

INSPECTION REPORT

HAZELDENE LOWER SCHOOL

Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109506

Headteacher: Mr. D. Saunders

Lead inspector: Mr P. Sudworth

Dates of inspection: 20th - 23rd October 2003

Inspection number: 261408

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	432
School address:	Stancliffe Road Bedford
Postcode:	MK41 9AT
Telephone number:	01234 300100
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M. Lambert
Date of previous inspection:	12 th October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hazeldene is a large lower school on the eastern side of Bedford. It draws its pupils from nearby housing and further afield. There are more boys than girls with major imbalances in Years 3 and 4 in favour of boys. There is very little movement of pupils in and out of the school during any academic year. Most pupils are white British with about one-tenth of the pupils from other ethnic groups. No pupils have English as an additional language. Thirty-seven pupils have special educational needs for a variety of learning and behavioural difficulties, including ten pupils with statements. The percentage of pupils whose parents have claimed entitlement to free school meals is well below the national average. The attainment of the pupils on entry is above average. During the past year the school was led for much of the time by a temporary headteacher. The current headteacher took up post at the beginning of the autumn term preceding the inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9391	Norma Ball	Lay inspector	
23870	Andy Howe	Team inspector	Science, history, music
10226	Susan Senior	Team inspector	Foundation stage, information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, religious education (RE)
32383	Rosemarie Sadler	Team inspector	English, art and design, special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a good education for its pupils but with no room for complacency. The quality of teaching is mainly good. Pupils make good progress in reading and writing, mathematics and science and they achieve well in these subjects. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher is moving the school forward judiciously after some difficult challenges for the school in recent months. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' achieve well in reading and writing, mathematics, science and in most aspects of physical education.
- Very good co-ordination and provision in the foundation stage enable children to make good progress.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are not developed well enough both in English and across the curriculum.
- The overall quality of teaching, including the assessment of pupils' work, is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to work and behaviour are not good enough in some classes and affect learning.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual development needs improvement.
- There is a good breadth to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in response to the issues that were raised. There have been improvements in assessment, special educational needs provision and a better challenge in English. Staff have shown much commitment in maintaining well above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics in national tests. However, the proportion of very good teaching has fallen. Management of behaviour has faltered in some classes and pupils' attitudes are not as good in the main. A policy for able pupils is under review.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 2 results

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	All schools			Similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	A	A	A	A
writing	A	A	A	B
mathematics	A	A	A	B

*Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

Pupils' achievements are good. Children make good progress in the reception classes and exceed the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception. Pupils achieve well in reading and writing, science and most aspects of physical education and reach well above average standards by the end of Years 2 and 4. Pupils achieve well in mathematics in Years 1 and 2 and soundly in Years 3 and 4. Pupils' speaking skills are above average and listening skills average but they are not developed sufficiently. In other subjects, pupils start school with average attainment. Their achievements are satisfactory so, by the end of Years 2 and 4, they reach the standards expected for their age and the local expectations for religious education.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are nurtured well. The provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good and satisfactory for their spiritual development. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to their work are satisfactory. Some pupils do not always apply themselves as well as they should and they can be noisy during lessons. Pupils are punctual but attendance in the last academic year was unsatisfactory and below the national average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Teaching and learning are good overall; two-thirds of all lessons being good and occasionally better. Teachers have high expectations, which help to promote pupils' skills effectively in reading and writing. Their good assessments of pupils' progress help them to plan appropriate work for pupils' different needs. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. A well organised curriculum and a wide range of extra-curricular activities supports pupils' good achievements in a number of subjects. The staff care for the pupils well. The school has a strong partnership with the parents and the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of both leadership and management is satisfactory. The new headteacher is acting judiciously and leading well in the first few weeks of his headship and has a good perception of where the school needs to improve. The effectiveness of subject leaders is satisfactory in the main but in some subjects they have not rigorously scrutinised standards across the school to promote better standards. The work of the governing body is satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have largely positive views of the school but do not feel they are well enough informed about school events. The team agrees. They look forward to a more settled future after the recent changes in leadership. Most pupils enjoy their work but about one-quarter suggest their lessons could be more interesting and significant numbers who responded to the questionnaire have concerns about other children's behaviour.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Promote pupils' speaking and listening skills more effectively.
- Improve pupils' work attitudes and behaviour in some classes.
- Improve the provision for pupils' spiritual development.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Children in the foundation stage make **good** progress in all areas of their learning and achieve well. Throughout the school, pupils achieve well in reading and writing and reach well above average standards. Their achievements are good in science and physical education, and they attain well above expected standards. Years 1 and 2 pupils make good progress in mathematics reaching well above average standards. In Years 3 and 4 they achieve satisfactorily and their attainment is above average. In other subjects pupils achieve soundly in the main with a little underachievement in music in Years 3 and 4 due to a lack of teacher confidence in the subject.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make good progress in the foundation stage.
- Results in national tests at the end of Year 2 have been consistently well above average.
- Pupils achieve well in reading, writing, science, mathematics and physical education.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are not strong enough.

Commentary

1. The children in the foundation stage make good progress and achieve well in all areas of their learning. This is because of the strength in the leadership and management of the foundation stage, the well planned and imaginative curriculum and the way that the teachers seize on every opportunity to develop pupils' learning. The teachers challenge the able pupils well, teach reading effectively and provide good opportunities for speaking and listening. By the beginning of Year 1, a high proportion of the pupils exceed the national expectations for children of this age. Many have started reading early scheme readers and writing sentences independently.
2. The school has a good history of performance in national tests at the end of Year 2 and standards are similar to those previously reported across all subjects. In the last four years for which comparisons are available, pupils at the end of Year 2 gained well above average results in reading, writing and in mathematics. In 2003, the pupils also did much better than pupils in schools that serve areas of similar socio-economic circumstance. Boys do particularly well. Contrary to the national picture, in reading they have been doing almost as well as the school's girls. In writing, the girls have been doing better than the boys but the gap is narrower than that nationally. Boys have been doing particularly well in mathematics and not only outperforming the school's girls, who have been doing much better than girls nationally in the subject, but outpacing boys nationally by over two terms progress. This is due to their keenness to succeed and their enthusiasm for reading.
3. Pupils' skills in reading are a particular strength throughout the school and of a well above average standard. Pupils read expressively and have a good familiarity with the way books work. They are keen readers and develop a good knowledge of different authors. Writing, although not quite as strong as reading, is nevertheless well above average and pupils use their reading and writing skills effectively across the curriculum to research and to write accounts. Pupils' speaking skills are above average and listening skills are average but not of the same high order as reading and writing because teachers do not plan enough discussion in groups and pairs into lessons, and a significant number of pupils find listening difficult and they lose their concentration.
4. Teachers pay good attention to individual need and so pupils with special educational needs achieve well English and make good progress over time and during lessons. Pupils with statements of educational need achieve very well and make very good progress. Pupils who are more capable achieve well, and pupils from minority ethnic groups make similar rates of progress as those with similar abilities.

5. In mathematics, pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and reach well above average standards. Progress slackens a little in Year 3 because the pace of work is not always brisk enough. Progress picks up again in Year 4 but sometimes the same pace is set for all pupils, usually that of the higher ability set, and less able pupils sometimes struggle. Over time pupils make steady progress in Years 3 and 4 and achieve soundly. In science, pupils achieve well throughout the school, make good progress and their attainment is well above average.

6. Pupils achieve soundly in ICT. Standards are in line with expectations but they are beginning to rise as teachers find ways of dealing with the difficult shape of the suite accommodation, benefit from the new ICT initiative involving other schools and make good use of the expertise that accompanies the initiative. Year 4 pupils are making increasingly good use of ICT across the curriculum.

7. Pupils reach the expected standard in most other subjects and achieve soundly, although there was not enough evidence to judge attainment in design and technology and geography. There are pockets of good achievement, such as the good understanding of the periods they study in history and the development of enquiry skills and pupils' drawing skills in art. Pupils make good use of literacy across the curriculum, as when they are challenged to write in the role of historical characters. There is some underachievement in music lessons in Years 3 and 4 and this is due to a lack of teacher expertise and confidence. In physical education, pupils achieve well in dance, swimming and games because of the expertise of the staff, the specialist teaching and the good facilities. Pupils achieve soundly against the local requirements for religious education and reach expectations.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.7 (17.9)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	16.3 (15.8)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	17.7 (18.3)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 82 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils enjoy school and behaviour and attitudes to learning are **satisfactory**. Personal development, including the pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and attendance are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- At leisure pupils play well together.
- There are good opportunities for social, moral and cultural development.
- Pupils arrive punctually but the latest annual attendance statistics are below the national average.
- Pupils can be restless and lack concentration in a significant minority of lessons and so they do not achieve as well as they should.

Commentary

8. Pupils like school but attendance fell last year to below the national average. Parents are pleased with the standard of behaviour. The inspection found that overall behaviour was satisfactory because some pupils do not concentrate well enough and their attitude to work is casual. It is good in the foundation stage and the children have very good attitudes to their work.

9. In the replies to their questionnaire, a significant number of pupils felt that sometimes other children did not behave well. Around the school, pupils mainly behave well, play together happily and enjoy each other's company even though a few examples of inconsiderate behaviour were seen. Pupils know that bullying and aggressive behaviour are unacceptable but they can

sometimes be careless about the feelings of others and not listen well to what their classmates say in discussions. The school is developing clear rules about how everyone should behave and each class talks about and agrees its own rules. Through focused discussions with the pupils in personal, social and health education lessons, the school is beginning to help pupils to understand the importance of listening well, respecting and valuing each other and developing more positive attitudes to work and behaviour.

10. Attitudes and behaviour are not as good as previously reported. This is largely due to the restless and inattentive behaviour of some pupils in a number of classes. In a significant minority of lessons seen during the inspection and in assemblies, some pupils were restless, reluctant to concentrate and to remain focused on their work, or to listen attentively for any length of time. In the replies to the pupils' questionnaire, a number of pupils indicated that they did not always find their lessons interesting or fun. However, sometimes even in lessons that have a lively pace and really interesting material, some pupils drift off task and begin to chat or distract one another. This results in lost learning opportunities and pupils do not always work as well as they can. For example, in a Year 3 music lesson pupils at first worked well, thinking about how certain animals move and behave, but they became restless and disengaged when working in small groups. Despite the lively and engaging style of teaching and interesting work, they lost interest for some time and did not gain as much as they could from the lesson. Attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are generally good during lessons and they work hard. Skilful teaching assistants keep pupils focused on their work and encourage them to listen to the class teacher.

11. The promotion of cultural, social and moral development is not as positive as it was at the time of the last inspection but it is good nevertheless. Achievements are celebrated and the recent inauguration of the 'Treemendous Tree' on which their achievements are described is a popular and very visible focus for this. Older pupils take pride in their responsibility for caring for younger children in the playground and in some extra-curricular activities. All pupils have been consulted and involved in deciding the new school rules and, through the recently invigorated school council, they make a regular contribution to the running of their community. Such opportunities make a good contribution to the social and moral development of the pupils and help them to mature.

12. Pupils think about the needs of others and this is well reflected in the enthusiastic way in which they support various charities. During the inspection there was a strong emphasis in assemblies and personal, social and health education lessons on friendship and the strength of sharing with each other, as well as respecting the different skills and gifts which make each person unique. Pupils understand how important it is to be truthful and to be fair and share things. In a range of subjects, pupils gain a good understanding of other ways of life and cultures. Pupils learn about other faiths in RE and meet people who celebrate their faith in different ways. In one RE lesson, pupils were shown the Jewish Torah for the first time and were deeply interested in its special significance for the Jewish faith. The school is working with determination to extend the spiritual awareness of pupils, which is satisfactory overall because teachers are not yet sufficiently alert to the contribution of its provision across the curriculum.

13. The attendance picture had remained good since the last inspection until the most recent year when it fell below the national average. Attendance is carefully monitored and the school follows up any concerns about attendance efficiently. Punctuality is good.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.0	School data	0.2
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

Exclusions

There have been no exclusions.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	356	0	0
White – any other White background	42	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	24	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **good** education for its pupils. The quality of teaching is good, the curriculum is broad and rich and pupils are cared for very well.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good overall and often very good in the foundation stage. The use of assessment to inform future learning is good. Pupils' learning is good in the main, although some pupils could engage more productively in their learning and develop better listening skills.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching in the foundation stage is good.
- Teachers have high expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of marking and assessment of pupils' work is good.
- There is good provision for pupils who have special educational needs.
- Teachers do not question pupils enough nor engage them enough in focused group and paired discussion.
- Significant numbers of pupils do not concentrate well enough.

Commentary

14. The teaching is good in the main but there is less very good teaching than at the time of the previous inspection. Two-thirds of lessons observed were of good quality and a few were of a higher quality. It is best in the foundation stage because of the way that the teachers consistently seize upon opportunities to build on learning during the activities that the children engage in. Elsewhere in the school, it more consistently good in Years 1, 2 and 4. The consistency of good teaching throughout the school is most marked in English, mathematics, science and physical education. This is because the planning is thorough, resources are well prepared and used effectively to develop pupils' understanding and skills. Good attention is paid to catering for different pupils' needs, particularly in English and in part in mathematics. The teaching of physical education is good because of the skilled leadership of the subject and the well used specialist teaching. The overall good teaching contributes much to the good progress and achievements that the pupils make, particularly in English, mathematics, science and physical education.

15. Work is well planned for different needs in English throughout the school, but this is less consistent in other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in all subjects and they achieve well as a result. In English, spelling lessons led by the special educational needs co-ordinator and the Additional Literacy Strategy sessions led by teaching assistants provide pupils with good quality small group work. The special educational needs co-ordinator teaches pupils good strategies for learning spellings and uses a range of activities to make spelling fun. The teaching assistants are used effectively to support these pupils and the specialist teaching of small groups is well done. The individual education plans, which are of good quality, are referred to in planning pupils' work and this assists their progress.

16. Teachers plan their lessons well and have clear learning intentions, which they share with the pupils. However, they do not often assess with the pupils whether the learning intentions have been fulfilled and rarely remind the pupils of them in the middle of the lesson to refocus their attention. In Years 1 and 2, teachers often plan well for pupils' different abilities in mathematics. The setting arrangements in mathematics work well in part but, in Years 3 and 4, the work is too often geared to the able pupils and the pupils in the lower sets sometimes struggle.

17. Marking is usually accurate and up to date. Many teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and their written comments help the pupils to improve their work because it is informative and also encouraging. They use the results of previous assessments to set targets and use these effectively to review how well the pupils have done. Good analysis is made of the progress of boys and girls, and also of the questions the pupils have answered wrongly in tests, to inform future work. Teachers also note work that causes pupils problems and adjust their planning for the future as a result of this.

18. A weakness in teaching is the lack of purposeful discussion in groups and pairs. When this is attempted pupils are not given criteria or strategies to undertake such discussion effectively. This lack of opportunity is reflected in pupils' generally average speaking and listening skills. In many classes there is a small group of pupils who find listening difficult.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 55 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1(2%)	6 (11%)	29 (53%)	18 (33%)	1 (2%)	0(0%)	0(0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen. Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The curriculum

The school's curriculum provides **good** opportunities for learning and pupils achieve well. It meets the particular needs of most of the pupils. Enrichment activities provided outside lessons are **good**. The staffing complement and accommodation are **good**. Resources for learning are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and planned carefully to ensure thorough coverage.
- Good links are made between some subjects, so that skills in English, mathematics and ICT are applied in other subjects.
- Extra-curricular provision and activities such as the arts festival, enrich the curriculum.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Accommodation is good and enhances teaching.
- Staffing is good, with use of teaching assistants a particular strength.
- Not enough opportunities are planned for the teaching of speaking and listening skills.

Commentary

19. Good coverage of the national curriculum is achieved by thorough planning, based on national schemes of work. Additionally, pupils are given experiences that foster greater understanding of various faiths and cultures. A good feature of the curriculum is the way in which it has been adapted thoughtfully so that pupils learn from local sources. History work on Bedford and Bedford Castle and local historical characters, such as John Bunyan, ensures that the subject is taught in a way relevant to the pupils. The development of mapping skills in geography draws upon local features. Improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection have included alterations to the timetable to ensure sufficient time is given to practical subjects. The provision for personal, social and health education is developing satisfactorily. Visits and visitors further enhance the curriculum. The school has taken part in several curriculum innovation projects, which have developed links with other schools in information technology and developed the school's practice in marking. This has ensured that pupils receive feedback in all subjects according to their needs.

20. Effective links are made between some subjects. The use of ICT in recording graphs and charts in science and the good quality of writing found in history ensure key skills are being increasingly applied across the curriculum. However, there are insufficient planned and structured opportunities to develop speaking and listening in other subjects. A significant number of pupils find it hard to listen and also to co-operate in discussion in groups.

21. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in planning, assessment and provision in information and communication technology. In a good initiative in ICT, the pupils are working with the lower school, which shares the same site, and the middle school pupils to develop a website for the local museum with a major focus on art. This will include teaching ideas and planning materials for all schools to use. This initiative is already making a significant contribution to improving pupils' ICT skills.

22. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. There is an up to date register of pupils' needs and a good detailed policy, which supports teachers in enabling these pupils to participate in all areas of the curriculum. Equally the register of gifted and talented pupils alerts all teachers to the most able pupils and some of these are helped by attendance at the children's university. The policy for them is still in draft form and a whole school approach is still at a developmental stage. However, not enough progress has been made in the school's approach to the provision for the gifted and talented.

23. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good and these help to foster pupils' interests and skills further with a good emphasis given to sport and music. In music, many pupils have group instrumental lessons. The choir and orchestra provide opportunities for pupils to develop their skills beyond class music lessons. Much extra provision is offered in physical education. Participation in events, such as the Hazeldene Festival, gives pupils good opportunities to develop and apply their creative skills and to perform publicly.

24. Pupils are effectively prepared for the next stage of their education. Good links are maintained with local middle schools and greater teaching specialisation in Year 4 prepares pupils well for the curriculum they will encounter when they transfer.

25. There is a good range of expertise among the staff and they have good opportunities for further training. Some good use is made of specialist teaching in physical education. There is an adequate number of teachers to teach the curriculum and particularly good use is made of teaching assistants to support pupils with special educational needs.

26. Accommodation is good and there are plans in place to improve access to the building for the disabled. The site agent is very effective in maintaining and developing the building, so that storage, and provision of resources such as the computer network have been accomplished in a cost effective way. Rooms are spacious and light and recent improvements to the school's décor are helping to promote an appropriate learning environment. Some improvements to the computer suite are necessary to improve ventilation and make it easier to teach and learn in. Resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in physical education, music and ICT.

Care, guidance and support

The school is very successful in providing a safe and caring environment for pupils. Pupils' views are increasingly well sought and valued by the school. Pupils are well supported and guided and their personal development is promoted well.

Main strengths

- A high priority is assigned to matters of health and safety, including child protection procedures.
- Staff are caring and know pupils well.
- Pupils' progress and personal development are monitored well.
- Pupils have good opportunities to take responsibility and contribute their views.

Commentary

27. The school provides a safe and caring place for all pupils. They are well supervised in class. Good arrangements are made for pupils who are unwell and key staff are fully qualified to provide first-aid. Accidents are not frequent and good records are kept of any incidents. Child protection procedures are fully understood. One health and safety issue was reported to the school during the inspection. Regular inspections are made of the premises and equipment in the school and there are regular fire drills. Some parents were concerned about the arrangements at the end of the day when all pupils leave school and meet their parents in a very crowded courtyard area. The school has plans to alter this arrangement and is aware that the congestion is difficult for both parents and pupils and makes the departure of pupils less smooth and secure than it could be.

28. All teachers have a good knowledge of the pupils in their care. The headteacher and all staff regard their pastoral support of pupils as very important and their progress and personal development are monitored well. Knowledge that staff gain of pupils is used well to promote their learning and help them to improve and mature as they move up through the school. Marking is good and pupils know how well they are doing and value the comments that teachers make about their work. Monitoring of pupils' personal development is largely informal and based on the good knowledge that teachers have of pupils in their care. Pupils are guided and helped well by teachers with the strong support of the headteacher. In turn, pupils feel they are well cared for and able to share concerns they may have from time to time with their teachers. The support and guidance of pupils are not as strong as at the time of the last inspection. This is due to the unsettled period there has been in the past few terms but there are clear signs of improvement.

29. Good attention is given to ensuring that children settle securely into the school. The transition to middle schools at the end of Year 4 is planned carefully and well structured. The school is aware that the transfer within school from Reception to Year 1 can be stressful for pupils. Plans are in place to provide more opportunities for pupils to get to know their Year 1 teacher and have time in their new class in the summer.

30. Pupils' views are valued and they are excited about their school council. In discussion times when pupils gather in a circle pupils have an opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas on problems and issues. Such forums for pupils to contribute their views are valuable in promoting their personal development and maturity.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents is **good** and improving rapidly. The partnerships with the community and other schools are also **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents provide good support for the school.
- Good community links are well used to extend learning.
- Good links with local schools are used effectively especially to facilitate the smooth transfer of pupils to their next school.
- Some aspects of communication with parents have not been as good as parents would have liked.

Commentary

31. The partnership with parents is good but not as strong as at the time of the last inspection. It is beginning to recover from the difficulties that arose over the school's previous leadership. Overall, parents have a very positive view of the school and value especially the way their children are cared for and helped to settle into school. They are pleased that their children like school and are encouraged to become mature and independent. Some aspects of communications with parents, such as notice time given for events, and information about their pupils' progress, have not been as good as parents would have liked. They also feel that their views have not been sought or sufficiently taken into account, for example in plans to reorganise classes at the beginning of the year. The inspection supports these concerns. Annual reports are satisfactory giving good detail of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses in English, mathematics science and in ICT. However they offer only basic information on what has been covered in other subjects. Consequently, reports are only of limited value to parents in conveying a full and accurate picture of the progress pupils make.

32. Parents have remained loyal and supportive of the school. There are some good features of communication with parents. Good information is provided for each year group on what is to be taught in lessons, both at a meeting and in a booklet for all parents. Guidance is also provided for parents in some year groups on how they can help their children at home. A new approach to keeping parents regularly informed about school events has already been put in place and regular letters and newsletters are now sent to parents. The prospectus and annual report of governors to parents are informative and now comply fully with legal requirements. Complaints and problems raised by parents are well managed by the school. A good number of parents regularly help in classes, particularly for younger pupils, and many parents are available to help with trips out of school. The School Association is a generous and helpful organisation and has made significant contributions to the school.

33. Links with the community are good and well used by the school to provide an exciting range of learning opportunities for pupils. A broad range of informative visits to the local area, parks, farms and museums all help to extend classroom studies. Pupils enjoy these and also like to welcome visitors to the school, such as the nurse and local fire brigade officers. Local residents help in school regularly and add their own recollections of past events to lessons so that the past comes alive for pupils, such as recollections of World War 2. Local agencies and services are well used by the school to support pupils and extend the care and guidance offered in the school. The school is available for community use, so that is able to provide a service to the community it serves.

34. Links with other schools are well developed and effectively used to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The school has especially good links with two middle schools to which most pupils transfer at the end of Year 4 and other partner schools in the area. By the time pupils transfer to the middle schools, they are familiar with them and have met some staff. Links with cluster schools are supportive of teaching staff as well, linking them to a wider professional community.

35. The school makes very good use of outside agencies such as the educational psychologist, speech and language therapists and advisory teachers. This improves the provision for pupils with special educational needs and provides teachers and teaching assistants with advice.

36. Some concern was expressed at the meeting with parents that it was not always clear who to approach regarding special educational needs pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator was able to explain how this misunderstanding had arisen and has plans to improve communication in the future.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall the quality of leadership and management is **satisfactory**. Leadership of the headteacher is **good**. The leadership of key staff is **satisfactory** and improving. The school is managed satisfactorily and governance is sound.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new headteacher is making a good start to leading the school forward.
- Subject leaders in English, mathematics and science work effectively to raise standards in their subjects.
- The leadership of the foundation stage is very good.
- The special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that pupils with special needs make good progress.
- Governors are not sufficiently involved in steering the future development of the school.
- The school improvement plan is too cumbersome to be of good use to staff.
- Foundation subject leaders have not been provided with sufficient opportunities to promote higher standards in these subjects.

Commentary

37. In the first few weeks of his appointment, the new headteacher has made a good start in stabilising the school and planning for future improvement. He has a good insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the school and a clear vision for its future direction. The headteacher has shared his philosophy and aims with the staff and governors and they appreciate his leadership style. There is a clear notion of how he wishes to build his staff team. The headteacher has begun to establish appropriate systems for managing the school, although some of these, such as performance management and appraisal of non-teaching staff, have not yet been fully implemented. A weakness noted at the time of the last inspection was that formal systems for monitoring the quality of teaching by the headteacher were not in place and this has not yet been addressed successfully.

38. Regular meetings between year leaders and their year teams result in good planning and communication, which provide equality of provision for pupils within year groups. There is, however, not yet sufficient communication between year groups, so planning for pupils to develop main skills step by step as they move through the school is not secure.

39. Subject leaders in English, mathematics and science work hard to improve standards in their subjects. Their detailed action plans ensure that appropriate priorities are identified in a continuous drive for improvement. Monitoring of teachers' planning, checking pupils' attainment and scrutinising pupils' work ensure that pupils make mostly good progress in these subjects. Lesson observations to assess the quality of teaching and learning provide teachers with development points for improvement. They encourage and support staff well. As a result, standards in these subjects are good.

40. The special education needs co-ordinator has an effective system for identifying special educational needs pupils and monitors their progress well. She keeps abreast of new initiatives and organises training for teaching assistants. She provides good leadership. She has developed very good communication systems between herself and teaching assistants who provide her with a written weekly overview of work covered, assessment and feedback on pupils' work. This helps her to plan future work for the pupils.

41. The leadership of the foundation stage is very good and a strength of the school. The leader's own skilled teaching, management of the foundation stage on a day-to-day basis, her own contribution to the very good atmosphere in the classes and her deep commitment to providing a good curriculum ensure the pupils make good progress.

42. The governing body fulfils all its statutory responsibilities and is supportive of the school. There is a good range of expertise within the governing body; one governor, for example, was instrumental in setting up the ICT suite. However, the governing body has not yet developed its role in shaping the vision for the school and is not actively involved in formulating the school improvement plan. The governing body does not yet have good systems in place for evaluating the work of the school. The chair of governors has plans to improve the governors' monitoring role. Some good work has been carried out by the numeracy and foundation stage governors, who regularly observe lessons and provide written reports for other governors and the class teachers.

43. The school improvement plan, largely organised by the deputy head, contains a thorough review of the school's previous development. Future priorities are identified meaningfully together with success criteria, lead personnel and costings. The inclusion of subject plans, a new development for the school, is a worthwhile new venture and driven by the enthusiasm of the deputy head.

44. The last inspection identified some inadequacies in the management of subjects and there are still remaining weaknesses in some subjects. Leaders of the foundation subjects have not had sufficient opportunities to monitor the quality of provision. No time away from their class teaching has been available for them to observe lessons and some co-ordinators are new to the role. All co-ordinators have development plans for their subjects and have developed a good, consistent approach to assessment.

45. Changes of leadership and uncertainties in management have been a barrier to raising standards in the foundation subjects in the past and contributed to an unsettled school. They are also reflected in pupils' attitudes and behaviour not being as good as at the last inspection. Despite this, the conscientious approach of the staff has helped the school maintain standards in reading, writing and mathematics through a difficult time in the school's history. It is beginning to emerge from those difficult days, which were a barrier to the school moving forward. The good support of the parents through that time has been a great support for the school.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	974,874
Total expenditure	936,682
Expenditure per pupil	2,168

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-6,741
Balance carried forward to the next year	38,192

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall attainment of pupils starting school varies each year. The current group of children in the reception classes entered the school with slightly above average skills. The provision for learning is **good** in all areas. There are good learning opportunities for children with special educational needs. The **good** and often **very good** teaching across all areas of learning helps the children to achieve well in all respects. A high proportion of children is on course to exceed the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception. The management of the Foundation Stage is **very good** because the leader is confident and well informed. Comprehensive and analytical assessment procedures are organised precisely to give a clear insight into children's progress and achievement. The judgements made in this inspection are similar to those made in the last inspection but there have been further improvements in teaching and management. The children are well prepared for their move to Year 1.

Personal, social and emotional development

Provision for personal and social education is **good**.

Main strengths

- Children take responsibility.
- Children maintain attention and concentrate.
- Trusting relationships are established.
- Social skills are developed well when pupils have their snack of fruit.

Commentary

46. Although the children had been in school for only a short time, they were achieving well. The successful induction process ensures that they quickly become familiar with the expectations and routines of the classroom. Children play alongside and sometimes with one another. They are beginning to work well in a group. Fruit time is a valued social occasion where social etiquette and manners are reinforced. Children are confident to take responsibility for tasks, such as handing round the fruit and tidying up afterwards. The children are able to sit quietly and listen to the teacher and each other. They take part successfully in whole-class and circle activities, which involve waiting their turn and watching other children.

47. Teaching is effective because the teachers have high expectations of children's behaviour and achievement. Trusting relationships have been established between the children and the classroom adults so that the children feel confident about offering their own thoughts and ideas when joining in activities, such as exploring the contents of the 'bedtime bag'. Work for children is planned so that they will achieve and be confident and successful, but there are also opportunities for more able children to face and take on achievable challenge.

Communication, language and literacy

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

Main strengths

- Good opportunities are provided for developing speaking and listening skills.
- The teaching of reading skills is very effective.
- Initial sounds are imaginatively taught.
- Writing activities are well matched to the needs of individual children.

Commentary

48. Children enter the school with a wide range of communication and literacy skills. They achieve well so that, at the end of the year, the majority of children can read early scheme readers and write sentences independently. The focus upon teaching mathematical and scientific language and valuing children as 'speakers' enables them to develop their ability to communicate effectively. Some children delight in experimenting with rhyme and acquiring quite mature vocabulary, such as 'nocturnal' when discussing animals that are seen at night. Children listen carefully in big book sessions to identify initial sounds and key words. They use this knowledge in the 'office' and 'red books' where children practise their writing skills. Some children, at this early stage in the year, can write or copy their name and a few can write the sounds that they hear in simple words. Children's achievement is good because the planned writing activities take account of these existing skills by providing tasks that closely match their individual learning needs.

49. Teaching and learning are good in communication and writing and very good in reading because the teachers capitalise upon the children's enthusiasm for listening to stories. Teachers have particular skills at reading stories aloud and all children become spell-bound. This increases the children's desire to learn to read for themselves. Initial sounds are introduced through the 'sound of the week' objects and practised through lively 'sing and do' alphabet songs, which give enjoyment in learning and a high impetus to acquiring phonic skills. Assessments of phonic knowledge and word recognition are made in the early stages of the term. These results, together with regular observations, are used to launch the children into the reading scheme as soon as they are ready. At an early stage, children learn to recognise key words and build words through letter sounds. Good achievement in reading results from teachers' skills in motivating children to read and building upon the interest of the parents in making a valuable contribution to this area of learning.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths

- Mathematics is woven into everyday activities.
- Observation and assessment are well used.
- Mathematical language is developed well.

Commentary

50. Children achieve well in mathematics because incidental learning opportunities for counting and recognising numbers are very well used to re-inforce the systematic teaching of number skills. Early assessments in mathematics show that, on entry, some children can count in order and recognise some numbers up to 10. These skills are further developed through the use of ICT. Children confidently use mathematical language of size and place such as 'before', 'small', 'heavier than', because structured activities are planned to use this language in practical situations. Positional language is reinforced well in other areas of the curriculum such as PE and geography.

51. Children enjoy learning through the systematic well planned practical activities, which gradually build upon their previous knowledge. Regular observations and the good use of assessment opportunities by teaching adults ensure that children are introduced to new concepts when they are ready to move on. Good teaching develops shape knowledge, counting skills and number order through encouraging children to solve problems. Children learn quickly because activities are varied, challenging and fun.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good development of scientific knowledge.
- Use of the local area enlivens teaching.
- Insufficient use of programmable toys.

Commentary

52. All aspects of this area of learning are well developed through good first-hand experiences and opportunities for discussion. Children enter the school with diverse, but usually quite good, basic knowledge. They build on this knowledge to help them to understand more about the place in which they live, the school area and what has happened to them since they were babies. Through exploring with their senses, children develop an appreciation of the wonders of nature and how materials are changed.

53. Children construct with bricks, blocks and a range of recyclable objects to make homes of varying types, such as caravans, pitched- and flat-roofed buildings. They confidently use the computer independently. They control the mouse and recognise letters and numerals on the keyboard. They do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills in using a programmable toy.

54. Teaching is good. Children achieve well because they enjoy finding out about the world around them through tasting, touching and examining things, such as the inside of an orange, using a hand lens. Teachers use the school grounds, and local area as a resource for exploring the natural world through the children's senses. This stimulates their interest and curiosity and ensures that they achieve well.

Physical development

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the development of specific skills.
- Fruit time contributes to children's understanding of healthy living.
- The outdoor play area lacks visual appeal.

Commentary

55. Children achieve well. They can run, jump, climb and balance and use space well. Through regular opportunities to use wheeled and pedaled toys and the school's climbing apparatus, they develop co-ordination and body control. The outside play area, which is accessed directly from the classrooms, lacks visual appeal and stimulation of learning. The foundation stage leader is aware of this and has plans to make this area more inviting.

56. The teaching is effective because planning indicates good provision for the development of specific skills, such as pencil control, cutting, stapling, and manipulating materials. Teachers ensure that there is an element of challenge but children's individual needs are catered for by providing appropriate support, such as left-handed scissors or assistance from teaching assistants in mastering new skills. Discussions of the value of apples, cheese and carrot at fruit time are well used to help children to recognise the importance of keeping healthy.

Creative development

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths

- There is a wide variety of creative opportunities.
- There are good links with literacy.

Commentary

57. The children achieve well. They print using a variety of objects or materials, such as natural objects, re-cyclable materials, hands and fingers. They create interesting collages using a wide range of well-chosen resources, such as fabric, feathers, tissue, wool and felt. Children develop their imagination and skills through listening to well-told stories and in interacting with each other through puppets and in a role-play situation. All children participate very well in singing and thoroughly enjoy making music with instruments.

58. Teaching is successful because good links are made with learning in other areas, such as literacy and science. A story often acts as a stimulus for music making, role-play, puppet re-enactment, drawing and painting so that children already have good ideas about what they would like to achieve. There is an appropriate balance between adult-directed and child-initiated activities so that children are able to express their creativity.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in reading across the school are well above average.
- Standards in writing across the school are well above average.
- The subject leader for English makes a very good contribution to ensuring that pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are not developed systematically enough.

Commentary

59. The above average standards in reading and writing by the end of Years 2 and 4 have been maintained since the last inspection. Reading skills are taught systematically and the school places a high emphasis on reading. Pupils achieve well as a result. Teachers listen to pupils read regularly on an individual basis and some teachers have developed 'reading conferences' with individual pupils, which develop their comprehension and a love of books. Some teachers spend parts of their lunch-times hearing readers. Parents support their children's reading at home, particularly in the younger classes. As a result of this very good provision, Year 4 pupils read quite challenging books. They read with very good expression, observe punctuation and are developing knowledge of different authors. Pupils are positive about reading and many read daily for pleasure. Pupils in Year 2 also read with good expression and have a developing knowledge of the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. They use an index and understand alphabetical order. They enjoy listening to stories read to them outside of the literacy hour. Pupils' good reading skills make an important contribution to the overall well above average standards in English.

60. Pupils achieve well in writing. Standards in writing are well above average and some pieces are outstanding. The school pays considerable attention to teaching the formal aspects of writing. This ensures that, at an early age, pupils' spelling, punctuation and sentence construction are good. Well taught handwriting skills ensure that pupils use correct letter formation and, by Year 2, the majority of pupils have a good fluent cursive script. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to

write independently in the form of stories, poems, play-scripts, instructions and descriptions. They have a good range of opportunities to write for different purposes, an improvement since the last inspection. Year 4 pupils wrote some delightful poems about the moon and stars and these showed great sensitivity and imagination. The whole school worked together to produce some good story books entitled 'The Queen's Pink Diamond', 'Sir Giggleshead Saves The Day' and 'Shadow from the Past'.

61. Very good quality marking and assessment contribute to the pupils achieving high standards in their written work. Teachers mark work using positive comments, and targets are set to move the pupils' learning forward. Pupils' stories are highlighted with pink and green to show the parts of the story which are good and parts which need improvement. This gives them a clear understanding of how to develop their work.

62. As noted at the last inspection pupils with special educational needs make good progress in English. They progress well in lessons where they are very well supported by skilled teaching assistants. Interventions, such as the 'Additional Literacy Strategy' and 'Early Literacy Strategy' effectively support pupils who need extra help in English. The use of ICT supports pupils' learning well in English.

63. Teaching in English is almost always good and sometimes very good. Teachers plan their lessons in detail and match the work effectively to pupils' different needs. They structure the lessons well and with an efficiently timed structure. Resources are used well and good use is made of big books and other reading material to promote pupils' interest. In a Year 4 lesson, the teacher referred to the previous day's work and helped them to deal with a common error they had been making in the use of 'their' and 'there' and gave the pupils a useful rule for remembering the difference. Good use was made of newspaper headlines to predict the article and pupils worked effectively in pairs to make notes in the follow-up activities.

64. Although pupils' speaking skills are above average in the main, their listening skills are average. They achieve soundly in speaking but their achievement in listening skills is unsatisfactory. This area of the English curriculum lags behind reading and writing. This is because there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills across the curriculum. In the sessions when pupils gather together, pupils are not always encouraged to listen carefully enough to what the teacher or other pupils are saying and some lose concentration too easily. There are too few opportunities for discussion and collaborative work to encourage the pupils to listen to one another carefully. Many pupils find it difficult to answer questions in detail and do not give clear explanations about what they are learning. They do not yet speak with great confidence or express an opinion fluently.

65. Subject leadership is good because the leader makes a very strong contribution to improving standards. She is very clear about the future developments needed in the subject. For example, she has monitored writing and tracked pupils' results looking at trends and this has helped maintain the very good track record in national tests.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. Reading and writing are promoted well across the curriculum. In science, good use is made of technical language. In geography and history children write factual accounts, letters, questions and answers. Year 3 pupils write their view of King Henry VIII and some of this writing is very mature for their age, showing great humour and leaving the reader to make inferences from the text.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2.
- Teaching in mathematics is good and pupils with special educational needs are well provided for.
- Good use is made of resources to help pupils' understanding.
- Pupils do not make as much progress in Years 3 and 4 as in Years 1 and 2.
- There is sometimes an imbalance of time in the different elements of lessons.
- The organisation of loose-leaf work is too casual.

Commentary

67. Pupils' attainment is well above average at the end of Year 2 and above average at the end of Year 4, which is similar to that at the previous inspection. Pupils achieve well in mathematics in Years 1 and 2 and soundly in Years 3 and 4. Their progress slackens a little in Year 3 because the pace of lessons is not always brisk enough. Progress picks up again in Year 4, although at times the ability sets do much the same level of work and this is often geared to the more able pupils. This means that the pupils who are less capable in mathematics sometimes struggle to understand the work. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have a very good understanding of three-digit numbers and many of four-figure numbers. They round with good levels of accuracy to the nearest ten and hundred. Their knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shapes is good. Many Year 4 pupils understand negative numbers, convert centimetres to fractions of metres and interpret number sequences well. They have a good understanding of the relationship between division and multiplication. Pupils are set challenging tasks and problem solving activities, which make them use their knowledge of number and think hard. Pupils present their work well in books, work neatly and this adds to their good level of accuracy.

68. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and are imaginative in the activities they present to pupils. They sometimes use games that appeal to the pupils, as when they get the pupils to ask mathematical questions to guess what shape is in the bag. Frequently a good pace and a lively delivery engage the pupils' interest and they work hard as a result. Teaching assistants work effectively with pupils who have special educational needs and the small group work assists the pupils' understanding. Teachers challenge higher attaining pupils well. Stimulating mental work at the start of lessons frequently engages the pupils' thinking because of the good challenge that the activities present. Teachers' good use of praise encourages the pupils to contribute answers. The effective use of white boards ensures all pupils think of an answer. Teachers make good use of resources, some designed and made by themselves. A Year 1 teacher made a 'function machine' and the pupils predicted the answers the machine might produce when it added on six. Teachers frequently get pupils to predict answers and this is very effective and challenges the pupils' thinking. A Year 4 teacher used a coloured rod effectively to get the pupils to interpret a sequence of numbers and to predict the answer at given intervals along the rod. In a Year 2 class, the teacher asked what shape the label on a tin of beans would be when she peeled it off. Resources are used particularly well in shape work and enable all pupils to be actively engaged. Pupils usually work hard in their activities but they can be noisy during tasks in the Year 3 classes and this affects the amount of work completed.

69. The balance of time given to the different elements of a lesson is sometimes mis-judged. At times, pupils spend too long on the carpet at the beginning of the lesson leaving insufficient time for the remaining parts. The result of this is too little time for pupils' activities and a rushed conclusion to the lesson, which prevents the teacher from checking and consolidating the learning and furthering pupils' understanding.

70. Teachers often use worksheets to promote activity in mathematics. These are carefully chosen to develop the pupils' thinking and many of them provide open-ended investigative tasks. However, the recording relating to these activities is often put in a wallet type folder and it is difficult to track the pupils' progress. This is because they are often not dated and they are not in order. Their work sometimes gets crumpled and does not then permit the pupils to take pride in what they have done.

71. The leadership of the subject has changed recently. The new co-ordinator is enthusiastic to develop the quality of teaching and learning further and to build on the good work of the previous subject leader. Much has been done in the past year to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics and this initiative, undertaken by the deputy head, has produced tangible improvements in teaching, particularly in the quality of mental work.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Good use is made of mathematics across the curriculum. Pupils measure and record the results of their investigations in tables and graphs in science. Some use is made of ICT to display different types of graphical representation of their results. Pupils use time lines in history and refer to co-ordinates in their map studies in geography.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of Years 2 and 4, pupils reach above average standards.
- There is a strong emphasis on investigative science.
- Teaching is good but in some lessons, unsatisfactory management of pupils' behaviour impedes learning.
- Marking is very good, enabling pupils to improve their work.
- Teachers make good links between science and skills from ICT, mathematics and written English.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.

Commentary

73. Standards of attainment in science are above average and similar to those at the time of the last inspection. By the end of Year 2, pupils sort materials by their properties. They recognise the conditions necessary for plant life. They undertake frequent practical investigations, which they understand well. By the end of Year 4, pupils sort materials in a more sophisticated way, classifying them as solids, liquids or gases. They are able to base their conclusions on evidence and to present evidence systematically. For example, Year 3 pupils have conducted effective investigations into the properties of light, learning that it travels in straight lines and travels faster than sound. This work is neatly presented in diagrams, tables and clear descriptions of the methods used. All pupils achieve well, making good progress over time. Pupils with special educational needs do well, because of the effective support they receive from teaching assistants and work that is appropriately matched to their needs.

74. Teaching is good in most lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge, so that appropriate terms are used consistently and they are able to teach confidently and question pupils to further their thinking. There is a very good emphasis on investigations, which promotes the acquisition of experimental skills. In a lesson in which pupils had to devise a method for testing the relative stretchiness of pairs of tights, pupils understood that carrying out a fair test would involve stretching the tights "with the same force". Teachers are good at structuring lessons so that pupils can plan fair tests and record their findings carefully. They have high expectations and encourage pupils to carry out practical work, which requires a high level of self-control and independence. This is not always successful where behaviour is challenging, but pupils learn to predict, to record and to present evidence in a truly scientific manner. Lessons are carefully prepared and planned.

Resources, including ICT, are well used to facilitate practical work. Good links are made with mathematics, so that pupils present their evidence in various graphical forms. Marking is consistently good and pupils receive useful feedback on their work. In general, relationships are good and pupils enjoy science, although where behaviour management is less effective, lessons become noisy and pupils lose interest. Teachers assess accurately and keep good records so that they are aware of groups and individuals who may underachieve.

75. The co-ordinator's leadership and management of science are good. She is conscientious and has a high level of expertise. She has monitored lessons and, where there have been concerns about progress, effective action has been taken to improve the situation. She has been particularly effective in promoting the teaching of investigative skills. She is fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and has successfully addressed all the issues raised at the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources have improved since the last inspection and are now good.
- There is a developing use of ICT in other subjects.
- The interactive whiteboard is used well.
- The teaching conditions of the ICT suite restrict pupils' progress.

Commentary

76. Achievement in ICT is satisfactory overall. Standards across the full range of themes have improved since the last inspection from being below average in part to average. This is because the curriculum is better, training has made teachers more confident and resources have been improved. All classrooms have been networked to have access to the Internet, and a computer suite has been added. In the younger classes, pupils benefit from more frequent access to using computers and their confidence has increased. Achievement in the Year 1 class lesson observed was good. Pupils developed their real or fantasy scene by accessing a template, adding colour from a palette and dragging and dropping characters and objects, changing their position and size at will. At the end of the session, they saved and exited to the desk-top display. In Year 4, the addition of the Internet access in the classroom has raised standards in sharing information and some of these older pupils develop higher order skills through this use and their use of home computers.

77. In the lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory overall. In a very good lesson on modelling, pupils were excited by their learning and stimulated by the teaching style, which took a 'small steps' approach and built positively upon success. The difficulties of managing pupils in a long, narrow computer suite were successfully overcome by short, brisk teaching sessions, which used the children's own work to illustrate teaching points. Where teachers have not yet developed these strategies, pupils in the suite are responsive and enthusiastic but noisy and less focused. All teachers use the interactive whiteboard effectively to demonstrate what pupils should do. Some teaching of older pupils does not take learning forward quickly enough and pupils find it 'really easy' because the focus is narrow and pupils have limited opportunity to make choices or decisions. This is not the case when the computer is incorporated into teaching in other subjects in the classroom.

78. Sound leadership and management of the subject have ensured that new resources such as additional software have helped teachers to teach all aspects of the subject and aid pupil progress. The school is beginning to develop a more rigorous assessment of what pupils can do with a view to tracking the progress that pupils are making more effectively. There has been very little monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in the suite, so the school does not have an accurate picture of whether pupils are achieving as much as they should.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

79. The school development plan focus upon cross-curricular ICT is leading to ICT being included successfully in other subjects. Its use in this way is satisfactory and improving. It is good in Year 4. Computers are increasingly used to good purpose in many classes for data handling, drafting ideas and to research information from the Internet, for example in a Year 2 history session on Florence Nightingale. Good use was made of the Internet access in a Year 4 literacy lesson when the teacher effectively used a newspaper website for a guided reading session in which pupils compared writing styles. In design and technology, products were enhanced by the use of clip art pictures. ICT was also used well to enhance learning in a Year 4 art and a mathematics lesson.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Insufficient work was observed in **geography** to judge provision. It receives its due amount of curriculum time. Good attention is given to developing geographical skills through studying the local environment but there is some repetition of content. Both Years 3 and 4 pupils were studying similar material and plotting local information of Bedford on a large scale map in similar ways.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- The quality of writing in history work is good.
- The quality of marking is good, enabling pupils to improve their work.
- Pupils' attitudes towards history are good.
- There is a lack of work which focuses on the interpretation of historical sources.

Commentary

80. Standards of attainment in history are average and similar to those at the last inspection. By the end of Year 2, pupils understand key events in the lives of famous figures, such as Florence Nightingale and Guy Fawkes and show a good understanding of the motivation behind the actions of people in the past. They use artefacts from the past, such as old toys, and compare past and present. By the end of Year 4, pupils show a sound grasp of the chronology of a period and using subject terminology explain what life was like for ordinary people in Bedford Castle. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they are well supported by teaching assistants and because tasks are matched to their needs. Teaching seen during the inspection was good but other evidence indicates that achievement is satisfactory overall. Teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations and use resources well to engage pupils in lessons. In a lesson on Bedford Castle, good use was made of a large picture and map of the castle, and at the end of the lesson pupils were excited by discussion of two model siege engines.

81. A particular feature of work in history is the quality of writing. Teachers set imaginative tasks, which help pupils to consider the points of view of historical characters and empathise with the feelings of ordinary people in the past. In one lesson, pupils had to write a letter to Henry VIII about their views on his divorce of Catherine of Aragon. This ensured they considered contemporary issues to do with religion and gender. Teachers mark work in history very thoroughly, ensuring feedback to pupils helps them to improve their work. Pupils enjoy history because confident teaching based on good subject knowledge brings the subject alive. Visits to places of historical interest, such as Bedford Museum, help to enrich the subject.

82. Pupils show good understanding of historical events in the periods they cover and develop some of the skills of historical enquiry, working from an appropriate range of sources of historical information. However, insufficient attention is given to considering the interpretation of historical sources, and why these should differ. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Curriculum planning and resources are satisfactory but the co-ordinator has not had sufficient time to monitor teaching and standards of work in order to raise standards.

Religious education

The provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and social education.
- Pupils have a good basic knowledge and understanding of the religions covered.
- Visits to different places of worship stimulate pupils' interest.
- The subject leader has not been given enough opportunities to lead developments.

Commentary

83. At the end of Years 2 and 4, pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious education is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and similar to findings of the last inspection. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

84. Pupils have a good understanding of religious traditions and the terminology associated with Christianity, Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. They demonstrate a secure knowledge of the Bible. Pupils make accurate references to festivals such as Ramadan, Easter, Passover and Divali. In Year 1, pupils consider the importance of celebrations when they re-enact a wedding ceremony. In preparation for a visit to St Mary's Church, Year 3 pupils looked at and confidently discussed the religious symbols, which are found in them. Older pupils understand that each religion has customs, celebrations and festivals, which have a particular relevance to believers and a bearing on how they behave. Personal and social education is integrated into the teaching of religious education so that pupils develop an awareness of other people and how they feel.

85. From the two lessons and work seen, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Visits to different places of worship, such as a church and a gurdwara, and input from members of the community stimulate pupils' interest in learning about different religions. Teachers in all classes provide opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas and feelings and make connections between religious customs and everyday life. For example, by explaining the religious origin of the word "mufti", pupils could relate this to "Mufti Day" in school. Good opportunities are given for pupils to practise their diverse writing skills through imaginative topics, such as writing newspaper articles for the Jericho Times or sensationalising the story of Zaccheaus. As a result, however, there is less time being spent in developing religious education skills to a higher standard.

86. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory but with some weaknesses in developing the teaching quality as a result of the school's difficulties. The quality of teaching and learning have not been regularly monitored. Work has been scrutinised and new end of unit assessments are being implemented. The subject leader has had little opportunity to explain new approaches to the teaching of the subject and this has restricted progress.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

There was not enough evidence to judge attainment in design and technology as it was not a curriculum focus during the early part of the term. Four lessons were seen in each of art, physical education and music.

Art and Design

Pupils' achievement in art is **satisfactory** and by Year 4 standards are in line with national expectations. This maintains the standards reported at the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are developing good skills in drawing.
- Some of the teaching in art is good and enables pupils to achieve well.
- Limited work was seen where pupils have the opportunity to experiment with a variety of techniques and materials.

Commentary

87. Pupils develop their drawing and painting skills well showing clear improvement from year to year. Year 1 begin by painting bright, colourful pictures of themselves, and some have used charcoal. Year 2 pupils create some good quality chalk drawings entitled 'All about me'. Year 3 pupils' drawing skills develop further when they look closely at items such as shoes, jumpers and mugs which they draw very carefully using pencils of different grades. These drawings are of very good quality showing a developing understanding of shade and tone. Using pastels and charcoal, Year 3 pupils skilfully blend colours to create winter scenes. The posters linking with the Year 3 history work on Henry VIII give pupils opportunity to extend their drawing and colouring skills.

88. Teaching in the lessons seen was mainly good. When teaching is good in art, lessons are well planned with clear learning intentions, and good behaviour management strategies ensure pupils are listening carefully and are on task with their work. An example of this was seen in two Year 2 lessons. These lessons built very well from a visit to the local museum where pupils had focused on the theme 'Mother Nature'. This visit had made a marked impression on the Year 2 pupils and they were able to talk about what they learnt at the museum and about the sketching and shading techniques they employed. Clear explanations of the task and high expectations of the pupils ensured that their finished work was of good quality. Pupils are absorbed in their work and work with care. Good use of ICT in art, using the museum's interactive website that the school helped to design, inspired the pupils when looking at pictures of shells and fossils. One pupil exclaimed, "Look at all that detail. That is beautiful!"

89. Year 4 pupils visited the museum to look at different types of chairs and this provided the starting point to their designing a chair for a person they knew or a famous person. Pupils responded very well to the teacher's lively pace and encouragement to use their imagination. The resulting work was some good three-dimensional drawings of chairs with specific features appropriate for different personalities, such as Tony Blair and Horrid Henry (a character from a book).

90. The co-ordinator for art is new to the role and has made a good start to her leadership and management of the subject, although she has not yet had time to monitor standards of work or quality of teaching. She has organised an art loan of sculpture and pictures by famous artists, which are displayed around the school, and this is helping the pupils' appreciation of artwork.

91. Displays around the school are satisfactorily presented but do not do enough to provide a lively stimulating atmosphere for pupils. In some classrooms, with the exception of the foundation stage, displays do not enhance pupils' learning enough.

92. Most work seen in pupils' sketchbooks, on displays of work and in the four lessons observed was drawing, painting and design. No work was seen involving printing and very little three-dimensional work and work with fabrics or clay. Art from a diversity of cultures is not much in evidence.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers encourage pupils to evaluate and improve their work.
- Extra-curricular provision for music is a real strength of the school.
- There is some underachievement in Years 3 and 4 because teachers lack subject expertise.

Commentary

93. Standards of attainment in music are average. By the end of Year 2, pupils sing tunefully with a good feel for the melody. They play percussion instruments in time and follow direction to produce a structured piece of music. Year 4 pupils sing in a satisfactory way, accurately and with an improving grasp of the flow of a tune, based on a growing understanding of the conventional musical scale. By the end of Year 2, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They improve their performance in lessons because there is a real focus on evaluating and developing the quality of playing and singing. In one lesson seen, very good use was made of tape recordings to capture pupils' performances and identify what groups could be doing better. In Years 3 and 4, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils could be doing better, but teachers' expertise and confidence are uncertain. This diminishes pupils' interest and the progress they make.

94. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of good support from teaching assistants and because of determined and sensitive input from teachers. Higher attaining pupils are given the opportunity to lead groups on occasion and this helps them develop confidence and musical skills.

95. Teaching is satisfactory. Where subject expertise is high, there are some real strengths: lesson pace is good and practical involvement in lessons is high. Where subject knowledge is less secure, the use of a published scheme is a useful support. However, there are also weaknesses in subject knowledge, which the scheme cannot overcome.

96. There is very good extra-curricular musical provision. A good range of instrumental lessons is available to pupils who enjoy improving their skills. The choir is well attended and pupils sing well, with confidence and enjoyment. An orchestra and recorder group also flourish and the school takes part in musical festivals. All this enriches the musical curriculum. Resources are good: instruments and tape recorders are widely available, which encourages practical lessons and the improvement of listening skills. The management of the subject is sound, but there has been insufficient opportunity for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching and so to raise standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths

- The good curriculum and wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- The good facilities help to promote good progress.
- The quality of teaching and specialist teaching in Year 4.
- The very good leadership and management of the subject.

Commentary

97. The physical education curriculum is well structured with a good balance of dance, games and gymnastics and its quality enhanced by the inclusion of swimming in the summer term. A wide range of games skills is developed well, a strength being the promotion of equal opportunities for boys and girls. The wide range of extra-curricular activities adds to the pupils' interest in physical education, enhances their skills further and helps to promote their social development.

98. The physical education curriculum is fostered effectively by the good accommodation. The large hall with its good wooden surface provides pupils with a good working space and enables them to work bare-footed. This increases the pupils' sensitivity in movement. The playground and field areas provide good surfaces for games activities and are well used. The school's swimming pool enables pupils to learn to swim at an early age and pupils reach good standards in swimming.

99. The good quality of teaching promotes good standards and an enthusiastic attitude and response from the pupils, continuing the quality reported at the previous inspection. They work well together, play fairly, dress correctly and enjoy the physical activities provided, particularly in dance, games and swimming. Teachers make good use of demonstration and focus pupils' minds on attending to correct techniques, which contribute to the pupils' good skills. Pupils want to do well and enjoy performing for others. As a result of the good teaching, pupils reach above average standards and achieve well.

100. The subject is very well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator, who has done much to promote the subject by enthusing other staff and ensuring it is well represented on the curriculum. She has ensured that there is a good level of resources, which teachers use effectively in lessons. This ensures that pupils have ample practice in small groups, which helps to develop their above average level of skills. Her own teaching provides a good example for other staff and her specialist teaching of the three Year 4 classes does much to enhance the good achievements pupils make in the subject.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education is **satisfactory**.

Main strength

- This aspect makes a good contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills.

Commentary

101. This aspect of work is still developing and teachers mainly rely on published materials. The training that the teachers have had has been effective and raised their awareness of the subject's possibilities in promoting pupils' maturity. The subject is making a valuable contribution to pupils' social development and awareness of the needs and feelings of others. Insufficient evidence could be obtained to judge teaching quality. In the two lessons observed, most pupils participated well in the discussion about friendship and made some very good and sensitive suggestions on what makes a good friend. Pupils in one class were more focused and interested in the discussion than in the other in which pupils' attention sometimes drifted away and the teacher had to work hard to retain their focus.

EXAMPLES OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

Example of outstanding practice

An excellent lesson was observed in dance with Year 4 pupils.

The pupils were working in bare feet on the theme of the circus and interpreting the music from 'Barnum'. The teacher's great enthusiasm and very good subject knowledge inspired the pupils throughout this lesson so they participated with much interest and were engrossed in the content. The teacher's very good questioning before they executed their movements and the informative commentary as they worked kept the pupils thinking throughout and enhanced their performance, which was well above average for their age. The pupils paid attention to minute detail as they feigned a wobble on the tightrope or engaged in slapstick humour as clowns. They were encouraged to use body language and responded effectively in their facial expressions demonstrating intense concentration as they did the tight rope walk with arms outstretched and looking anxiously forwards and upwards to the finish.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	4
Attendance	5
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7), insufficient evidence (8).