked to other curriculum areas, for example, when pupils follow their own lines of enquiry in history or describe life for a Greek oarsman in 490BC.
51. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in all year groups because work is well planned to meet their learning needs. They receive good support from teaching assistants who are appropriately experienced and trained and have a good understanding of the pupils in their care. There are good systems for identifying pupils' special needs and staff work hard to monitor their achievement, particularly in withdrawal group work. Throughout Years 3 to 6 teachers successfully implement the 'TRACKS' system to support pupils. This results in good learning and achievement.
52. In Years 1 and 2 there is both good and satisfactory teaching. In Years 3 to 6 teaching is consistently good or very good, resulting in good achievement by all pupils. Throughout the school teachers use the National Literacy Strategy successfully and plan a structured programme of work to meet the needs of both year groups in their classes. Weekly planning shows effective groupings for the different ages and abilities and as a result, most pupils achieve as well as they can.
53. Years 3 to 6's pupils' recorded work is generally neat and well presented. There is evidence of a wide range of opportunity for pupils to explore different presentations such as charts, newspaper formats, poems and screenplays. Pupils use varied and interesting writing for the task. Recorded work suggests that older children are very motivated, partly because teachers use positive marking techniques which acknowledge their effort and encourage all pupils to take pride in their work. Written work by younger children shows a range of reasons for writing. They devise class books, analyse characters, write letters and review favourite books. Their presentation is generally untidy and this is not addressed in marking. Their recorded work is mostly in worksheet format, which does not always reflect the different ages and needs

in the class, resulting in work that is too difficult for some younger pupils and inhibits their progress.

54. All pupils seem to enjoy books. There are good arrangements for older and younger pupils to read together and they are well supported with their reading at home. The library makes good use of pupils' own research booklets, which are displayed for use by others. This gives a purpose to their work and values their contributions. Younger pupils enjoy listening to stories. They willingly join in with the repetitive elements, laugh at relevant places and comment where appropriate. Pupils of all abilities are eager to share their books and show a good understanding and enjoyment of the story.
55. In all lessons pupils are encouraged to contribute and their views and opinions are sought. As a result they speak confidently to the class and most listen and respond to the views of others. In Years 5 and 6, pupils speak in the way adverbs describe, for example, wearily, timidly or angrily. In Year 1, pupils take on character roles in their story. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are generally good, but could be extended through more planned opportunities to speak for different purposes, including drama.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

Teachers plan a range of opportunities to use English in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils use these well, particularly in Years 3 to 6, to apply their reading and writing skills in science, mathematics, geography, history and religious education. Some effective application of pupils' literacy skills was seen in Years 1 and 2, with good use of ICT to support writing. Over-reliance on worksheets limits opportunities for pupils to develop early writing skills in other subject contexts. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 organise very effective homework research opportunities, which effectively promote reading and writing, as well as encouraging pupils to develop independent learning skills. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 make good use of their ICT skills by combining text and graphics to produce a newspaper. Those in Years 5 and 6 prepare an interview with a Greek sailor. Pupils throughout the school have very good opportunities to speak during circle times, in personal, social and health education lessons and when looking at citizenship. The School Council offers a positive forum for debate, both within meetings of representatives and during reporting back to classes.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities achieve very well overall;
- standards in Years 3 and 6 are well above average and in Year 5 they are very high;
- teaching in numeracy lessons is good overall and very good in Years 3 to 6, where pupils of all abilities are supported and challenged extremely well;
- the use of mathematics in other subjects is very well developed;
- occasionally, work is not sufficiently well matched to pupils' abilities;
- the school makes good use of ICT to support pupils' learning in mathematics; and
- targets for learning are not yet shared with pupils as successfully as in reading and writing.

Commentary

56. Standards in national tests in Year 2 and Year 6 have been consistently high in recent years, even in year groups where several pupils have special educational needs. The school's success is due to very good teaching of mathematics, with an emphasis on mental and oral practice, practical use of mathematical apparatus, especially with younger pupils and a challenge for pupils to explain their mathematical calculations to their class, group or partner. Pupils are achieving at least as well as expected and often make very good progress, achieving beyond expectations as a result of the very effective and challenging teaching.
57. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 encourage pupils to explain how they have worked out their answers to sums and to written mathematical problems. These techniques require pupils to think about

their mathematics and to use their knowledge well enough to explain their understanding. In Years 5 and 6 pupils successfully compose their own mathematical problems, requiring certain forms of calculation, to challenge their classmates. Pupils in all classes use short daily sessions to develop and consolidate their mental knowledge of number patterns and relationships.

58. Teachers throughout the school use the National Numeracy Strategy successfully to plan work for both year groups in their classes. They prepare resources conscientiously and organise groups carefully in line with pupils' assessed abilities. Occasionally the planned lesson does not challenge pupils sufficiently and activities used do not take pupils' learning forward sufficiently. In this situation, pupils do not concentrate so well. In the main, however, the match of challenge and support stimulates pupils to think hard and work at a good pace.
59. Teaching assistants are deployed well during group activities, but not always during initial class teaching sessions and final summing up discussions. Assistants work particularly effectively alongside small groups of pupils within the class who need extra support to help them express and record their understanding. Teachers in all classes plan lessons carefully and share at the outset what they want pupils to learn. They do not always use the end of the lesson to involve pupils in summarising what they have learnt, in order to give them a sense of achievement and build their own picture of how well they are doing. The school shares with parents and pupils the targets set for each year group by the National Numeracy Strategy, but teachers do not yet focus pupils' minds on specific group and individual targets, as they do in reading and writing.
60. Older pupils' recorded work is usually neat, with the teacher's written marking comments giving due praise or requiring response from pupils. Younger pupils' recorded work is appropriately mainly in published workbooks, with the use of squared exercise books introduced gradually. The choice and use of workbook and worksheet exercises is occasionally good, where pupils fill in answers alongside practical tasks that require focused thought, but also occasionally unhelpful, where time-consuming colouring and cutting does not take learning forward.

Mathematics across the curriculum

Teachers plan plenty of opportunities for pupils to use mathematics in other curriculum areas. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make simple charts to record information in their science work and make very good use of the ICT suite to record information about shoe size, hair and eye colour and other personal attributes. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 apply their mathematical knowledge successfully in science, design and technology, geography and history, guided well by their teachers to record their findings accurately and present them neatly. Older pupils develop data-handling skills in the computer suite and design spreadsheets with formulae to calculate costs of multiple articles.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high;
- pupils of all abilities achieve very well overall;
- teaching in science is very good, stimulating pupils to learn very successfully through investigative work;
- displays and events such as Science and Technology Week raise the profile of the subject and show how enjoyable the school makes it; and
- development plans lack reference to pupils' achievement and standards.

Commentary

61. Last summer approximately three-quarters of the pupils in Year 6 reached standards higher than those set for pupils of their age. Every year since the previous inspection standards reached at Weston by 11-year-olds have been above or well above the national average. One

year, the results were in the top five per cent of schools nationally. It is clear that the school's focus on making the subject interesting and enjoyable through practical activities has paid dividends. Good results have been achieved by pupils in Year 2, where teacher assessments show all pupils reaching the standard for their age in each of the last two years, with around a third achieving higher each year.

62. Pupils' work in books, on displays and in classes shows continued high quality teaching and learning. Recorded work is well presented. Pupils express themselves clearly, applying their literacy skills as they set out how their experiments are to be conducted, what they observe and what they find out. Pupils make very good use of data-handling skills, tables, graphs and diagrams, applying their mathematical knowledge and skills in purposeful contexts. Pupils of all ages make use of ICT to enter information and create charts. Older pupils use more advanced skills to label diagrams and to research information linked to scientific studies.
63. In the one lesson sampled, pupils in Years 5 and 6 responded enthusiastically to their teacher's challenge to discover how to muffle unwanted sound, following the receipt of a fax from a company requiring help with sound insulation. The imaginative and clear presentation of the task, the support for pupils with special educational needs by a teaching assistant and the additional provision of a well-briefed parent to discuss with groups the choice of materials for testing, all contributed to a highly effective lesson. Pupils worked in collaborative pairs to design their experiment, with everyone achieving extremely well as a result of the concentration and enthusiasm generated by the teacher's planning, organisation and high expectations.
64. All teachers display pupils' work very effectively. Particularly striking are the displays throughout the school of work from the science week, involving visiting experts working with pupils and their teachers at the end of the summer term. The creation of a range of artefacts from a specific plastic material followed a series of tests to ascertain the material's properties. The competition to land an egg safely following its parachute leap from the school roof showed how serious learning can be real fun.
65. In the context of a very strong subject, one area for development is the plan for future action, which refers only to tasks for teachers and lacks reference to targets expected for pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the subject are excellent;
- pupils in all year groups are achieving very well and standards among older pupils are above expectations for their age;
- teaching is of consistently high quality, with teachers' subject knowledge backed by very good technical support;
- resources are very good; and
- development planning lacks reference to measurable benefits for pupils.

Commentary

66. The school has made excellent improvement in this area, which was the main issue to be addressed following the last inspection. In 1998, pupils' achievement was unsatisfactory, teachers' subject knowledge was weak and resources were poor. The subject has undergone a complete transformation. The new ICT suite has been in place just over a year. All teachers at the school are fully trained in the subject and use ICT proficiently to research and plan lessons, to produce information for pupils and parents, to record pupils' progress and to enhance the quality of display in their classrooms. Their teaching shows confident command of the subject and very good knowledge of how to support and challenge pupils in each year group. The curriculum for each class is very well planned, the use of the suite is very well organised and the provision of a technician to both troubleshoot and offer additional teaching

support gives excellent value for money. The excellent recent improvement is due to excellent leadership and management, with credit for this shared by the subject co-ordinator, headteacher and deputy.

67. As this was the school's major weakness, it was chosen as a main focus for the current inspection. All but one class was observed working in the suite. In every case, from nursery to Years 5 and 6, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieved very well as a result of high quality teaching. Teachers make excellent use of the projector to demonstrate skills to the class and pupils collaborate very successfully two to a computer to show that they have followed the instructions. Teachers extend higher attaining pupils by challenging them to apply what they have learnt in different ways or by taking them a step further. Pupils concentrate fully during their time in the suite and show by their application, their questions when they don't understand and their delight in achieving what's required, that they are thoroughly enjoying their learning. Pupils' positive response and high achievement match teachers' high expectations. The school has initiated assessment of pupils' abilities this term. Its action planned for the subject does not contain measures for establishing the success of its much-improved provision.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

Because teachers use the suite so successfully to teach ICT skills and are knowledgeable about the possibilities of its application, they make very good use of the subject in many contexts. The school's broad and exciting curriculum offers a wide range of opportunities. Older pupils use spreadsheets and younger pupils plot information on graphs in mathematics. Older pupils use the Internet to research in history, geography and religious education, word-processing. They use desktop publishing skills in English and creative packages to explore artistic effects. They use ICT to apply both numeracy and literacy skills in design and technology and science. Many pupils in Years 3 to 6 have made expert use of ICT during homework research projects, presenting their information booklets and biographies attractively for sharing with their classmates in the school library. The introduction of control technology with the support of the technician and the use of ICT in religious education to make a virtual tour of a mosque are two exciting illustrations of the skill, enthusiasm and imagination with which this subject is presented at Weston school in 2003.

HUMANITIES

History and geography

Provision in history is **good**.

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and understanding of subject needs;
- appropriate plans for development;
- very good use of ICT in Years 3 to 6;
- good resources for both subjects;
- very good use of visits to support learning; and
- insufficient reference to standards in improvement planning.

Commentary

68. Humanities are the main focus for the school's curriculum development this year. The co-ordinators of both subjects have worked hard together to plan a programme for development that will ensure a more consistent approach to planning, teaching and assessment. The school follows national guidelines to provide schemes of work for both subjects. These have recently been revised to allow for more appropriate skill development throughout all year groups. Development planning does not yet refer clearly to the intended, measurable benefits for pupils, however.
69. The subjects were not a focus for the inspection, but displays throughout the school, pupils' books and folders, sample lessons and discussions with the co-ordinators show that the

teaching and learning in both subjects is very good in Years 3 to 6. This is because pupils' work shows very good standards of presentation in detailed studies of history topics such as 'Ancient Greece' and 'Ancient Egypt', where pupils are starting to follow their own lines of enquiry. They interview a Greek soldier, recall life as a sailor and write their own messages in Hieroglyphics. All pupils' work is marked with positive comments, valuing their efforts and Years 3 to 6's pupils are starting to identify their own learning at the end of each topic. In the one lesson sampled in history, Year 5 and 6 pupils were learning to use sources of evidence to find out aspects of life in the 1950's, 60's and 70's. All pupils maintained good focus during the lesson. They are enthusiastic and interested in the topic. This is due to very good teaching, which makes expert use of artefacts, displays and resources to stimulate learning and to support and extend pupils' ideas.

70. In Years 1 and 2 there is both good and satisfactory teaching in history and geography. Overall pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In history, pupils learn about life in the 1900's, comparing toys and homes and identifying differences in children's clothes, but their recorded work relies too much on worksheets, which do not always meet the different learning needs within the class. Work is not always marked, giving no indication for pupils as to how well they have achieved.
71. In geography two lessons were sampled in Years 1 and 2, with very good and satisfactory teaching. Teaching that is very good engages all pupils through well-planned, practical activities that appeal to their interests and previous experiences. As a result they achieve very well. They recognise road signs - *'It's a dead end, I've seen it at church'* - and place them on a floor map explaining their reasons. Year 2 pupils achieved well during whole class discussions about natural and made items found on the beach, and their learning was extended in a summing-up plenary, where pupils gave sensible reasons why some resorts have more 'left items' than others. However, pupils' tasks rely too much on the completion of worksheets, which are often inappropriate for some younger pupils in the class.

Religious education (RE)

Provision in RE is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and standards among older pupils are beyond those expected;
- very good, imaginative teaching, founded on a very well planned curriculum, ensures that pupils are interested and learn successfully;
- staff use resources, visitors and visits effectively; and
- the subject has a high profile and is used well to promote understanding and tolerance and raise awareness of other faiths and cultures.

Commentary

72. Older pupils show a mature understanding and good knowledge in what they know *about* religions studied and what they learn *from* them. Pupils' books show well-presented information about Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Alongside the knowledge recorded, pupils express their own views and use their class and group discussions to record what they are learning from their studies *about* religions. They list, for example, ultimate and non-ultimate questions, they record a *destruction* story based on consideration of what appears careless human activity today to match the seven-day creation story. Displays show pupils in Years 1, Reception and Nursery at a wedding in Weston Church, playing roles of bride, groom and attendants, with the local vicar helping pupils understand the significance of the ceremony and vows.
73. Visits, recently to a nearby Sikh Gurdwara and shortly to the Hindu Temple in Watford, help bring home to pupils the reality of current practice of religions other than Christianity in Britain today. The school makes good use of the subject to raise pupils' awareness of the multicultural and multi-faith nature of British society and to introduce discussions on race and culture. Collective worship is also used to support pupils' learning. During the inspection, for

example, the focus was on 'personal qualities' and staff used internationally famous people from a range of cultures to show examples of courage, faith, perseverance, patience and care.

74. In the sample lesson observed, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were introduced to Buddhism through the use of a video. The teacher introduced this in a way that presented a cliff-hanger expectation among the pupils, who watched intently to see what it was that the young prince discovered to change his life outside his father's castle walls. Their comments during the initial discussion showed very mature thought and showed a common attitude of respect for and interest in religions. Pupils' successful achievement stems from the teachers' sensitive approach to the subject and thoughtfully-worded questioning, which follows thorough research, planning and preparation of lessons.
75. Leadership and management of the subject is very good. The curriculum is very well planned, with every opportunity taken to present lessons in an interesting way. Staff use artefacts and the local church imaginatively. The local vicar contributes very effectively. Visits further afield to see other faiths in practice enrich pupils' knowledge and understanding. The use of a local authority ICT package to make a virtual visit to a mosque and the recognition or celebration of various religious festivals also contribute to the very effective school adaptation of the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus. The school's emphasis on first-hand experience and discussion ensures an inclusive approach to the subject, which benefits all pupils and is particularly beneficial for those with special educational needs. The school is looking to involve visitors from other faiths more as it seeks to improve its already good emphasis on pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

The provision for art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes good use of visiting artists to support teaching through school projects;
- very good links with other curriculum areas;
- very good extra-curricular provision, led by local artist;
- good use of 'focus weeks' in art and design for the whole school, with emphasis on developing skills;
- insufficient focus on standards and the co-ordinator does not fulfil a monitoring role at present; and
- little evidence of the influence of artists, craftspeople and designers from different times and cultures in Years 1 and 2.

Commentary

76. The school has improved the provision for art and design since the previous inspection. Pupils have benefited from the expertise of visiting artists and from contributing as a whole school to projects such as wall mosaics and the designing and making of a 'Midsummer Night's Dream Carpet'.
77. Staff use national guidance materials to support their planning. This, together with the support from artists in residence, provides pupils with a relatively broad curriculum in art and design. The school is introducing procedures for assessing pupils' achievement and this should provide the co-ordinator with a better indication of the standards being achieved.
78. Art and design was not a focus for this inspection. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and are still judged in line with expectations for pupils in Years 2 and 6. Very good use is made of artists and their specialisations to extend the learning opportunities offered. Both pupils and staff benefit from contributing to school projects.

79. The lesson sampled displayed good elements of teaching for Year 1 children. They develop an awareness of the features of a car through first hand observations of cars and successfully use this knowledge to plan and design their own vehicle. Staff use their time well to talk to pupils about their work and to provide additional support if required. Pupils have access to a well-planned learning environment, which provides opportunities for them to manipulate malleable materials and to use a range of tools for cutting, printing, squashing and rolling. As a result of this good teaching all pupils are achieving well. Pupils' work in Years 1 and 2 shows satisfactory achievement in a range of pattern making, printing and collage. In Years 3 to 6 sketchbooks show good achievement. In Years 3 and 4, pupils develop their skills by exploring techniques involving tone, shade and texture and design stencils for printing. Teachers use opportunities to apply pupils' artistic skills in other areas of the curriculum and this is particularly evident in Years 3 to 6. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 had decorated an Egyptian Mummy, using Hieroglyphics and patterns and pupils in Years 5 to 6 used their knowledge of the Ancient Greeks to design vases and masks.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well and standards are above national expectations;
- the teaching of designing and making skills is good;
- the school gives the subject a high profile, through events such as the Science and Technology Week, attractive displays of work and visits; and
- action planned for the subject does not refer to its planned impact on pupils.

Commentary

80. The subject was not a focus for inspection, but displays throughout the school, samples of pupils' design work from all year groups, discussion with the co-ordinator and a sample lesson observation show clearly that teaching and learning are good overall and in some instances very good. Standards reached by pupils in Years 3 to 6, both in the design and the realisation of their plans, are in general above those expected for pupils of these ages. Pupils achieve well because the curriculum is well organised and teachers make very good use of national planning materials. Teachers' expectations are high in this subject as in all others.
81. Pupils' recorded work in their design and technology books shows clear presentation of diagrams, labels and explanatory ideas. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 already evaluate their designs to see what they liked best, what worked best, what was difficult and what did not work. Their finished artefacts and models show care in making. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 build successfully on these early skills. Links with science, planned thoughtfully by teachers, develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and practical skills. Pupils throughout the school were urged to design, make and test their products during the Science and Technology Week only after they had investigated the scientific properties of materials or the effects of gravity, upthrust and air resistance for example. Throughout the school, staff make good use of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in the context of design and technology. With the successful use of the ICT suite, the school is beginning to develop older pupils' understanding of control technology to link understanding with this subject. The co-ordinator's action plan lists items for attention, but does not refer to the intended impact or benefit of this for pupils. Otherwise, the subject has been successfully led and managed and contributes considerably to pupils' personal and social development, as much of the work demands collaboration with others.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning ensures high standards and very good achievement for all pupils in Years 5 and 6;

- very good opportunities for singing, recorder playing and other instrumental tuition;
- good opportunities for pupils to perform in school and at community and inter-school events;
- insufficient attention to music from a range of cultures; and
- development planning lacks reference to pupils' achievement and standards.

Commentary

82. The subject was not a major focus for inspection. In the lesson sampled, in Years 5 and 6, the quality of teaching and learning was very good. Standards of singing by the whole class and of understanding the effects of music and lyrics were well above average. From attendance at assemblies it is clear that the quality of singing is good, with pupils showing very good attention to diction and dynamics in their hymn singing. A well-attended choir, run by two of the teachers, performs at village events and festivals at St Alban's and Stevenage. The two teachers also run recorder groups, one for beginners and one for more advanced players. The school engages an instrumental teacher to provide tuition on a range of brass instruments and many pupils learn to play instruments privately. A summer music afternoon offered very good opportunity for pupils to share their talents before parents and the rest of the school.
83. One or two parents expressed the view that music provision is very good for those interested but that standards could be higher for singing and music making by all pupils. Other parents share the school's view that all pupils receive good opportunities to develop musical knowledge and understanding and to develop performance skills. Though limited, inspection evidence shows that the music curriculum is well planned and covers the full National Curriculum programmes of study. In the lesson observed, pupils of all abilities achieved very successfully as a result of the teacher's high expectations, very good choice and use of resources and very well focused questioning. All pupils participated enthusiastically, singing the Skye Boat Song very tunefully and expressively, before considering the composers' intended effects of lyrics and music in a song from Oklahoma. Some very good examples of pupils' appraisal and interpretation of music were observed from Years 3 and 4. Pupils had listened to Saint Saens and Benjamin Brittain and recorded their thoughts. They also responded artistically to Grieg's 'Morning Mood' by creating pictures with titles such as 'a day in the park', 'the dolphin sea' and 'a morning sunlight'.
84. During the inspection, Indian music played daily at the start and close of assemblies. The co-ordinator is aware that the school does not yet do enough to introduce pupils to a range of world music. As in other subjects, the development plan lacks reference to the school's aims for pupils. An agreed school assessment system has just been introduced. Overall, the subject has a high profile and the provision seen is very good.

Physical Education (PE)

Provision in PE is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good provision and achievement;
- standards are enhanced through a wide range of sporting clubs held out-of-school hours;
- a specialist sports coach teaches games throughout the school;
- very good opportunities for older pupils to participate in competitive sports;
- effective annual reviews of provision identify appropriate priorities for development;
- insufficient focus on standards in the school development plan;
- provision for dance is not as strong as for other aspects of the subject; and
- resources for most areas of the subject are good, but hall apparatus will need replacing in the longer term.

Commentary

85. The school has improved provision since the last inspection by planning for a broad curriculum, which makes very good use of a visiting sports coach for teaching games skills and for coaching other sporting activities after school. As a result, pupils with particular talents

and natural abilities are given opportunities to excel. In addition, pupils in Years 3 to 6 have the opportunity to experience a range of outdoor activities such as caving, quad biking and team building challenges during their annual residential visits. The school has rightly identified dance as an area requiring development and has plans to implement procedures for monitoring pupils' achievement in all aspects of physical education. The intended impact of these measures does not yet feature on the recorded development plan. Physical education apparatus in the hall is adequate but ageing. The school is aware that it will benefit from replacement within the next few years.

86. Physical education is rightly seen as a strength by the school. Standards are high. The curriculum places good emphasis on the teaching of all aspects of PE. The extensive range of extra-curricular opportunity indicates the value the school places on the subject.
87. Because no lessons were observed in Years 3 to 6 and none of the sports coaching lessons were timetabled during the inspection, it is not possible to make a judgement on the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers' planning shows good progression in all aspects of the National Curriculum requirements, including swimming. Evidence from parents' and pupils' comments suggests that teaching is good. It is clear from older pupils' participation in team games and the high take-up of club activities that pupils are very enthusiastic and achieve well in games, swimming, educational gymnastics and outdoor pursuits.
88. The two lessons sampled in Years 1 and 2 included both good and satisfactory elements of teaching and learning. The subject co-ordinator provides a good role model for teaching and has planned a well-balanced programme with a sufficient breadth of activities to be taught throughout the school. Pupils in Year 1 work enthusiastically in games and make good progress in developing their skills of throwing and catching. This is because the teacher demonstrates good techniques and has planned a range of activities for children to practise and improve their skills. In Year 2, children respond well to instructions from an audio tape, they follow music and combine simple body movements but have insufficient opportunities to evaluate their own work and that of others. Their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as others, as they are well supported by additional staff.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision is personal, social and health education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planned programme of work throughout the school with good continuity;
- the introduction of the School Council has enthused pupils and raised the subject's profile;
- each class has weekly sessions, showing the value placed on the subject; and
- good provision for sex and relationships education.

Commentary

89. The school has made good improvement in this area of its work since the last inspection. The range of work on display includes good examples of pupils' thinking about attitudes, respects and emotional responses, for example, a compliment tree in Years 3 and 4 and the exploration of feelings in Years 5 and 6. The school gives pupils of all ages an introduction to the workings of democracy and the importance of citizenship through its introduction of a School Council. Elected members from all classes take their responsibilities seriously and have already begun to contribute their thoughts and ideas. The school ensures that older pupils in particular have opportunity to show initiative and think about world citizenship in the context of raising funds for overseas charitable work. The school pays good attention to sex and relationships education and to drugs awareness through its well-organised programme of studies. Many lessons take the form of circle times, where pupils accept the rule that each speaks in turn and all respect the speaker's views.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2

Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2

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

The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

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

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