

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **DUNSTABLE ICKNIELD LOWER SCHOOL**

Dunstable

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109444

Headteacher: Mrs Leonora Prewett

Lead inspector: Mrs Stephanie Lacey

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> October 2004

Inspection number: 266757

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:	3 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	313
School address:	Burr Street Dunstable Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU6 3AG
Telephone number:	(01582) 663 709
Fax number:	(01582) 670 233
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Ruth Lyddiard
Date of previous inspection:	8 <sup>th</sup> March 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Dunstable Icknield Lower School is on the northwest side of Dunstable. It has ten classes for pupils from Reception to Year 4 and a separate morning and afternoon Nursery class. Pupils come from a wide range of social, economic and academic backgrounds. Seven per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average and reflects the advantaged background of many of the pupils. Last year this percentage was slightly higher. Almost all the pupils live within two miles of the school, although for about 65 per cent it is not their nearest school. This is a popular school, with few spare places. Most pupils are White British, with eight per cent from other ethnic backgrounds. Two children are at the early stage of learning English. When children start school, their skills, knowledge and understanding are wide-ranging, but are broadly in line with levels expected for their age. Nine per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is below average. These pupils have a range of learning difficulties. One pupil has a statement of special educational need. Last year the percentage of pupils either joining or leaving the school other than at the normal time was broadly average. The school gained a reassessed 'Investor in People' award in 2004.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3764	Mrs Stephanie Lacey	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage English Music English as an additional language
14756	Mr John Lovell	Lay inspector	
24019	Mr Ken Parry	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Physical education
30618	Mr Paul Story	Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology
32456	Mr David Musty	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Religious education Special educational needs

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school.** Pupils are taught well, achieve well and reach high standards by the time that they leave in Year 4. The headteacher provides a very clear educational direction and enables pupils and staff to do their best. In light of the relatively low funding and good standards achieved, the school provides good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is very good.
- Good teaching overall underpins pupils' good achievement.
- Standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science by the time pupils leave the school in Year 4.
- The headteacher is committed to providing a high quality education and has the full support of a hardworking staff team.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Work planned in different subjects is interesting and captures pupils' interest.
- There is a very good partnership with parents.
- Individual governors bring a range of high quality expertise.
- The accommodation for the older pupils, the library and the staff lavatory arrangements are unsatisfactory.

The school has made good progress since its last inspection in 1999. High standards and good quality teaching have been maintained and there have been significant improvements made in provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is also much improved. The school has successfully tackled the issues identified for improvement by the last inspection. These were related to work in the Nursery and Reception classes and planning for investigations in mathematics.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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	C
writing	A	A	A	B
mathematics	A	A	A	C

*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. Dunstable Icknield is in the 8% to 20% band.*

**Overall, pupils achieve well.** In the Nursery and Reception classes, children achieve very well and by the time they move into Year 1, most children have reached the goals expected for them, with some doing better. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve well and in recent years standards have been well above average in Year 2 national tests in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2003, pupils did as well as pupils in schools with a similar free school meal entitlement in reading and mathematics and better than them in writing. National comparative data is not yet available for 2004, but there is every indication that standards have dropped a little. There are several reasons for this. The most significant is a higher proportion than usual of pupils who have special educational needs and who did not reach expected levels. In Years

3 and 4 pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Most pupils in Year 4 have reached the levels expected for their age, with many exceeding these, reflecting the well above average standards reached in their Year 2 tests. Pupils with special educational needs, those learning English as a second language and those from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as their peers.

**Pupils' good personal skills are effectively promoted by good overall provision for their spiritual, social, moral and spiritual development.** Most pupils are positive about school and behave well. Pupils with identified behavioural difficulties are supported effectively. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a good quality education. Teaching and learning are good overall.** Teaching is very strong in the Nursery and Reception classes and ensures that children make a very good start. In Years 1 and 2, good quality teaching helps pupils to learn effectively. Teaching is sound in Years 3 and 4, with some very strong features, and pupils move forward at a steady pace. Work planned in different subjects is interesting and enhanced by a good range of activities outside lessons. Some aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory. There is a very good partnership with parents, who do all they can to support the school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** The headteacher leads very effectively and is supported well by senior staff. The school is managed well and good use is made of the resources available. Governors make a valuable contribution to the work of the school, with a few governors providing invaluable expertise. However, the school does not meet with statutory requirements for collective worship.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Most parents are pleased with all that the school does for their children. Many have chosen to send their children to Dunstable Icknield, even although it is not their local community school. A small minority who returned the questionnaire were concerned about information about their child's progress, homework arrangements and arrangements for seeking parents' views. The inspection found that these areas were all at least satisfactory, but that the school needs to explore these areas with parents further. At the meeting, a small number of parents expressed concern about the management of pupils with behavioural difficulties last year. The inspection found that this year, the school's approach to promoting good behaviour is working well, but that parents are not fully informed about the procedures in place. Pupils are also positive about school and clearly like and respect their teachers.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

Apart from inadequacies in the accommodation, there are no significant weaknesses in this good school. Within this context, the most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Improve the accommodation for pupils in Years 3 and 4, the library and the staff lavatory arrangements.

- Ensure that the written behaviour policy matches the good practice in school and is shared with parents.
- Analyse the detailed assessment records to tease out progress made by different groups of pupils;

**and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- ensure that pupils are not withdrawn from the daily act of collective worship for additional literacy support.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects**

Children achieve very well in the Nursery and Reception classes and by the time they enter Year 1 are doing better than other children of their age. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and in most years standards in Year 2 national tests are well above average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 3 and 4 and standards are well above expected levels in Year 4.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve very well in the Nursery and Reception classes in all areas of learning<sup>1</sup>.
- Standards in national tests have been well above average in recent years.
- Standards in Year 2 tests were not as high this year as they have been in the past.
- Standards in English, mathematics and science are above expected levels in Year 2 and well above expected levels in Year 4.
- Most pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers.

#### **Commentary**

*Children achieve very well in the Nursery and Reception classes in all areas of learning.*

1. When children start school in the Nursery, their knowledge, skills and understanding are broadly in line with the levels expected for their age. Some children are a little more advanced and a few are a little behind their peers, but the span of ability is not wide. Children make very good progress in their time in the Nursery and Reception classes and by the time that they enter Year 1, most have exceeded the goals expected of them in all areas of learning.

*Standards in national tests have been well above average in recent years.*

2. Between 2001 and 2003, standards in Year 2 national tests have been consistently well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2003 tests, the performance of pupils matched pupils in schools with a similar free school meal entitlement in reading and mathematics, and was better in writing.

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

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<sup>1</sup> The areas of learning are: personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development.



Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.1 (17.1)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.2 (15.8)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.5 (17.8)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 60 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

*Standards in Year 2 tests were not as high this year as they have been in the past.*

3. In 2004, standards in Year 2 national tests dropped. The school's national comparative data is not yet available, but there is every indication that standards in reading and writing will be broadly average and standards in mathematics above average. There are several factors that have contributed to the drop in standards. These include:
- A larger than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the year group, who made sound progress but did not reach the expected levels.
  - A small group of pupils with behavioural difficulties who did not make sufficient progress and who affected the learning of others.
  - One or two pupils who were away from school for extended periods and so fell behind.
4. The school has taken several steps to help this group of pupils to move forward more quickly.

These include:

- Regrouping the two classes to establish a balance of ability and aptitude.
- Providing extra support, for pupils who need it, in reading and writing.
- Providing more support for pupils with behavioural difficulties.

This is proving effective and in the lessons seen in Year 3, pupils made steady progress. Pupils with behavioural difficulties were managed and supported well.

*Standards in English, mathematics and science are above expected levels in Year 2 and well above expected levels in Year 4.*

5. Currently, standards in English, mathematics and science are above expected levels in Year 2 and well above expected levels in Year 4. This reflects the differences in the overall profile of these particular year groups. Standards in ICT are broadly average through the school and pupils meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education at the end of Years 2 and 4. There was insufficient evidence to make a firm judgement on standards in other subjects.

*Most pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers.*

6. Most pupils achieve very well in the Nursery and Reception classes. They achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactorily in Years 3 and 4. Good support from teaching assistants helps these pupils to keep pace with their peers.
7. Most pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers, and better when they have extra support. About a third of the pupils identified with special educational needs have emotional or behavioural difficulties and sometimes struggle to conform. Sometimes their behaviour affects their achievement adversely, in spite of the good efforts of staff. The small group of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also achieve as well as their peers. Those learning English as an additional language do well because of the good support that they are given.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils enjoy school and most behave well, although there were three exclusions for inappropriate behaviour last year. Pupils' good personal development is promoted by good provision overall for

their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance levels are satisfactory and most pupils are punctual at the start of the day.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are confident and happy.
- Pupils are positive about school and enjoy learning.
- Behaviour in lessons and at playtimes is good.
- A few pupils find it difficult to behave well, but are supported effectively by staff.
- There are good procedures for encouraging pupils to behave well, but these are not reflected in the school’s written guidance.
- Relationships are good and pupils are aware of their moral and social responsibilities.
- The school does not systematically promote pupils’ understanding of the rich multicultural dimension of British society.

**Commentary**

*Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are confident and happy.*

8. Children settle quickly into school routines and are safe and happy in their new environment. They are encouraged to be independent and to play and work sensibly with other children. Children readily turn to staff for help and reassurance and clearly enjoy the wide range of learning activities provided for them.

*Pupils are positive about school and enjoy learning.*

9. Most pupils are very positive about school. They enjoy lessons and feel that they are expected to work hard. All pupils are very enthusiastic about ‘Golden time’. This is a Friday afternoon session when pupils can chose their learning activity, if they have worked hard during the week. Pupils like the staff and feel that they are fair.

*Behaviour in lessons and at playtimes is good.*

10. Most pupils behave well in lessons and quickly respond to their teachers when they are asked to do something. In some classes, pupils work a little noisily. At playtimes, pupils also behave well. In some lunchtime sessions, there is play equipment for pupils to use and this provides a focus for pupils’ play. Towards the end of the lunch time session, when all the pupils are on the playground, space is restricted and so it is more difficult for pupils to run around freely. There was no evidence of bullying during the inspection and pupils feel that staff deal with any instances of bullying quickly.

*A few pupils find it difficult to behave well, but are supported effectively by staff.*

11. Several pupils have been identified with behavioural and emotional difficulties and receive extra support to help them to cope in class. This year, the school’s records show that these pupils are managing better than they did previously. Sometimes they find it hard to concentrate, but the procedures in place mean that their behaviour does not affect the learning of others. One of these pupils has a statement of special educational need. Last year, there were several instances of inappropriate behaviour and the school found it necessary to exclude three separate pupils on three different occasions. These exclusions followed discussions between staff and governors and the parents of the children concerned were fully involved.

**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
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White – British	218	3	0
White – any other White background	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0

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

*There are good procedures for encouraging pupils to behave well, but these are not reflected in the school's written guidance.*

12. The school has a raft of sensible strategies to encourage positive behaviour and attitudes. These include awards for good behaviour, classroom rules agreed by each class and weekly opportunities for pupils to discuss their feelings and concerns. There are also sound procedures for managing inappropriate behaviour. Currently there are a few separate policies outlining the school's approach to promoting good behaviour, but these do not reflect the good practice evident in the everyday life of the school. A few parents noted their concerns about the school's management of inappropriate behaviour and this could, in part, stem from a lack of clear information from the school.

*Relationships are good and pupils are aware of their moral and social responsibilities.*

13. Generally, pupils get on well with each other and very well with the staff. The school strives successfully to help pupils to develop their moral and social skills and provision in this area is good. There is a school council, for example, with representation from Year 1 to Year 4, which discusses a range of issues. There are weekly personal, social and health education lessons, when pupils have the opportunity to discuss moral and social issues. Pupils are expected to take on responsibilities. Older pupils, for example, take it in turns to act as 'playground friends'.

*The school does not systematically promote pupils' understanding of the rich multi-cultural dimension of British society.*

14. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Assemblies provide good opportunities for the development of moral and social understanding, but sometimes the spiritual element is not emphasised sufficiently. Staff help pupils to develop an understanding of non-white European cultures well, such as the recent Year 4 work on Peru. However, this is not planned systematically and there is little displayed in school to help pupils to understand the range of different cultures represented in Great Britain today.

*Overall attendance is broadly in line with the national average.*

15. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are satisfactory and the school, supported by the Education Welfare Officer, has an appropriate range of strategies to promote good attendance and encourage parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.9	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good education. Good teaching overall ensures that pupils make good progress through the school. Work in different subjects is interesting. The provision for the Nursery and Reception classes is a strength of the school. The satisfactory accommodation has several shortcomings including small some classrooms, an inadequate library and unsatisfactory siting of staff lavatories.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good in the Nursery and Reception classes, good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory, with some clear strengths, in Years 3 and 4. Assessment procedures are good, although pupils do not always know what they have to do to improve.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good in the Nursery and Reception classes and consequently children move forward in their learning very quickly.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 and 2.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in Years 3 and 4, with some very strong features.
- Planning and preparation are good throughout the school and so pupils are appropriately challenged.
- Pupils persevere well with their work, although sometimes they work a little noisily.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils form a solid basis for learning.
- Teaching assistants and Nursery nurses contribute well to work in classrooms.
- Teachers assess pupils' progress effectively, but pupils do not always know what they have to do to improve.

### Commentary

16. Good quality teaching has been maintained successfully since the last inspection and is a key factor in pupils' good overall achievement.

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 45 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	8 (18%)	23 (51%)	14 (31%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

*Teaching and learning are very good in the Nursery and Reception classes and consequently children move forward very quickly.*

17. There has been very good improvement in the quality of teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes. This is now very good and ensures that children make a very good start at school. The strongest teaching is in the Nursery class. Key elements in this strong teaching include:

- Very thorough planning and preparation in which all members of the teaching team are involved;
- Very good team work;
- Very good relationships between staff and children, which underpin children's confidence and enjoyment;
- Opportunities for children to work independently and imaginatively.

Consequently, children achieve very well. They show initiative and remain involved in learning activities for sustained periods.

*Teaching and learning are good in Years 1 and 2.*

18. Teaching is consistently good in Years 1 and 2. Again good planning, good teamwork and good relationships provide a firm foundation for pupils' learning.

Other factors, which contribute to the good teaching and learning are:

- Clear explanations, which help pupils to grasp new ideas quickly;
- Clear pointers for pupils about what they are expected to learn in the lesson, which helps them to remain focused; and
- Interesting activities, which help pupils to enjoy learning.

It is more difficult for staff in Years 1 and 2 to work closely together, because Year 2 pupils are taught in temporary classrooms in the playground.

*Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in Years 3 and 4, with some very strong features.*

19. There is more variability in the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 4 than in other classes in the school. All teaching seen was satisfactory, with several very good lessons seen in Year 4. In Year 3 classes, teachers are providing a calm environment and expect pupils to work hard. This is proving successful and, in lessons seen, most pupils worked hard and remained on task. In Year 4, there are particular strengths in the teaching of personal, social and health education. Pupils are encouraged to reflect and to share their ideas, which helps them to tackle all their work in a thoughtful and considered way. Overall teaching is satisfactory rather than good because there are inconsistencies in the teaching from class to class. These are related to the use of time, sharing the purpose of the lesson with pupils and teaching methods.

*Planning and preparation are good throughout the school and so pupils are appropriately challenged.*

20. Teachers plan work carefully and provide appropriate challenge for all groups. Pupils with special educational needs have their own personal targets for learning and teachers hold these in mind when they plan work for the whole class. Higher-attaining pupils are expected to accomplish more and sometimes work on more difficult learning activities in order to challenge them further. Teachers pay good attention to preparation and make sure that materials and equipment are available for different lessons. This is especially important in Years 3 and 4 because the rooms are small, with limited accessible space for resources.

*Pupils persevere well with their work, although sometimes they work a little noisily.*

21. In most lessons seen, pupils were fully involved in learning activities and remained focused on what they had to do throughout the lesson. In some classes, pupils worked noisily, which made it difficult for all to concentrate easily.

*Very good relationships between staff and pupils form a solid basis for learning.*

22. Pupils clearly like their teachers and assistants and the very good relationships between staff and pupils form a good basis for learning. Pupils are not afraid to ask for help or to share their views and, in their turn, staff enjoy the pupils' company and do their best to help pupils to approach learning tasks confidently.

*Teaching assistants and Nursery nurses contribute well to work in classrooms.*

23. Teaching assistants and Nursery nurses are valued members of the teaching teams. They work closely with staff and provide encouragement and support to individuals and small groups. They are especially effective in their work with pupils who have special educational needs so that these pupils achieve as well as their peers.

*Teachers assess pupils' progress effectively, but pupils do not always know what they have to do to improve.*

24. Teachers have a good understanding of the progress and learning needs of the individual pupils in their class. This is because there is careful tracking of how well pupils are doing. Staff are beginning to set individual targets for pupils in English and mathematics. There is some inconsistency in how this is approached from class to class. Marking of pupils' written work is regular, with some positive comments, but it does not always let pupils know whether they have learnt what was intended for that lesson. Not all pupils are clear about what they have to do to improve their work.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides a broad, interesting and relevant curriculum, enriched well by visits, visitors, clubs and activities. The school is well staffed and has worked hard to make the best of the accommodation, although some parts of the building are unsatisfactory. Resources are satisfactory overall and good for the Foundation Stage, ICT and gymnastics.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Learning opportunities for children in the Nursery and Reception classes are very good.
- The school provides all its pupils with a broad, interesting and relevant curriculum.
- Good use is made of visits, visitors, clubs, the locality and practical activities to enrich pupils' learning.
- The school is well staffed and the resources for the Nursery and Reception classes, ICT and gymnastics are good.
- The school has worked hard to overcome the limitations of its buildings and grounds but the library, Years 3 and 4 classrooms and staff lavatories are unsatisfactory.

## **Commentary**

*Learning opportunities for children in the Nursery and Reception classes are very good.*

25. There have been very good improvements since the last inspection. Planning is firmly based on national guidance and is very thorough. Involvement in the 'Effective Early Learning Research Project' has had a very positive impact. Staff plan a stimulating range of activities which excite, engage and interest children.

*The school provides all its pupils with a broad, interesting and relevant curriculum.*

26. Since the last inspection, national and local authority guidance and commercial schemes have been used well to develop a broad and interesting curriculum. This is firmly based on the requirements of the National Curriculum and locally agreed syllabus for religious education and tailored to the needs of all pupils. Well-planned programmes ensure pupils are well prepared for the move to their next school. Statutory requirements are met, including those relating to sex and drugs education.

27. Teachers make good use of the national strategies for Literacy and Numeracy as the basis for planning. Catch-up programmes in English and mathematics meet pupils' specific needs well. Ability grouping and open-ended tasks are used well to ensure pupils of all abilities are able to complete their work. Care is taken to ensure pupils develop specific subject skills when links are made between different subjects. Good emphasis is currently being placed on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills through questioning, discussion and oral activities in all subjects. Good use has been made of involvement in research projects and initiatives to review curriculum organisation

and develop new approaches. Following improvements in provision, the school is currently developing the use of ICT in other subjects.

*Good use is made of visits, visitors, clubs, the locality and practical activities to enrich pupils' learning.*

28. Visits, visitors and the schools' grounds and immediate neighbourhood are used well to make learning interesting and relevant. Practical activities are used effectively to provide stimulating starting points in all subjects. Clubs and out of lesson activities provide good opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sport and the creative arts.

*The school is well staffed and the resources for the Nursery and Reception classes, ICT and gymnastics are good.*

29. The school is well staffed with well-qualified and experienced teachers. Teachers and teaching assistants are deployed well to make best use of their expertise. All staff work well as a team and the friendly and helpful office staff and caretaker contribute very effectively to the smooth running of the school. Resources in all subjects have been augmented and improved since the last inspection and are sufficient to meet current needs. They are good for the Nursery and Reception classes, ICT and gymnastics. However, book provision is barely satisfactory in Years 1 to 4.

*The school has worked hard to overcome the limitations of its buildings and grounds but there are problems with the library, Years 3 and 4 classrooms and staff toilets.*

30. The accommodation is satisfactory overall and very good for the Nursery and Reception classes. This is due to the creation of an outside classroom and remodelling of the internal space. The school makes good use of its restricted space, and has worked hard since the last inspection to overcome the problems of its buildings and site. The newly-refurbished hall, funded by the Parents' Association, is a good example. However, sound still travels between the Year 3 classrooms. Year 3 and 4 classrooms are small and this makes it difficult to organise practical activities. There is no field and the playground is not large enough for all pupils to play energetically without impinging on others. The current location of staff lavatories is unsatisfactory and the library is too small. The school has identified these as areas for attention.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The good support, advice and guidance found at the time of the last inspection has been maintained and there are some very strong features. Arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory and those for child protection meet requirements. The school has good procedures for involving pupils in their school community.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are very good arrangements to help children to settle quickly into school.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils make it easy for pupils to ask for help when they need it.
- Pupils are supported well in their personal and educational well-being.
- Pupils are successfully involved in contributing their views about the running of the school.
- First aid provision is good.
- Formal risk assessments are insufficiently developed.

### **Commentary**

*There are very good arrangements to help children to settle quickly into school.*

31. Staff make every effort to make sure that children settle happily into school. Parents are offered home visits so that relationships can be developed in a familiar setting. Parents are provided with clear information about starting school and the opportunity to see how the school is working. Children make several informal visits in the term before they begin. Consequently, children's first few days at school go very smoothly and they quickly adjust to school routines.

*Very good relationships between staff and pupils make it easy for pupils to ask for help when they need it.*

32. Very good relationships between staff and pupils are established in the Nursery. These underpin the good guidance that pupils and parents feel staff provide. Staff know the pupils and their families very well. Pupils turn readily to their teachers or support staff if they have any problems.

*Pupils are supported well in their personal and educational well-being.*

33. Pupils are supported well because staff monitor their personal development carefully and have a good awareness of those factors that might affect their progress at school. Individual pupils' academic progress is also checked carefully and good support given. Pupils with special educational needs are supported effectively by teachers and the team of hardworking teaching assistants.

*Pupils are successfully involved in contributing their views about the running of the school.*

34. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to contribute to the development of the school through circle time and the elected school council, which meets regularly and provides reports to the whole school. Pupils readily identify how their ideas have contributed to improvements, for example through developing class rules which 'belong' to the pupils and developing ideas such as the playground 'friends' to provide peer support and company for pupils who may feel lonely. It is clear that pupils feel that their opinions are valued.

*First aid provision of is good.*

35. First aid provision is good because of the number of qualified staff and the staff's understanding of individual pupils' needs. The school has five fully trained first aiders and one member of staff has undertaken 'emergency aid' training. First aid boxes are readily accessible and appropriately stocked and travel kits are available for journeys. However, accident records are not formally monitored to identify potential risks.

*Formal risk assessments are insufficiently developed.*

36. Safe practice is promoted well on a day-to-day basis and in lessons. Equipment is checked regularly and evacuation procedures practised. However, there is not enough use of risk assessments, although formal risk assessments are prepared for visits. There is insufficient attention paid to identifying and formally recording assessments, for example, to consider whether anything needs to be done in wet weather to minimise the risk of slipping on wet floors.

## **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**



The very good links with parents, identified at the time of the last inspection, have been maintained and make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. Parents are pleased with what the school does for their children. Links with other schools and the community are good and enrich pupils' learning opportunities.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a very good partnership with parents which supports children in their learning and personal development.
- Overall, parents are happy with all that the school does for their children.
- Parents are well informed about their child's progress.
- Consultation with parents is good and is used to develop the partnership between school and home.
- Opportunities for parents to learn about supporting children's work in specific areas of the curriculum are limited.
- Parents and local residents provide very valuable voluntary support in school.
- The support of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is very good.
- The school has good links with other schools and the community.

### **Commentary**

*There is a very good partnership with parents which supports children in their learning and personal development.*

37. The school has established a very good partnership with parents. This is reinforced by the home/school agreement, which sets out the responsibilities of parents, pupils and the school. Parents are very supportive of pupils' learning at home and most share books regularly with their children and help them well with projects and 'finding out' activities. Parental support enables many pupils to consolidate what they have learnt at school and improve their skills.

*Overall, parents are happy with all that the school does for their children.*

38. Most parents are positive about the education provided, the progress that children make and the good support for their personal development. Parents are particularly pleased that their children like school and are helped to settle in well. They are positive about most aspects of the school's provision, but a small minority express some concerns about information provided to them about their child's progress, homework arrangements, the extent of consultation with parents and the behaviour of a few pupils. The inspection found that information about progress is good, homework arrangements are satisfactory and that the extent of consultation with parents is generally good. It also found that pupils with behavioural difficulties are managed well, but that the school has not shared its approach to behaviour management with parents in a clear way.

*Parents are well informed about children's progress.*

39. Parents are well informed about their children's progress through an annual report, which is clearly written and provides good information about each pupil's progress. Clear targets are set in mathematics and English to help parents understand what is necessary to move their children to the next stage in their learning. There are two formal consultation evenings, which are attended by well over ninety per cent of parents. Teachers are also happy to discuss pupils' progress at other times. Other written information about the life and work of the school is good.

*Consultation with parents is good and is used to develop the partnership between school and home.*

40. Consultation is used constructively to involve parents in developing elements of the school's work and there have been two formal 'surveys' in the last year. The results were effectively shared with parents. Informal 'soundings' of parents take place on an ongoing basis. Following consultation, the school has developed a 'travel plan' and has gained funding for its implementation. It is hoped this will improve children's fitness and safety.

*Opportunities for parents to learn about supporting children's work in specific areas of the curriculum are limited.*

41. Last year the school arranged an informal session about helping children to read, with about 40 parents attending. Parents would like more information about what children learn and the school is planning to develop these initiatives during the coming year. Newsletters are used well to keep parents informed of current initiatives, such as the focus on friendship and co-operation.

*Parents and local residents provide very valuable voluntary support in school.*

42. Parents provide very valuable support, which is appreciated by pupils and staff. Up to 40 parents help regularly in classrooms, and other parents are drawn in to assist on school visits.

*The support of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is very good.*

43. The PTA raises significant sums of money through activities such as summer balls, fayres, and sponsored bounces. The money and practical assistance have been combined to provide enhancements to facilities and the learning environment which have made a very positive difference to children's experiences. For example, in the last year, the PTA has refurbished and provided new curtains for the hall and contributed to the development of the computer suite.

*The school has good links with other schools and the community.*

44. Good links with local middle schools support the transfer of pupils well at the age of nine and there are strong curricular links with one middle school in particular. Good links with the local community contribute to pupils' learning. Local elderly residents visit school to share their personal experiences in history, for example. One local resident regularly plays the piano for assemblies and music lessons and works very well with pupils and staff. The local area is used well as a resource to support learning.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides a very clear sense of direction and her vision is shared by all staff. Governance of the school is good and a nucleus of individual governors brings high quality expertise to their roles.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher's very clear vision and high expectations provide a sharp focus for the work of the school.
- Consistently good subject leadership makes a strong contribution to the quality of leadership and management.

- The school collects large amounts of data on pupils' attainment but does not analyse it closely enough to check that pupils are making sufficient progress.
- There are good systems to ensure that the school runs smoothly and efficiently.
- The high quality expertise of individual governors is used very well.
- Collective worship does not always meet statutory requirements.

## **Commentary**

*The headteacher's very clear vision and high expectations provide a sharp focus for the work of the school.*

45. The headteacher provides very good leadership. She has a very clear vision of what she wants for the school and high expectations for pupils' academic and personal development. This is evident in her continuing drive to raise standards and her determination to provide a stimulating and exciting environment for learning. She leads by example and communicates her ideas clearly, resulting in a shared view of what is best for the school and the pupils. She knows the staff well, recognises their achievements and provides advice and support when these are required.

*Consistently good subject leadership makes a strong contribution to the quality of leadership and management.*

46. The headteacher's good interpersonal skills enable her to get the best from all members of staff. This is evident in the consistently good subject leadership across the whole curriculum. This makes a significant contribution to the overall quality of leadership and management. Co-ordinators gain a good overview of provision within their subjects through their termly reviews, discussions with pupils and colleagues and sampling of pupils' work. Their annual action plans show an astute awareness of strengths and weaknesses and these feed directly into the school improvement plan. Staff report regularly to governors, reinforcing the strong partnership that exists between staff and the governing body. The leadership of work in the Foundation Stage is very good. The special needs co-ordinator provides clear leadership and manages the work in this area well.

*The school collects large amounts of data on pupils' attainment but does not analyse it closely enough to check that they are making sufficient progress.*

47. The school makes good use of national and local data to evaluate how well pupils are doing. It also has its own internal testing procedures to gather information about standards. Teachers make good use of the information to plan the next steps in learning and to cater for individual needs. However, the headteacher and senior staff do not use this information to check that pupils are making sufficient progress or to compare the achievements of different groups and classes within the school.

*There are good systems to ensure that the school runs smoothly and efficiently.*

48. The school is managed well and there are good systems in place to enable it to run smoothly and efficiently. Procedures to check how well the school is doing and to plan for the future are also good with the views of all staff and governors contributing to the process. The resulting school improvement plan is a comprehensive document that identifies key priorities for action and provides a clear focus for the work of the school over a three-year cycle. Teachers' plans and evaluations are closely monitored by the assistant headteacher who reports to the headteacher on a weekly basis, ensuring an immediate response to issues that may arise. The professional development of all staff

is actively promoted through the good arrangements for performance management and a programme of training that meets the needs of individuals as well as the whole school. The headteacher keeps a careful eye on the school's involvement in a variety of projects involving outside agencies. As a result, she is clear about the benefits of taking part in initiatives such as the 'Effective Early Learning Project' and the 'Bedfordshire School Improvement Partnership'. These have led to much improved provision for the Foundation Stage, and have encouraged staff throughout the school to reflect on the different learning styles within their classrooms in order to meet the needs of individuals more effectively.

*Financial management.*

49. Management of the school's finances is satisfactory. The headteacher and governors check the budget regularly and there are sound procedures to ensure that the school spends wisely and carefully. Finances were very tight two years ago and difficult decisions had to be made in order to balance the budget. There have been cutbacks in spending on books and equipment since then but the school now is in a better position financially to move forward. The table below shows that the school has a carry forward of about four per cent, which is just below with national recommendations. Total income is below the national median and expenditure per pupil is low. The school gives good value for money. Governors are aware of the need to refine their roles by reviewing and evaluating the impact of particular spending decisions and using national data to compare their spending with other schools.

**Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	700,200	Balance from previous year	34,969
Total expenditure	709,407	Balance carried forward to the next	25,762
Expenditure per pupil	2,509		

*The high quality expertise of individual governors is used very well.*

50. Governance of the school is good overall. Individual governors make very good use of their high quality expertise to support a well established and effective committee structure. They maintain regular and frequent contact with the school and the chair ensures that meetings are well focused and that their work is carried out in a businesslike way. Governors have a good grasp of the school's significant strengths and areas for development and are able to ask informed and challenging questions. They are very supportive of the staff and proud of the school's achievements.

*Collective worship does not always meet statutory requirements.*

51. The school is currently failing to meet statutory requirements with regard to the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. For example, although an achievement assembly seen during the inspection provided a worthwhile experience for pupils, it did not constitute an act of worship. In addition, groups of pupils are withdrawn on a daily basis from assembly for additional teaching.

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

### AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Children start school in the Nursery class on a part-time basis. They attend school full-time from the September or January of the academic year in which they are five, depending on their birthdays. There are three classes in total in the Foundation Stage; one of these is for part-time children and two are for full-time Reception year children. Since the last inspection there has been very good improvement in the provision for children in the Foundation Stage. This has been supported very well by the school's involvement in the 'Effective Early Learning Research Project'. An 'outside classroom' has been developed and this contributes effectively to children's progress in all areas of learning. The teachers, Nursery nurses and assistants in the teaching team work very well together. They share responsibility for planning work and checking how children are doing. Overall, teaching and learning is consistently very good in the Nursery class and good with very good features in the Reception classes.

### PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are very independent.
- Children work and play together very happily.
- Staff provide very good role models.

#### Commentary

Standards of attainment	Most children reach the levels expected for their age, with some doing much better and some a little behind
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good
Other factors affecting pupils' achievement	Very good induction arrangements Good levels of adult support
Improvement since last inspection	Very good

*Children are very independent.*

52. Children in both the Nursery and Reception classes are very independent. This is because staff encourage them to take responsibility for choosing what activities to undertake, and expect them to select their own materials and equipment and to tidy away at the end. Children know what is expected of them and this gives them the confidence to make decisions.

*Children work and play together very happily.*

53. Most children get on very well with each other. They take turns and share equipment sensibly. They co-operate very well when required to do so. In role-play areas, children enjoy making up stories together and show sensitivity in their dealings with their peers.

*Staff provide very good role models.*

54. Staff are very positive and patient. They work very well together and are consistent in their approach. This provides a very clear message to children about how to behave and how to approach learning tasks.

## COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good provision for all aspects of children's development in this area.

### Commentary

Standards of attainment	Most children reach the levels expected for their age, with some doing much better and some a little behind
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good
Other factors affecting pupils' achievement	Good support from parents with reading at home.
Improvement since last inspection	Very good.

*There is very good provision for all aspects of children's development in this area.*

55. From the very start, children are encouraged to communicate clearly. Staff are very encouraging and use questioning very well to help children to put their thoughts into words. There are rich and varied opportunities for children to both speak and listen. These range from whole-class sessions to situations where children are working in very small groups. Sometimes individual children speak to the whole class. In one Reception class, for example, a child told the others about the adventures that 'Travelling Ted' had experienced when he went home with her. She spoke very clearly and illustrated her talk with photographs.
56. Children have every opportunity to enjoy books and stories. The reading areas are inviting and attractive, staff share books and tell stories very regularly and parents or carers look at books with their children at home. Children approach reading confidently and Reception children 'read' wordless picture books with a due sense of sequence and story. Alongside this, children are taught letter sounds and Reception children are beginning to identify the initial sounds of words. Some children read simple words.
57. Children learn to communicate through writing. Most clearly understand that marks on paper convey meaning and their work shows that they enjoy making lists and writing their names. During the inspection, children were involved in preparations for 'PB Bear's birthday' and enjoyed writing invitations to his party. A very good emphasis on making sure that there is some purpose to the writing activities that children are expected to undertake is helping children to enjoy writing.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Activities are interesting and fun.

- There is a very good emphasis on helping children to understand mathematical language.



## Commentary

Standards of attainment	Most children reach the levels expected for their age, with some doing much better and some a little behind
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good
Other factors affecting pupils' achievement	Good attention paid to developing children's understanding of mathematical language
Improvement since last inspection	Very good

*Activities are interesting and fun.*

58. There is a good balance between whole-class teaching, focused group work and activities where children can work independently. In all these scenarios the work or play activity planned captures children's interest and attention. Consequently they move forward in their learning very well. In one Nursery session, for example, children had to collect, into a tub, as many rice grains as they could in the time it took a toy bird to slide down a stick. They then worked with the teacher to count them up confidently.

*There is a very good emphasis on helping children to understand mathematical language.*

59. Staff take care to use correct mathematical language and to reinforce this when they work with the children on focused tasks. This was very evident in a Reception Year session to do with 'small' and 'large' numbers.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Activities are firmly rooted in children's experiences.
- Children are developing their ICT skills very well.

## Commentary

Standards of attainment	Wide-ranging, most children reach the levels expected for their age, with some doing much better and some a little behind
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good
Factors affecting pupils' achievement	Interesting and relevant activities grab children's imagination
Improvement since last inspection	Very good

*Activities are firmly rooted in children's experiences.*

60. There is a wealth of activities available in both the Nursery and Reception classes to extend children's understanding of the world about them. Staff engage children's interest by planning work based on half termly 'topics'. In the Reception Year, children have been looking at 'bears' and in one session seen children compared differently flavoured porridge. Alongside topics, pupils develop their understanding of the passing of time through their celebration of birthdays and religious festivals, such as Chinese New Year.

*Children are developing their ICT skills very well.*

61. Children have regular opportunities to use computers, digital cameras and tape recorders. They use these well and show good control of the keyboard and mouse.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outside classroom is very well resourced.
- There is good attention to the development of children's skills in using small tools and equipment.

### Commentary

Standards of attainment	Most children reach the levels expected for their age
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good
Factors affecting pupils' achievement	The outside classroom is used very well to develop children's skills in this area
Improvement since last inspection	Very good

*The outside classroom is very well resourced.*

62. Children use the outside classroom very well. They enjoy the very wide range of activities available. These include a very good selection of wheeled toys and a purpose-built climbing frame. They use the space carefully and show due concern for other children. Children are developing their physical skills very well.

*There is good attention to the development of children's skills in using small tools and equipment.*

63. Pupils have every opportunity to work with small tools and writing implements. They show increasing dexterity in the use of these. They enjoy playing with the 'small world' toys and construction kits and manipulate these very well.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Role-play areas are well equipped and organised very well.
- There is a very good range of materials and tools for children to experiment with.
- Children have good opportunities to make music.

### Commentary

Standards of attainment	Most children reach the levels expected for their age
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Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching and learning	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good
Factors affecting pupils' achievement	Good range of materials and resources for children to use
Improvement since last inspection	Very good

*Role-play areas are very well equipped and organised well.*

64. There is a range of role-play areas. These include areas where pupils make up their own stories and use dressing up clothes to help them to act them out, and other areas with a narrower focus, such as the shoe and cake shops. Children use these imaginatively and an interesting incident took place in one session when the role-play in one area almost escalated into a shop burglary.

*There is a very good range of materials and tools for children to experiment with.*

65. Children select freely from a range of materials and tools when they make models and pictures. They show great imagination. One child in the Nursery, for example, who was sticking sequins onto a dark background explained that it was night time and her sequins 'were stars sparkling in the sky'.

*Children have good opportunities to make music.*

66. Songs and Nursery rhymes are part of the children's everyday diet, and complement work in all areas of learning. Children also have focused music sessions, where they learn about instruments and how to play them. There are also music areas, where children may choose to make up their own tunes.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above expected levels in Year 2 and well above expected levels in Year 4.
- Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and this underpins pupils' good achievement.
- Sound teaching in Years 3 and 4 ensures that pupils make steady progress.
- There is good support for pupils with special educational needs.
- The current focus on encouraging pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills is helping pupils to extend their thinking.
- The good emphasis on helping pupils to develop their reading skills is hampered by a limited range of fiction and non-fiction books.
- Pupils' writing shows that the work set is interesting and relevant.
- The subject co-ordinator has a clear understanding of strengths and what needs to be improved.

### **Commentary**

	Years 1 and 2	Years 3 and 4
Standards of attainment	Above expected levels	Wide ranging, but well above expected levels
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory

Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory, with clear strengths
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	Satisfactory
Other factors affecting pupils' achievement	Good support from parents and carers with reading at home has had a positive impact on learning	
Improvement since last inspection	Good provision has been maintained	

*Standards are above expected levels.*

67. At the end of both Years 2 and 4, almost all pupils have reached the levels expected for their age in speaking and listening skills, reading and writing, with some doing better in Year 2. In Year 4, a larger proportion is reaching higher levels. These pupils achieved very high standards in their Year 2 tests and have made steady progress in Years 3 and 4.

*Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and this underpins pupils' good achievement.*

68. Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and this ensures that most pupils achieve well. Particular strengths related to the teaching of English are:

- The use of good quality texts as a basis for work in lessons, which help pupils to appreciate how sentences are constructed;
- a good emphasis on encouraging pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills through 'talking buddies'; and
- interesting writing tasks, which help pupils to get really involved in their work.

*Sound teaching in Years 3 and 4 ensures that pupils make steady progress.*

69. Teaching is more variable in Years 3 and 4 and is sound overall, with some good features. Consequently most pupils achieve satisfactorily, with some doing better than this. Strong elements within the teaching include:

- Good support through the Additional Literacy programme for pupils who are a little behind; and
- high expectations of good presentation, which help pupils to take pride in their work.

Work is generally planned well, but pupils are not always told the purpose of the lesson and so do not always know where to focus their efforts. Usually tasks set are interesting, but on occasions teachers do not clarify exactly what pupils are expected to do, and so pupils struggle.

*There is good support for pupils with special educational needs.*

70. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well. Teachers are sensitive to their learning needs and plan appropriate tasks. Often these pupils receive extra adult support in class.

*The current focus on encouraging pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills is helping pupils to extend their thinking.*

71. There is a whole-school focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills, and this is a feature of work in all classes. Often during the introductory part of the lesson pupils work with their 'talking buddies' to discuss questions posed by the teacher. This helps all to be involved in the lesson and helps pupils to articulate their ideas on a regular basis. Pupils are generally confident speakers and most listen well to their classmates and teachers. The school is working towards developing a written framework to identify how to develop speaking and listening skills across the curriculum. During the

inspection, there was a good deal of evidence of paired work, but not so much emphasis on asking pupils to present work to the whole class.

*The good emphasis on helping pupils to develop their reading skills is hampered by a limited range of fiction and non-fiction books.*

72. Teachers do their best to interest pupils in a range of good quality fiction and non-fiction books. In Year 1, particularly, reading areas are attractive and inviting. However, staff are hampered by a limited selection of books and, in Years 3 and 4, by lack of space to create browsing areas for reading. The library is too small for a whole class to work in and has a limited number of books. Nonetheless, pupils are interested in books and enjoy reading. Reading skills are taught well. There is an appropriate emphasis on the teaching of phonics and pupils use a range of strategies to tackle unfamiliar words. Parents support their children well by sharing books with them at home and the home-school diaries show that pupils have good support both at home and at school.

*Pupils' writing shows that the work set is interesting and relevant.*

73. Right from the beginning pupils develop their skills by writing about topics that are rooted in their own experience. Very little time is spent on routine exercises. Consequently pupils enjoy writing and easily become involved in writing activities. Teachers provide good support for pupils by providing writing prompts in the form of lists of key words, or 'frames' to set out their writing. Spelling and handwriting are taught regularly, although in Year 2, pupils' everyday writing does not reflect the good handwriting style that they have been taught.

*The subject co-ordinator has a clear understanding of strengths and what needs to be improved.*

74. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and well-organised. She is clear about what needs to be improved and provides good support for colleagues. Her area of expertise is in work with younger pupils and so she finds it more challenging to monitor and evaluate the provision in Years 3 and 4.

## **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

75. Pupils are encouraged to develop their skills in other subjects. This is particularly apparent in the area of speaking and listening, with paired work being undertaken in several subjects. Pupils develop their reading and writing skills well in history and geography particularly.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above expected levels in Year 2 and well above expected levels in Year 4.
- Teaching is good overall.
- There is a strong focus on developing pupils' numeracy skills.
- Pupils' recorded work often does not reflect their level of understanding.
- The co-ordinator provides good leadership.

### **Commentary**

	Years 1 and 2	Years 3 and 4
Standards of attainment	Above expected levels	Wide ranging but well above expected levels in Year 4
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	Good
Other factors affecting pupils' achievement	Good support for pupils of all abilities Not enough opportunities to use and apply mathematical skills in practical situations	
Improvement since last inspection	Satisfactory	

*Standards are above expected levels in Year 2 and well above expected levels in Year 4.*

76. Pupils in Year 2 are achieving well and standards are above expected levels. Most pupils develop a secure understanding of basic number, shape and measurement. In Year 4, pupils are working well above expected levels. This year group did very well in their Year 2 tests and have made steady progress since. They are achieving satisfactorily and maintaining the high standards attained in the national tests in 2002 when they were in Year 2. They know the value of each digit in numbers to 1000, begin to understand negative numbers and measure accurately.

*Pupils' recorded work often does not reflect their level of understanding.*

77. There is not enough emphasis on encouraging younger pupils in particular to record their work. As a result their good levels of understanding are not reflected in the samples of work seen during the inspection. This limits their progress towards pencil and paper methods as they get older. Teachers quite rightly emphasise the importance of pupils understanding the concepts they teach. However, pupils often miss out on the opportunity to reinforce and extend their understanding by recording their strategies, for example when carrying out calculations. Sometimes this is because teachers talk too much at the beginning of lessons and group activities are rushed.

*Teaching is good overall.*

78. Overall, teaching and learning are good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Although teaching is stronger in Years 1 and 2, with teaching sound in Years 3 and 4, teachers throughout the school are well prepared for their lessons and make good use of practical aids to support pupils' learning. They show good knowledge of the subject. As a result, their teaching is accurate and their explanations are clear. Day-to-day assessment is used well to check pupils' understanding and to plan for future learning. With the capable support of teaching assistants, they provide well for pupils of all abilities, including lower-attaining pupils who are withdrawn from the class in small groups to help them catch up. Within this positive picture, there are elements of teaching that could be refined in order to strengthen the quality of pupils' learning. For example, the review or plenary phase of lessons is always used to check pupils' progress but could be used more imaginatively to set new challenges or to suggest the next steps in learning.

*There is a strong focus on developing pupils' numeracy skills.*

79. Teachers make good use of the National Numeracy Strategy as the basis for planning and their lessons are well structured. They encourage pupils to explore a range of different mental methods to aid their calculations and to discuss their work with talking

partners to consolidate their learning. However, there are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to use and apply these skills in practical situations.

*The co-ordinator provides good leadership.*

80. The leadership and management of mathematics are good. The co-ordinator is experienced and hardworking and has responded enthusiastically to the opportunities provided to develop her leadership role. Her analysis of test results and information gathered through sampling pupils' work and observing lessons provide her with a clear picture of standards and provision across the school. Her action plan is a detailed working document that reflects these monitoring procedures. It shows a determination to continue to improve the curriculum and teaching in order to raise standards further, for example, by developing the use of ICT to support pupils' learning.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

81. There are regular opportunities for pupils to use mathematics as part of their work in other subjects such as design and technology, geography and science. Teachers take advantage of these opportunities as they crop up, but are not yet planning them systematically.

### SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress and by Year 4 achieve well above the expected levels.
- Good teaching and learning ensures all pupils achieve well.
- There is a strong focus on pupils using and applying scientific knowledge.
- The subject is led and managed very well.
- The use of ICT to support learning in the subject is underdeveloped.

### Commentary

	Years 1 and 2	Years 3 and 4
Standards of attainment	Above expected levels	Well above expected levels
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Other factors affecting pupils' achievement	Strong focus on scientific enquiry Development of staff expertise	
Improvement since last inspection	Good	

*Pupils make good progress and by Year 4 achieve well above the expected levels.*

82. Since the last inspection pupils have continued to make good progress and achieve well. Pupils at the start of Year 2 are currently working at above the expected level and already beginning to design their own investigations. Those at the beginning of Year 4 are working at well above the expected level in planning investigations to test their hypotheses and accurately recording their observations. It is clear from the work seen

that all pupils, including the higher attainers, pupils with special educational needs, boys and girls, make good progress and achieve equally well.

*Good teaching and learning ensures all pupils achieve well.*

83. Teachers plan carefully and prepare lessons that build well on pupils' previous learning. They explain and introduce new ideas, ensuring pupils understand and use the correct terminology. Good use of questioning challenges and extends pupils' thinking. For example, Year 2 pupils used prior knowledge to suggest ways of finding the warmest part of the room. Teachers and the well-briefed teaching assistants provide good support for pupils of all abilities. This enables all pupils to achieve equally well. The practical nature of the well-chosen tasks ensures pupils are well motivated and eager to learn. Teachers' marking is supportive. It indicates to pupils how they are doing and often suggests how they might improve.

*There is a strong focus on pupils using and applying scientific knowledge.*

84. Investigations and practical tasks are a predominant feature of the work seen. From Year 1 onwards, pupils are progressively introduced to activities that capture their interest and develop their understanding. Year 4 pupils used their knowledge of insulators and a fair test to design an investigation. Teachers pay good attention to the process of predicting, testing and reaching conclusions to develop pupils' scientific skills and understanding. Careful recording and interpretation of observations sharpens pupils' scientific and mathematical skills. Teachers make good use of recording proformas to ensure children of all abilities achieve equally well.

*The subject is led and managed very well.*

85. Since the last inspection, the co-ordinator has made very good use of national guidance, LEA advice and governor expertise to develop a well-balanced scheme of work for the subject. In-service training sessions have been used well to develop staff expertise and focus on a practical approach to learning. Resources have been improved and the Millennium garden was created with parental help. Very good use has been made of monitoring opportunities to form an overview of provision. A clear plan for improvement has been central to improving provision and raising standards.

*The use of ICT to support learning in the subject is underdeveloped.*

86. The use of ICT is still at an early stage of development although there are clear plans to use the new resources to develop it further. Good use was made of digital magnified images of different papers in a Year 3 lesson to support a discussion about absorption.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Significant investment in the new computer room is having a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- The joint subject co-ordinators provide good leadership and management.
- The use of ICT to support other subjects is underdeveloped.



## Commentary

	Years 1 and 2	Years 3 and 4
Standards	At national expectation	At national expectation
Achievement	Good	Good
Quality of teaching & learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	Good
Other factors affecting pupils' achievement	Investment in the new computer suite is having a positive impact on learning.	
Improvement since last inspection	Provision for ICT has improved significantly.	

### *Teaching and learning*

87. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are planned well and make a good contribution to the development of pupils' computer skills. Teachers' good subject knowledge was evident in some of the lessons seen. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution and their extra support helps individual pupils learn effectively. Pupils are developing skills across all strands of the subject and reach the levels expected for their age by Year 2 and Year 4.

*Significant investment in the new computer room is having a positive impact on pupils' learning.*

88. The school has recently made a significant investment in providing a networked computer suite. This is helping teachers to ensure that pupils have more regular and consistent access to computers and is already having a positive impact upon pupils' learning and achievement.

*The joint subject co-ordinators provide good leadership and management.*

89. The joint co-ordinators provide good leadership and management. They are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and committed to ensuring that the subject continues to develop within the school. They work well together to ensure that teachers are supported in their planning in a subject in which individual confidence varies. They have a clear vision of how provision for ICT will continue to develop.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

90. The school is developing the use of ICT to support other subjects. Some interesting work has been undertaken. Pupils in Year 1, for example, used desktop publishing software to create their own front page for a book. Another Year 1 class used computers to create and label a map of their recent journey to visit a local church in a religious education lesson. In another lesson, Year 2 pupils used a program to create Mondrian-style pictures. There is scope to develop the use of ICT further and the school has correctly identified this as an area for improvement.

## HUMANITIES

### Religious education

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The use of interesting resources helps pupils to learn effectively.

## Commentary

	Years 1 and 2	Years 3 and 4
Standards achieved	At expectation	At expectation
Achievement	Insufficient evidence	Good
Quality of teaching and learning	Insufficient evidence	Good overall
Quality of curriculum leadership	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Other factors affecting pupils' achievement	Good use of first hand experiences has a positive impact on pupils' learning	
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory	

*The use of interesting resources helps pupils to learn effectively.*

91. Standards in religious education are broadly in line with those expected nationally and in the locally agreed syllabus, as they were at the time of the last inspection.
92. Two lessons were seen in Years 3 and 4 during the inspection. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in one and very good in the other.
93. A common feature of both lessons seen was the teachers' use of a practical activity to enliven and enrich the experience for pupils. In a Year 3 lesson on Christian baptism, for example, pupils took on the roles of parents, minister and godparents to act out the ceremony under the direction of the teacher. Similarly, in a Year 4 class, the teacher wore traditional Muslim clothes as she taught about the Muslim prayer ceremony, the *Wudu*. All pupils were invited to join with the teacher in acting out the stages of this ceremony, including two pupils who also wore Muslim dress. This very good lesson was characterised by the respectful manner in which it was conducted, which, in turn, ensured that all pupils achieved well. Year 1 pupils were eager to tell inspectors about their visit to a local church during the previous week. There they were able to see the large Bible, following on from their thinking about 'special books' in class.
94. Only one lesson was seen in **history** and two lessons in **geography**. It is not therefore possible to make a secure judgement about provision, although the limited evidence suggests it is at least satisfactory. Evidence was also drawn from talking to teachers and pupils, viewing planning and displays and looking at examples of work from the previous year.
95. In both geography and history, there are strong links with other subjects including literacy and numeracy, although teachers maintain an emphasis on developing the particular skills of each subject. In history, for example, pupils in Year 4 were captivated by the teacher's storytelling. They showed a secure understanding of different sources of evidence and a developing sense of chronology as they considered Boudicca's motives for leading her revolt against the Romans. In geography, pupils' enquiry skills are developed successfully and there are regular opportunities for fieldwork. In both subjects, good use is made of visits and visitors to enhance teaching and learning. Fieldwork is a regular feature of the geography curriculum. In Year 1, pupils recalled their walk to the church using photographs to identify features observed on their route. In Year 3, they moved on to looking in more detail at different forms of land use in Dunstable. Good use is made of ICT in both subjects. Lower-attaining pupils used a CD-Rom to extend their knowledge of Boudicca and in Year 1, pupils developed basic computer skills while constructing a local street plan.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

96. Only one lesson was seen in art and design, one lesson and one group in design and technology and one lesson in music. Three gymnastics lessons were seen in physical education. It is not therefore possible to make a secure judgement about provision although the limited evidence suggests it is at least satisfactory. Evidence was also drawn from talking to teachers and pupils, viewing planning and displays and looking at examples of work from the previous year.
97. In **art and design**, good use is made of opportunities to link work to topics in other subjects such as geography, science and ICT. Teachers introduce pupils well to a range of different approaches and techniques, with pupils being encouraged to record and develop their ideas in their sketchbooks. These are used well to develop pupils' skills through use of different media. Displays show how Year 1 pupils had experimented with the different qualities of a range of materials. Following their visit to Bennets 'Rec', Year 2 pupils had used collected material for observational drawing, printing, clay work and collage. Their teacher's careful explanation and detailed guidance encouraged good results. Year 2 pupils had made good use of ICT to create pictures in the style of Mondrian and Jackson Pollock. Year 4 pupils' Clarice Cliff designs showed how they had explored her designs by experimenting with a range of media, including ICT.
98. In **design and technology**, good emphasis is placed on developing pupils' skills by providing opportunities to learn different techniques through working with a range of materials. A group of Year 1 pupils accurately cut and assembled the moving paper parts of their 'Red Riding Hood' pictures. Beneficial links are often made to other subjects. As part of their work on Peru, Year 4 pupils looked at designs, learnt different stitches and how to weave. They explained how they had examined different bags, prepared designs for pencil holders and evaluated their work. Annotated designs from Year 3 showed how they had planned and constructed hand puppets. Good use has been made of national guidance to ensure all the expected strands are planned.
99. In **music**, planning is based on national guidance and a published scheme. This ensures that skills related to performing, composing and appraising are taught, as well as providing opportunities for pupils to listen to music and apply their knowledge and understanding. The school's own evaluation identifies work on performance skills as the strongest element. This was certainly corroborated by the very good standards of singing in the choir rehearsal seen. Older pupils have the opportunity to take part in local music festivals and all pupils are involved in school productions. In the very good lesson seen, Year 1 pupils used instruments very effectively to represent mood and changes and achieved very well because of skilled teaching. Strengths in the teaching include the very good subject expertise and enthusiasm of one of the staff, who provides good support for colleagues. A skilled volunteer accompanist also makes a very valuable contribution to the teaching of singing. He is much appreciated by the pupils who look forward to 'Granddad's' weekly visits. A few pupils are given the opportunity to learn a tuned instrument. Currently, a few pupils learn the violin and cello.
100. The **physical education** curriculum provides a well-planned range of experiences in dance, games and gymnastics. The spacious hall is well equipped for gymnastics and dance and the nearby park is used for games teaching. There is no requirement to teach swimming with this age group. In the three gymnastics lessons seen, in Years 1, 3 and 4, standards were in line with expected levels.

101. In each of the lessons, teachers worked hard to encourage good attitudes to physical education and managed pupils' natural enthusiasm well, channelling this effectively into successful learning. They combined clear explanations and instructions with plenty of opportunities for pupils to practise a variety of gymnastics movements. Teaching was good in two of the lessons and satisfactory in the third. Secure knowledge of the subject was a feature of the better lessons, enabling the teachers to provide more specific guidance about how pupils might refine their movements. As a result, pupils in Year 4, for example, thought carefully about shape, balance and travel in their well-controlled sequences.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

102. There is insufficient evidence to judge the overall quality of teaching or standards achieved. The school attaches a good deal of importance to this area of the curriculum. Lessons are regularly timetabled and the quality of teaching in those seen was satisfactory and very good in Year 4. In a very good Year 4 lesson, a story by Janine Amos was used very effectively to stimulate pupils' thinking about bullying. The teacher used it not only to explore the motives of those concerned in detail, but also to tease out how such issues might be tackled. Emotions and feelings are explored well through scenarios in class discussions. These provide good opportunities for pupils' own personal development and their ability to live in harmony with others as they explore ideas such as friendship in Year 2. In discussions, teachers are careful to value all contributions and to create a supportive climate in which pupils of all abilities feel able to contribute.

103. The school council and class discussions make an effective contribution to pupils' understanding of citizenship. Programmes of sex, drugs and health education are linked well to pupils' work in science and help them develop a healthy lifestyle. Good use is made of outside agencies and the visit of the 'Life Bus'.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

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

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
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	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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