

INSPECTION REPORT

GOTHIC MEDE LOWER SCHOOL

Arlesey

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109427

Headteacher: Mrs J Phillips

Lead inspector: Mr Graham Lee

Dates of inspection: 27th – 29th June

Inspection number: 266897

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5-9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	215
School address:	High Street Arlesey Bedfordshire
Postcode:	SG15 6SL
Telephone number:	01462 732002
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs S Avis
Date of previous inspection:	30 th November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Gothic Mede Lower School is situated in the small town of Arlesey in rural Bedfordshire. It is at the centre of the community and is part of a complex, which includes the nursery school, library, district council offices and doctor's surgery. It is the only lower school in the town and the vast majority of children come from within the town. Currently there are 215 children on roll aged five to nine. They transfer from the adjoining nursery school in the term following their fifth birthdays. The roll has declined slightly over the last few years, although there has been a recovery this year. The school serves a wide ranging community with diverse needs, although attainment on entry is broadly average. Approximately 20 per cent of the school population have special educational needs, which is in line with the national average. This figure has risen sharply over the past year. Five children have a statement of special educational need. Almost all children are of white British heritage and none speak English as an additional language. Around 8% of children are entitled to free school meals, which is well below average. In 2003 the school received a School Achievement Award and was also accredited as a Healthy School and an Investor in People.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20959	Graham Lee	Lead inspector	English Geography History Religious Education
9977	Fran Luke	Lay inspector	
12603	Tusha Chakraborti	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Science Art and Design Design and Technology English as an additional language
25787	Edmond Morris	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communications Technology Music Physical Education Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective and inclusive school. Children achieve well because of good teaching. Standards reached currently at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 are better than average. The school has a strong caring ethos where children feel safe and secure. Gothic Mede has been through a difficult period but has recovered very well through the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, strongly supported by a very effective leadership team and governing body. It provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very strong leadership from the headteacher, senior team and governors provides vision and high aspirations for all.
- Children achieve well because of good teaching.
- A strong caring ethos means that children are happy and secure and learn effectively.
- Children behave very well and enjoy learning because of the high expectations of all staff.
- The school is very inclusive and children with special educational needs achieve very well.
- Children make a very good start in the Reception class.

The school has no significant weaknesses.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection and particularly rapid improvement over the past year. Standards are at least as good and the quality of teaching is better than at the time of the last inspection. The school's ethos and the behaviour of children are now very good and the provision for children's personal development has also improved. All key issues have been successfully addressed. Planning is now better and promotes multi-cultural education effectively. Teachers' assessments help children to understand what they need to do to improve. The role of the curriculum co-ordinators is developing and having an impact on attainment.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
reading	C	A	D	D
writing	C	A	D	D
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*

Children achieve well throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, those who are gifted and talented and the few children learning English as an additional language. They arrive with standards that are broadly average and make very good progress in the one or two terms they spend in the Reception class because of the high quality teaching they receive. Most are on course to meet the early learning goals for children of this age and some have gone beyond this. They continue to achieve well in the current year as they move through the school as a result of good teaching. At the end of Year 2 they are reaching standards that are above average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics and science. Their attainment is above expected levels by the time they leave the school in Year 4. This represents a significant improvement from last year when standards and children's progress took a dip, particularly in reading and writing, because fewer children reached the higher levels.

The school's provision for the personal development of children is very good, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural needs. The provision for social and moral development is

particularly strong because of the excellent relationships throughout the school and strong, nurturing ethos.

Throughout the school children's behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. They enjoy school, are enthusiastic about their learning and work well together. Attendance is satisfactory and has improved over the last year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **good quality of education** for its children. **Teaching is good overall** and of high quality in many lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of their children. They plan effectively to meet the needs of all their children and work in close partnership with a very effective team of teaching assistants. As a result, children achieve well and make good progress in their learning. There are effective procedures for assessment in the school. The curriculum is good and provides an impressive range of additional activities to enhance learning. The performing arts are beginning to have a very positive impact on learning both within lessons and in the termly productions that take place. The accommodation is satisfactory but classroom and outside space for the reception children is limited. There are excellent relationships in the school and children are well cared for and supported. The school now has a very strong partnership with parents and a satisfactory relationship with the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are very good overall. The headteacher is an outstanding leader who has brought renewed success to the school after a very difficult period. She is very ably supported by a highly effective leadership team and a strong governing body. School leaders are committed to high standards in all aspects of the school's work and have implemented many strategies that have brought about the rapid improvement of the school. Curriculum co-ordinators are clear about their roles and are becoming increasingly effective in improving teaching and learning in their subjects. Governors know the school well and have made important decisions that have brought about the improvements in the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold the school in high regard. Without exception they point to great improvements in the school this year. Children also take a pride in their school and enjoy all that it has to offer

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school has no major areas to address.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Throughout the school, children of all abilities achieve well. Many children exceed expected standards at the end of the Foundation Stage in most areas of learning. By the age of seven, children's attainment in reading and writing is above average and in mathematics and science it is well above average. By the time children leave the school in Year 4 their attainment is above average overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well in the Reception class through high quality teaching.
- Throughout the school, children achieve high standards in mathematics.
- Children are achieving very well in reading and writing leading to improving attainment.
- Higher attainers in science are now achieving well through very good teaching.
- Children with special educational needs (SEN) achieve well and make very good progress.
- Achievement in the performing arts is impacting on attainment.

Commentary

1. Children enter the school with attainment that is broadly average overall but not quite as good in their communication and language skills. In the short time they are in the Reception class, they make rapid progress and achieve very well because of very effective teaching. By the time they enter Year 1 many children are exceeding the early learning goals set for children of this age in all areas of their learning except in communication, language and literacy, in which they reach expected standards.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	15.3 (17.0)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	14.1 (16.7)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	17.3 (18.3)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 36 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. In mathematics standards for seven year olds have been consistently high since the last inspection both in relation to all schools and those that are similar. Those high standards are likely to be maintained this year and children are reaching levels, which are well above average for their age. They build on their achievement in the Reception class and make good progress. After a year of very limited progress, children are now achieving well in their last two years and by the time they leave the school, at the end of Year 4, standards remain above average. The main reason for the high standards is the good quality teaching. A particular feature of the work in mathematics is the successful emphasis on mental calculation throughout the school, which gives children confidence in tackling a range of problems.

3. In reading and writing the picture has been more variable and results took a significant dip last year. This was mainly because far fewer children reached the higher levels than has been the case in the past. However, standards have recovered this year and are likely to be above average in both reading and writing, with many more children achieving higher levels. This improvement is the result of high calibre teaching, which motivates and interests the children. In particular there has been an effective emphasis on guided reading which has generated a real enthusiasm for books in the school. Writing skills are developed and encouraged by creative approaches, which encourage

children to think of themselves as writers. After a year of very limited progress last year, children in the current Year 3 and 4 are now achieving well in all aspects of English. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4 their attainment is above average in both reading and writing. Throughout the school children make good progress in all aspects of the subject. Standards and achievement are now at least as high as they were at the time of the last inspection.

4. Last year in science all children reached the expected level but very few reached the higher levels. In the current Year 2, standards have improved and are well above average because a significant number of children are reaching the higher level through appropriate levels of challenge. Pupils are developing good scientific knowledge and understanding and the skills of scientific enquiry through very good teaching. Throughout the school, children are achieving well and standards remain above average by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4. This indicates that the good standards achieved by children at the time of the last inspection have at least been maintained.

5. In most other subjects, children are performing as well as expected. A particular feature of the work is the high quality of attainment in the musical and dramatic aspects of the performing arts, which is beginning to have a positive impact on children's performance in many aspects of the curriculum. In information and communications technology (ICT) and religious education (RE) children are making satisfactory progress and are reaching standards which are broadly average.

6. Children of all abilities achieve well because the school has a very strong commitment to inclusion. Throughout the school children with SEN make very good progress in relation to their individual targets and achieve very well. This is because teachers plan effectively to meet children's needs and they are very well supported by a strong team of teaching assistants. Similarly, those of higher ability receive levels of additional challenge, which enables them to achieve well in most lessons. This is confirmed by the significantly higher number of children reaching higher levels in reading, writing and science this year. The few children learning English as an additional language make as good progress as their peers. In recent years boys have consistently outperformed girls. However, during the inspection girls and boys performed equally well and the school ensures that they have equal opportunities through a variety of teaching styles.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Children's attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. The level of attendance is satisfactory and children are very punctual.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children show an excellent level of interest in school life and all the activities available to them.
- The school's very positive behaviour policy and the exceptionally high expectations of children's conduct means that they want to behave well.
- Children are free from harassment.
- Excellent relationships enable children to work together co-operatively and collaboratively.
- Children have very positive attitudes to their work.
- Children are punctual to school, which means the day starts well.

Commentary

7. Children have very good levels of interest in school life and all the activities provided for them. Their very positive attitudes to their work, eagerness to learn and enthusiasm mean that little time is wasted in lessons. Teachers have high expectations and manage children very well; this means they are kept well engaged, concentrate and are attentive. Children are keen to discuss their ideas and they work together very well, either in groups or in pairs. In the playground they play very well together, supported by staff who keep them occupied with various playground games. In the dining hall children show good manners and there is quiet, social atmosphere. The school sets extremely high expectations with regard to children's behaviour. This approach means that

behaviour throughout the school is very good at all time and supports children’s learning and achievement very well. There were six exclusions in the school year prior to the inspection. However, this very positive approach to children’s behaviour has had a significant impact and this figure has reduced to one in the current year. Parents are very clear that behaviour has improved dramatically.

8. Children are polite and courteous to their peers as well as to all adults. As a result, relationships are very good. Children are encouraged to have respect for one another and this leads to a calm and harmonious atmosphere in the school. The school has very effective procedures in place to deal with all forms of harassment. Consequently, children are confident that little bullying takes place and all members of staff deal with any issues very quickly.

9. The school has worked hard to improve children’s self-esteem through the many opportunities to take on additional responsibilities; as a result children from Reception onwards are confident. Children have a variety of responsibilities including collecting class registers and acting as monitors in the classroom. They are also appointed as school council representatives. They are very proud of their responsibilities and take them very seriously.

10. Children’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. Spiritual development is good and enhanced by the general ethos of the school and through religious education (RE) and in assemblies. Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on their feelings and spiritual issues. They show a high level of respect for other people’s feelings and beliefs.

11. Moral and social development is promoted very well through the very strong caring ethos, which pervades all aspects of school life. Children are encouraged to think of others through their fund- raising activities and are constantly reminded of the importance of living in a community. In lessons they discuss issues in groups and in pairs and recognise the need to show respect and let others have their say. Boys and girls routinely work together in all classrooms which enhances their social skills.

12. Provision for children’s cultural development is good. Staff use children’s own background and cultures to support learning. The school promotes other cultures and faiths well through geography and RE and children learn to understand and to respect these cultures. The school prepares pupils well for living in a multi-cultural society and this is an area, which is much improved from the last inspection.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2003/04)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.8	School data	0.4
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

13. The school has worked hard to improve attendance. As a result attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. Parents are supportive of the school’s efforts and ensure their children arrive at school on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education for its children. The quality of teaching is good overall with many very good features. The curriculum is good and there are many opportunities to enrich children’s learning. The provision for children’s care and welfare is very good as is the partnership with parents. Community links are satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Partnership between teachers and teaching assistants is very effective.
- Teachers and children are clear about what they are learning.
- Relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and children are excellent.
- Teachers have high expectations of children's work and behaviour.
- Enthusiasm of teachers and children leads to very effective teaching and learning.
- Commitment to the inclusion of all children means that all children achieve well.
- Marking is inconsistent; in some classes it helps children to improve their work but this is not always the case.
- Expectations regarding homework are unclear.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 31 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (6 %)	15 (48 %)	11(36 %)	3(10%)	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.

14. The quality of teaching is good overall and this means that children are enthusiastic learners and achieve well. In more than half of lessons seen the quality of teaching was of high calibre. This is an improvement on the last inspection. Teaching was of consistently high quality in the Foundation class and the very best teaching in the rest of the school was spread equally across both key stages and subjects. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. When work in children's books from the beginning of the year is taken into account the overall quality of teaching is good. Overall this shows an improvement in the quality of teaching from the last inspection.

15. In the reception class the teaching is of high quality. The teacher makes the most of the relatively short time she has with the children to plan effectively to meet their needs. She uses a wide variety of teaching strategies and uses her knowledge of the children to build on their knowledge and understanding in order to move on to the next stage of learning. The environment is welcoming and stimulating. As a result children quickly adjust to routines and become eager and independent learners.

16. A real strength in the teaching is the partnership between teachers and between teachers and teaching assistants. As a result there is a consistency in planning and approach, which benefits the children. A lot of work has been done this year to ensure that teachers and children are clear about what they are learning and how they will know if they have been successful. As a result, children have a sense of achievement at the end of lessons and are able to identify the progress they are making. As much of the planning is conducted jointly teachers are able to share ideas and resources and work to improve what they do together. Teaching assistants take a very active part in lessons and provide high quality support to children with SEN in particular. Consequently, all children are able to make progress in lessons regardless of their needs.

17. Another major strength in the teaching is the excellent relationships between teachers and children and the genuine enthusiasm for learning that they communicate. They have very high expectations of children's work and behaviour. Children respond to this positive approach very well. They enjoy school, are extremely positive about their learning, concentrate on their work and behave very well.

18. In the very best lessons teachers employ creative and innovative methods which excite and challenge the children and promote their learning effectively. There were many examples of this during the inspection. In a Year 4 geography lesson, children were asked to direct each other round the classroom using instructions and compass directions. In a Year 2 lesson on seaside holidays, the teacher used a strategy where children were asked to act as 'experts' in a particular field in order to collect information and share it with others in the group. In a Year 1 music lesson, children were challenged to create their own score for a piece of music. The teaching in English and mathematics is of consistently good quality throughout the school. In literacy lessons, teachers use creative methods which enthuse children and enable them to see themselves as writers. A feature of the work in mathematics is the brisk and purposeful mental and oral starter, which sets the tone for the lesson and allows children to develop a facility with mental recall.

19. All teachers create inclusive classrooms and staff promote equality of opportunity very effectively. Groups are arranged very carefully to ensure that activities meet the needs of the children. These groups change depending on the activity. A particular feature of classroom organisation is that boys and girls sit together as a matter of routine and there are regular opportunities for them to collaborate and co-operate effectively. Teachers plan activities to meet the needs of pupils with SEN and these children are supported very well both in the class and in withdrawal groups, through the teaching assistants. Similarly teachers plan challenging activities to meet the needs of those of higher ability. As a result, most children are able to achieve well.

20. Teachers are very good at giving verbal feedback during lessons to enable children to improve their work. They also review work at the end of lessons in order that children can reflect on their learning. Children are also encouraged to assess their own and each other's work in a constructive manner. For example in a Year 4 English lesson, children were asked to indicate to one another strengths and weaknesses and points for improvement. As a result children are routinely looking to make their work better. Some good examples of marking were seen which gave children clear guidance on how they might improve their work but this was not the case in all books. Similarly, some parents were concerned about inconsistencies in the use of homework and inspectors found that expectations did vary from class to class.

The curriculum

The curriculum provision is **good** throughout the school. It is enriched by a good level and range of additional activities. The accommodation is satisfactory and resources in the school are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good quality curriculum that is carefully planned to engage children.
- Many opportunities for all children to participate in a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities.
- The curriculum provides very well for children with SEN.
- The school is very well staffed.
- Some aspects of the school's accommodation are unsatisfactory.
- Extent of visits and visitors is somewhat limited

Commentary

21. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements, including those for religious education and the daily act of worship. There is suitable provision for sex and drug education. There is good provision for teaching children personal, social, citizenship and health education. The curriculum is good throughout the school and is very good in the Reception class because of the range of activities offered to children. All subjects are taught to an appropriate depth and the time allocated to mathematics, judged to be too long at the last inspection, has been trimmed with no reduction in the standards achieved. The school has developed a number of productive links between subjects to make the curriculum more relevant and interesting. These links are particularly effective when the time allocation for each subject is combined. This either frees up time to be used in other

subjects of the curriculum or allows for study to a much greater depth in the two subjects concerned. For example, when Year 4 children used the Internet to find out about the Romans they improved their ICT skills whilst also learning more about history. As a result of the good quality curriculum with its many extras, children are all fully capable of coping with the demands of the next stage in their education.

22. The school gives children many opportunities to enjoy experiences and activities over and above those included in the National Curriculum. The very good level of high quality clubs held at lunchtime and after school by teachers, teaching assistants, parents and outside providers includes a range of sporting and other activities. The level of participation in sport, some of it competitive, and in singing, dance and drama is very good. Children in all years also go out of school occasionally to visit museums and other places of educational interest. Visitors to the school, such as the 'Saxon' visitor, help provide a focus to learning by grabbing children's imagination and making the work much more interesting. There is an annual residential school trip to France for pupils in Year 4. This enables them to experience another culture whilst learning to live together harmoniously in an environment away from home. However, the number of visits out is rather limited and the school does not make full use of the many museums and other places of interest in the area.

23. The curriculum for children with SEN is very good throughout the school. It is most successful when the work they are given by their teachers is linked to the targets in their individual education plans and is specifically designed to help them achieve as well as possible. These individual plans have been much improved since the last inspection when the targets were too broad. They are now much sharper and the targets are easily measured smaller steps. Children are given full access to the curriculum and the many other activities provided by the school. They receive high quality help from extremely well trained and committed teaching assistants. This support is sometimes given outside the classroom and, wherever possible, is linked to the work in class so they do not miss any important learning in other subjects.

24. The school is very well staffed with teachers who have a range of expertise in many subject areas. They willingly share their skills and knowledge with colleagues when planning the curriculum so that all aspects can be successfully taught. Their enthusiasm, particularly for the performing arts, is infectious and there is a real buzz of excitement in the school about the curriculum and how to improve it even further. Teaching assistants are highly qualified, dedicated and very skilled. They give very good support to the teachers and the children they work with. As a result, children are able to achieve well and make good progress as they move through the school.

25. The school's accommodation is satisfactory overall. The outside area is well maintained and, with the access to the adjacent park, is spacious and gives children lots of room to play safely. Most classrooms are of a suitable size and there are a number of small bays used effectively for teaching groups. However, classroom space for the Reception children is rather limited and their outside area is unsatisfactory. It consists of a rather cramped, coned off area of the school playground and has no shade or fixed equipment. Children's toilets in the Year 1 corridor are too open, as they are not separated from the corridor by doors. Swimming has been a good feature of the physical education curriculum for many years.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for children's care, welfare, health and safety is very good. Children's personal development is tracked well. The involvement of children through seeking and acting on their views is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Health and safety procedures ensure that the school is kept safe.
- Very good levels of care for all children ensure that pupils are monitored closely as they progress through the school.

- Very good induction procedures for children entering the school ensure that they settle quickly.
- Children have an active voice in what happens in the school.

Commentary

26. This area remains a strong part of the school's work as it was at the time of the last inspection. The school has very thorough health and safety procedures in place. All staff and governors are vigilant in ensuring that the environment is kept safe by routinely checking grounds, buildings and equipment on a termly basis. Any concerns are promptly reported back to governors and addressed. Risk assessments are fully in place.

27. Child protection procedures are firmly in place. All teaching staff and most non-teaching staff have recently attended a training course; all staff who didn't attend were fully briefed at a later date. As a result all staff are aware of the procedures and know what they need to do should they have any concerns. Children who suffer minor accidents or who are feeling unwell are very well looked after. As a result, they feel safe and well cared for. At the pre-inspection parents meeting, parents confirmed that they are very happy with the level of care provided for their children.

28. There are very good opportunities for the school to obtain children's views through the school council as well as through children's questionnaires. Very good informal procedures to monitor children's personal progress, together with very good relationships mean that all adults know the children extremely well and are quickly aware if something is wrong. Children confirm that they enjoy coming to school and are extremely happy that there is always someone they can turn to for help and advice.

29. Very good induction procedures for children entering the school ensure that they feel welcome and settle into school quickly. Few children start at the school in older year groups, but if they do arrangements are made for them to meet the headteacher and their class teacher. They are then dealt with on an individual basis to help them settle and understand school procedures.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents and with other schools are very good. Links with the community are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has very positive links with parents; they are consulted on different issues and are supportive of the school.
- Information provided for parents about the school and the curriculum is very good.
- Very good links with other schools ensures that there is a smooth transfer for children when they move up to the middle school.

Commentary

30. Newsletters and other general letters to parents give them a regular update about what is happening in school. At the beginning of each year parents are invited in to meet their child's teacher and to find out what they will be covering in the curriculum during the year. Many use the information given to support their children at home and help them practise what they learn in school.

31. Parents are able to see very clearly from the written annual reports, what progress their children are making. The reports show what children know, understand and can do and some give areas for further development. There are many opportunities for parents to discuss progress informally as well as at formal consultation evenings.

32. The responses to the parent questionnaire and the pre-inspection meeting with parents, confirms that the school has very positive relationships with parents. Parents confirm the school's

open door policy and say that staff are always available on the playground in the morning and after school for informal discussion. Parents believe they are well informed and welcomed in the school. A good number help out on a regular basis in the classroom, as well as on school trips. Parents are regularly surveyed for their views on different aspects of school life. Their views were recently sought when the school revised its behaviour policy to see if they had noticed any impact. The surveys were analysed and acted upon and as a result parents feel their views are valued. The Parents and Friends of Gothic Mede is very supportive and organises social and fund-raising events for specific projects throughout the year.

33. The school's links with the local community are currently satisfactory. The school arrange a number of visits to places of interest in the local area as well as visitors to the school to support the curriculum. Visitors include the fire brigade and the Baptist minister. Links with the local elderly residents help to support pupils' personal development. There is scope for further development of links with the community.

34. The school works very closely with the local middle school to ensure that the transfer of children at the end of Year 4 takes place smoothly. A range of visits and activities take place in the three terms prior to transfer giving children ample opportunities to visit the school to meet both staff and pupils. These activities, plus discussions between staff ensure that the middle school staff knows the children well before they start in Year 5. Curriculum links with other schools in the local area support the school well. Staff regularly attend joint training sessions and the school is part of a Learning Network in the area, which has enhanced a variety of curriculum areas.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and governance are very good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Management is effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has demonstrated outstanding leadership in moving the school forward over the past year.
- The leadership team provide very effective support .
- Governors have led the school effectively through a very difficult time by taking decisive and appropriate action.

Commentary

35. The current headteacher has excellent leadership qualities. She has turned the school into a successful school again since she took over the position in an interim role in September 2004, following the long-term illness and subsequent retirement of the former headteacher. She has created a highly effective team that includes all who work in the school and has successfully united them in a common aim to strive for high standards in all aspects of the school's work. Her high aspirations for the school and the constant drive to improve learning for all children are key factors in the school's success. The new leadership team provide very high quality support and have implemented many initiatives to ensure rapid and effective school improvement over the current year. Strategic planning is very closely linked to the school's aims and priorities are very carefully planned to ensure that these are successfully met within the given time. The school improvement plan is flexible and is always ready to respond to changing circumstances so that initiatives are always relevant and successful. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses very well so that its improvement plan contains all the issues that it needs to sustain high standards of children's work and behaviour.

36. Management of the school is good. All decisions focus on what is best for the children and how to further improve the already high quality of education. The leadership team play a central role in supporting and developing the subject leaders through performance management. Many of the subject leaders are new. Although their roles are very well developed in English, mathematics

and science, they are not developed so well in the foundation subjects yet. However, the school's improvement plan has prioritised the focus areas for each of next three years to ensure that the roles of all subject leaders are developed effectively. The curriculum is monitored effectively through the evaluation sheets filled in by teachers for all subjects when a particular unit of work is completed. These evaluations enable the leadership team and subject leaders to know exactly what has been taught, to what depth and how successful the pupils have been in learning new skills and gaining in knowledge.

37. The governing body plays an important role in leading the school forward. They understand the strengths of the school as well as areas for improvement and assess the impact of any new initiatives and judge the effectiveness of their spending efficiently. In this respect, their decision to appoint the new management team has been very effective and arrangements for a successful succession next year have been secured. Governors are very involved with all aspects of the school. They carefully evaluate and monitor information and reports they receive from the headteacher and staff about curriculum areas. Each governor who has a curriculum responsibility links up with subject leaders and visits classrooms which help them to understand the work of the school. They give very good support to all staff and are their critical friends. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties.

38. Provision for children with SEN is managed very well. Children's achievements are tracked very carefully to highlight any need for intervention if they are not achieving as well as expected. The governor who oversees the provision for children with SEN is actively involved in the school and has received training. Regular meetings with the SEN co-ordinator helps to sustain the effective provision for these children. Outside agencies are consulted and fully involved in the provision when required. Support assistants are trained very well and are highly valued members of the whole school team.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	612,234	Balance from previous year	5,994
Total expenditure	577,647	Balance carried forward to the next	46,089
Expenditure per pupil	2,808		

39. Financial management is very secure. The principles of best value are applied very well in the recruitment of experienced staff and the use of resources. Suppliers are challenged to show that their product or service will have a positive impact on the quality of learning. The school has a higher than usual surplus, but this is clearly earmarked for future projects, such as improving the outdoor provision for the Foundation Stage and the purchase of new computers. The school gives good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

40. Children's attainment on entry for this age is in line with that normally seen, although it is just below average in communication, language and literacy. They enter the school in the term following their fifth birthdays in the spring and summer terms each year from the adjacent nursery school. Summer born children go straight into Year 1 and do not spend any time in the Reception class. Children make very good progress in all the areas of learning during their short stay in Reception and achieve very well. As a result, by the time they enter Year 1, most children exceed the expected standards set for them in personal social and emotional and mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative and physical development. In communication, language and literacy, they reach the expected standards.

41. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in all aspects of the work. Staff have very good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and the ways children learn. They plan very effectively and use a variety of teaching methods to develop children's skills, knowledge and understanding successfully. They assess very well what children know and can do and use this information very effectively to plan activities, building on their previous learning. Elements of the literacy framework are used successfully to ensure that children develop a good understanding of phonics through stories and rhymes. Staff ensure that the learning environment is welcoming and stimulating. Resources are used imaginatively to help children to become independent learners. This enables them to make important choices about their work and to learn through a variety of challenging and interesting activities.

42. The accommodation is barely satisfactory overall and staff make very good use of the limited space to enhance children's learning experiences. The classroom is cramped and the outdoor play area is not appropriately equipped to give children full access to outdoor learning activities. The school is well aware of this and has plans to improve the outdoor provision. Resources are good and well organised. A very effective assessment system charts children's progress consistently. The Reception teacher works closely with the leadership team and this area of the school's work is led very well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are engaged in activities very well and are eager for new experiences.
- They develop independent learning skills very well.
- Relationships between children and adults and children themselves are excellent and this provides a very positive learning atmosphere.

Commentary

43. Children make very good progress in personal, social and emotional development. Staff are very successful in enabling children to become independent and to make choices about their activities. They set up a range of well-planned activities to capture children's imagination and to ensure that learning takes place both inside and outside the classroom. Children readily come together on the carpet for the whole class sessions and listen with concentration. They work well together and support each other, for example, in playing games and role-play. Staff engage children very effectively in group discussions and respond to their experiences with genuine interest, encouraging them to play together. Children enjoy taking part in discussions and respond

confidently. They behave very well and play harmoniously, sharing their ideas and helping each other.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff provide very good opportunities to develop children's speaking and listening and reading skills.
- Children are encouraged to try out their knowledge of writing at a very early stage.
- There is a strong focus on teaching phonics, which enables children to recognise sounds and to try reading and writing words phonetically.

Commentary

44. Staff provide many opportunities for children to develop their speaking and listening and reading skills through discussions in all language activities, such as teaching phonics, reading stories and rhymes, retelling stories and role-play. Children's language is also developed very efficiently through activities in all other areas of learning. For example, children read the big book 'Smarty Pants' as a class and offer rhyming pairs of words. They sing rhymes and learn spelling patterns identifying initial and final letters in words. Teachers plan effectively to ensure that children are given sufficient opportunities to develop their language skills through conversation with adults during different activities. Adults play alongside the children to extend their vocabulary and model conversations and discussions. They use the correct vocabulary that helps all children to develop their communication skills. Children are developing early reading skills well and know that pictures tell stories. They show good understanding of the stories that the teachers read to them. Many children write their own sentences about the stories they read, describing the drawings that illustrate their ideas. Some words are spelt correctly; others are simple marks where children have tried to write independently. The very good teaching enable children to achieve very well.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make very good use of resources to engage children gainfully in their learning.
- Very good planning and assessment mean that children make very good progress.
- There are very good opportunities to develop mathematical understanding throughout the day.

Commentary

45. Children make very good progress in mathematical development. There is very good emphasis on developing children's knowledge about numbers across all the areas of learning. Staff help children to count and recognise numbers in every day situations. Most children count to 20 or beyond and recognise and write these numbers correctly. They also recognise and name different shapes and describe their characteristics, counting the edges and sides of the shapes correctly. They are learning to do simple addition and subtraction. Many children know that 1 less than 6 = 5 or 1 more than 6 = 7. They use appropriate mathematical language, such as 'more than' or 'less than' correctly during such activities. They develop good understanding of the use of every day words for giving directions to play games or to use programmable toys. For example, children were observed playing such a board game to learn how to instruct each other to move a number of lengths up or down the squares, as a preparation for the use of such a toy in a subsequent lesson.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of interesting activities develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

Commentary

46. Children enjoy many exciting experiences that help them to make very good progress throughout their stay in the Reception year. Staff plan activities together to ensure that children's skills are fully developed and that they build successfully on previous knowledge to understand more about the world in which they live. For example, children look at old and modern toys and discuss their similarities and differences in appearance and construction. In such an activity, they set up a toy hospital in the role-play area and are now planning to make their own versions of a hospital environment. They enjoy working on computers and use them effectively and confidently to paint, read stories or to write their names. They are good at manipulating the cursor and at recognising symbols needed to operate the computers effectively. Appropriate activities based on different topics also widen children's knowledge and understanding in other areas of the curriculum. In geography, they record changes in the weather during each season following walks around the local area.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well because staff plan very good opportunities to develop their skills and teaching is very good.
- Children have very good access to the school hall and appropriate equipment, although outside play area is not well equipped.

Commentary

47. Children achieve very well in this area of learning. This is because of the very high level expertise of the classteacher and the excellent use of the indoor provision. The outside play-area is not sufficiently developed to provide children with appropriate outdoor learning experiences. However, the co-ordinator has ensured that extra sessions in the hall and the use of the very good range of equipments in there develop and enhance children's co-ordination skills and an awareness of space very effectively. Children learn to make very good use of the equipment and the space in the hall, leaving room for others to move safely. They know why it is necessary to warm up before undertaking energetic physical activity and use space well as they move to music. In the classrooms, children show good manipulative skills in writing and drawing, handling pencils and brushes with confidence. Staff ensure that children are able to use the apparatus carefully to perform sequences of related activities, such as catching and bouncing a ball without losing control of it. At playtime, children make good use of the existing playground facilities for games involving skipping, jumping and running, demonstrating good skills.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are encouraged to use their initiative to enable them to achieve very well.
- Children communicate their ideas well through a range of imaginative work.

Commentary

48. A very good range of stimulating activities with very well focused adult support and encouragement enable children to make very good progress in this area of learning. Creative activities are often linked to other areas of learning, such as through a wide range of experiences in art, music, toy-making and imaginative play. For example, children plan and design wheeled toys, following their study of old and new toys. In the lesson observed, children successfully evaluated their work to check if their plans match their products. They use a variety of materials imaginatively in such activities. Role-play activities in the play corner and outside play area promote good achievement in imaginative work and communication of ideas. Adults join in role-play activities and help children to develop their ideas and gain confidence. Children paint imaginatively using vibrant colours and learn to mix colours to a good effect. Very good opportunities are provided for them to develop their co-ordination skills, for example cutting and sticking paper. They successfully construct cars and houses using a range of building kits and are good at using modelling materials, such as dough to make different shapes. They enjoy singing. They sing tunefully a range of rhymes from memory and are developing a good sense of rhythm. The classroom provides a stimulating environment for children to work in and they are very well supported by the sensitive intervention of all adults.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching has led to significant improvements in the achievement of the children this year.
- Planning and links with other subjects contribute to an interesting curriculum
- Support for pupils with SEN is very good resulting in good progress
- Provision and enthusiasm for reading has led to great improvements in reading
- Excellent subject leadership has led to rapid improvements in the subject
- Marking helps children to improve in some classes but this is not the case in all
- Opportunities to speak at length are limited in some lessons

Commentary

49. Standards in English have recovered from their dip last year and are rising because the school has focused intensively on improvement in all aspects of the subject over the past year. This will be evident in the tests results for seven year olds in 2005, which are likely to indicate that standards in reading and writing are once again above average. In particular, the number of pupils reaching higher levels in both aspects has increased significantly. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4 standards remain above average in both reading and writing. This represents very good progress as children enter the school with skills that are below average in this area.

50. The inspection found that most children achieve well throughout the school because of the commitment to including them all. A particular strength of the school is the provision for children with SEN. These children make good progress because teachers provide them with work that is appropriate to their needs and because of the very good support they receive from teaching assistants. Children who are gifted and talented are able to achieve well as a result of the extra challenge they receive in most lessons. The few children learning English as an additional language make the same progress as their peers. Over the last few years, boys have outperformed girls in reading and writing. Despite careful analysis and review of its practice, the school cannot identify a reason for this disparity. Indeed, inspectors found that through careful pairing and grouping, the school provides for equality of opportunity for both boys and girls. As a result all children are achieving equally well.

51. Standards in speaking and listening are also above average. Children's listening skills are particularly well developed and right from the start they are expected to listen carefully and respectfully to their teachers and to one another. They develop confidence in speaking as they move up through the school. In most lessons they discuss their ideas with their 'listening' partner or in a group. They have increasing opportunities to express their ideas to a wider audience, for example when children in Year 3/ 4 were asked to 'perform' their poems to the rest of the class. This helps to improve their speaking and listening skills and their overall confidence. Children respond well to questions, but some lessons proceed at such a brisk pace that they have fewer opportunities to express their ideas at length.

52. Reading standards have improved markedly this year as a result of a large emphasis on guided reading and improved book resources, which have generated a real enthusiasm for books within the school. This is evident right from the Reception class where children have the opportunity to choose from a wide variety of books and are able to say whether they are stories, poetry or information books. There is a successful emphasis on teaching phonics in the early years and literacy sessions are also used to develop reading skills effectively. Those children who are experiencing difficulties benefit from 'catch up' programmes, which provide intensive support for their reading skills.

53. Children's skills in writing develop well as they move through the school. The children are taught to form their letters correctly from the beginning and the introduction of a new cursive handwriting scheme has seen big improvements in handwriting over the year. Skills in spelling and punctuation develop well and children write for an increasing range of purposes. Innovative approaches are also used to stimulate writing, such as the 'mind mapping' in Year 2 which was used to promote writing on seaside holidays. Children are constantly encouraged to develop a range of interesting vocabulary. In a Year 1 story, a child had begun '*One deep, dark night in a deep, dark wood there lived a dirty rascal.*' In a Year 4 lesson children were composing list poems based on photographs. Ideas such as '*trees swaying in the light breeze like a ballerina*' and '*maybe you will see a dazzling city in the heart of Russia*' were commonplace.

54. The quality of teaching and learning was of high calibre in five of the six lessons seen. In all these lessons teachers and children were very clear about what they were learning and how they would know if they were successful. The emphasis was on developing literacy skills in an enjoyable and creative way. Teachers have excellent relationships with their children and make every effort to include everybody. As a result children enjoy lessons, concentrate well and work hard to improve their literacy skills. They are eager to contribute to lessons and co-operate and collaborate very well.

55. Assessment is developing well in literacy. There were many examples where children were challenged to improve their work and make suggestions to others to help them develop their work forward. Children's writing is assessed every term, which gives an effective guide to progress and individual targets are in place for each child. Marking, however, is inconsistent. In some books there is evidence of good marking, which gives the child a clear view of what they need to do in order to improve. This is not the case in all classes.

56. The new subject co-ordinator provides excellent leadership in English. When she arrived in September, she quickly identified what needed to be done and has introduced the changes highlighted above that have led to a rapid improvement in the achievement of the children. Through rigorous monitoring she has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and has identified what needs to be done next year.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. There are many opportunities for children to develop their language and literacy skills in other parts of the curriculum. In most lessons children are asked to discuss their ideas and this develops their speaking and listening skills. They read for information in many subjects and also use the internet for research. Their writing is often linked effectively to other subjects. For example, in their work on World War 2 older children wrote letters from the point of view of an evacuee. In Year 2, their writing and video work was related to the history topic on seaside holidays. There is evidence of writing reports in science and instructions in design and technology. The school is looking to increase and develop these links.

MATHEMATICS

Provision In mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in mathematics are well above those found nationally.
- The quality of teaching is good. Support staff are very effective. Children achieve well.
- Assessment procedures are good.
- Children's attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- The leadership of mathematics is very good.

Commentary

58. In the 2004 national tests the standards were well above the national average. Children currently in Year 2 are also reaching standards well above those expected for their age. Children in Year 4 are attaining standards above those expected for their age in all areas of mathematics. Last year children in years 2 and 3 made limited progress but these children are currently achieving very well. Overall, children achieve well as they move through the school as their mathematical skills and understanding on entry to the school are similar to those found nationally. The good quality teaching is a major factor in helping children achieve well. Throughout the school there is a particular strength in mental calculation. This enables children to complete work quickly as they do not have to waste time on basic arithmetic when solving more complex problems. Children with SEN make very good progress as they are provided with work carefully tailored to their needs and are very well supported by their teachers and high quality teaching assistants.

59. The quality of teaching and learning is good. All lessons seen were good or better. Teachers manage their classes very well and create a very good working atmosphere in which children can learn most effectively. Relationships are extremely strong and there is a great deal of mutual respect evident in all classes. In both very good Year 1 lessons the teachers insisted on the highest standards of behaviour. As a result, no time was wasted and the lessons moved along at a fast pace with children learning new skills in measuring using different units of measure. Lessons always start with a very brisk and focussed mental or oral session that sets the tone for the lesson and helps children tune in to the work planned for them. Children of all abilities achieve well as the work in lessons is very carefully planned to build on their prior knowledge and understanding. The skilled and well-trained teaching assistants are used particularly well to help children learn very effectively. They support children's learning in class and sometimes with a specific group outside the classroom. Teachers keep them fully informed about their role and share each lesson plan with them so they know the objectives the children are working towards.

60. Teachers regularly and accurately assess their children's work. The data collected is used to track pupils and measure how well they are achieving. Those who are identified as making insufficient progress are highlighted and various useful strategies are put in place to help improve their progress. Teachers have very good questioning skills that they use most effectively to help children reflect on their learning and explain their mathematical thinking. By using individual whiteboards, on which children record their answers and then show them, the teachers are able to quickly assess the levels of understanding and adjust their questions accordingly. Test results in mathematics are analysed in order to highlight any areas of strength or concern and to plan for improvement. However, marking of children's work is inconsistent and is often rather perfunctory with ticks and a few supportive comments.

61. Children respond very well to the good teaching, are most attentive in lessons and are very eager to learn. They positively enjoy the challenges posed for them and demonstrate a great enthusiasm for the subject. They are justifiably proud of their many achievements. They present their work neatly in their books and the vast majority successfully complete the work set for them. Children's behaviour in lessons is always very good and leads to a calm and peaceful environment in which all can flourish and produce good quality work.

62. The leadership of mathematics is very good. The provision is regularly and carefully monitored to identify areas of strength or weakness. Appropriate action is then taken to make necessary improvements. Teachers' plans are monitored to ensure that the coverage of the subject is sufficiently challenging. They are also observed taking lessons and given useful feedback on their strengths and areas for future development. The setting in Years 2, 3 and 4 is proving to be most effective as it enables the teachers to plan work closely matched to the prior attainment of the children.

63. There has been a good improvement in the provision since the last inspection. The quality of the teaching has improved and children's attitudes, previously judged as good, are now very good. The pace of lessons has also improved and time is now used much more effectively.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. Children's skills in mathematics are used well in other subjects of the curriculum. When such links are made they prove useful, making learning more relevant and helping children reinforce their skills and understanding in mathematics. For example, children in Year 1/2 made block graphs based on the data they had collected in geography about the favourite theme park rides of their classmates. They used the computers to enter the data and produce the graphs, thereby enhancing their ICT skills at the same time. In design and technology children use their measuring skills when making various models and often have to measure such things as temperature in science.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Skills of investigation and scientific thinking are developing well.
- Very good teaching ensures that children achieve very well.
- Children have very positive attitudes to learning and relationships are very good.
- The subject is managed very well to ensure that children's achievements continue to improve.
- Marking of children's work does not always suggest how they can improve their work.

Commentary

65. In the 2004 teachers' assessments all children reached the expected level but few reached the higher level 3. This represented a dip from the previous year. In the current Year 2 standards are well above average because many more children are reaching the higher level 3. By the time they leave the school in Year 4, children's attainment is above average. Last year children in Year 2 and 3 did not make sufficient progress but this year children in year 3 and 4 are achieving very well. Overall standards have improved since the last inspection. All children, including those with SEN, achieve very well.

66. Children develop good scientific knowledge and understanding. The promotion of investigational skills is a strong feature within each science topic and contributes to the rising standards. Children recognise the importance of a fair tests in their experiments. For example, Year 2 children were observed to plan and conduct an investigation successfully to find out what kind of force makes a boat travel farthest. They decided on the possible variables appropriately and conducted the investigation successfully showing their clear understanding of a fair test.

67. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teaching is very well planned to cover the curriculum systematically and to stimulate the interests of children of all abilities. Staff use questioning in lessons very skilfully to assess the progress made by all groups of children. This helps children to develop a good understanding of scientific concepts and a wide range of scientific vocabulary. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and they make learning interesting. The resources are used very effectively to ensure that children learn from real experiences. Teachers have high expectations of children's work and behaviour, which, along with the very good relationships, means children have very good attitudes to their learning. Teaching assistants are well trained and support the learning of the targeted pupils very effectively. Children work well collaboratively in pairs and in small groups, supporting each other effectively. They respond very well to their teachers' very high expectations of the knowledge they can acquire and of their ability to demonstrate their understanding of scientific principles.

68. The headteacher has taken up the responsibility of managing the subject for this academic year. She has led it very well and has ensured even better results this year. The assessment system is very thorough. They are used very well to assess children's progress and the information is used effectively to track and monitor individual progress. There were some good examples of the marking of children's work but it does not consistently guide them to understand how to improve

their work. Resources are good and are well used.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have a very good attitude to their work.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Some good links are made to other subjects.
- The classroom-based computers are not always used effectively.

Commentary

69. The standards attained in Years 2 and 4 are similar to those found nationally. By talking to staff and children it is clear that all aspects of the subject are taught over time and children make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Only one lesson was timetabled during the inspection so it is not possible to make a judgement on the overall quality of the teaching in the school. Most of the ICT teaching takes place in the computer suite and each class is timetabled for one lesson every week.

70. Children thoroughly enjoy ICT work and are very proud of their efforts. They have a very good attitude to their learning and use all equipment very sensibly. They share tasks fairly and often give each other good support when difficulties are encountered. Children are able to explain in detail the work they have completed. For example, Year 4 children talked animatedly about the branching databases they had constructed to identify different materials. Year 2 children were very excited about using the new video cameras to interview each other about seaside holidays.

71. The computers that are based in classrooms are not used regularly enough to improve children's skills in ICT. Many were not switched on during the inspection and children said they were mainly used as a reward for good work or behaviour during 'golden time' each week. Lesson plans rarely mentioned them as an additional learning tool or for making the work more interesting. The interactive whiteboards installed in some classrooms are used effectively to improve learning and teachers use them well to introduce lessons and demonstrate new work. They also allow children to use them thereby making lessons much more fun and interesting.

72. The subject is well led by the headteacher who has a good overview of the provision and clear ideas for future developments. All the areas needing improvement have been identified and there are plans to improve the provision to enable the school to keep pace with the rapid developments that are a feature of the subject. This has already started with the introduction of some interactive whiteboards and video cameras. These are proving to be a useful tool for teaching in all subjects as well as helping the children in their ICT work.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. Interesting and useful links are made with other subjects. When such links are made it improves pupils' learning in both ICT and the other subject. Links are often made with mathematics when pupils make graphs; to English using the video cameras for interviews; in history using the Internet for research about topics such as the Romans and in geography to create maps.

HUMANITIES

74. The humanities were not a main focus of the inspection although three lessons were seen in **religious education**, two in **history** and one in **geography**. Inspectors also looked at limited samples of work in these subjects and talked to the relevant co-ordinators. Religious education is reported in detail whilst it is not possible to make an overall judgement about provision in geography

and history. There is every indication, however, that standards are at least average and have been maintained since the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in Religious Education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good planning ensures that children study a range religions and religious themes.
- The subject is well led and resourced.
- Links with a variety of faith communities are under-developed.

Commentary

75. From the evidence of three lessons and examples of children's work it is clear that children's achievements are broadly in line with the Agreed Syllabus for Bedfordshire. Children study a variety of the world's major religions with a strong emphasis on Christianity.

76. In the three lessons seen the quality of teaching was satisfactory overall. In each of the lessons teachers had an enthusiastic approach to the topic which engaged children and motivated them to learn. Lessons were well prepared and resourced by the teachers. There were some weaknesses in subject knowledge. For example, in lessons on Christian symbolism opportunities were missed to explore the real meaning of the cross for Christians.

77. Planning is good and broadly follows the Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus although it is adapted to meet the needs of the school's children. There is an emphasis on Christianity in both key stages with opportunities to study others faiths such as Judaism and Hinduism. The school is developing a good range of resources and artefacts to support this work and bring it alive to children. As well as learning about religion, children also learn from religion as was apparent in some work in Year 3 on 'the most important people to me.'

78. The school has good links with local churches but contacts with other faith communities are under-developed. The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership and is keen to develop the subject further.

79. In the **geography** lesson seen the quality of teaching and learning was very good. In a lively lesson, 4 children demonstrated that they had a very good understanding of their locality. They developed their geographical skills well and were able to give and follow directions based on points of the compass, relating these instructions to simple co-ordinates on a map of Arlesey. Geography is planned effectively in blocked units based on a two-year cycle. Good links are made between different aspects of the curriculum. Older children's study of 'Settlers' deals with the Roman and Anglo Saxon settlement of Britain from both a historical and geographical perspective. The school makes good use of the local area to develop geographical skills, for example children have recently been involved in conducting surveys in order to inform a debate about traffic and parking in Arlesey. The subject co-ordinator is well informed and monitors provision through planning and the half-termly evaluations of teachers.

80. The quality of teaching and learning in the two **history** lessons seen was good overall. In Year 1 and 2 teachers have a lively and creative approach, which engages the children and fires their imagination. For example, at the start of the lessons identifying similarities and differences in seaside holidays, staff dressed in Victorian bathing costumes much to the amusement of the children. In these lessons a range of artefacts and photographs were used to stimulate children's thinking about past and present. In the Year 2 lesson children simulated an archaeological dig to unearth these treasures! There are very good links with other subjects. Children had filmed interviews of each other (and the headteacher) talking about their imaginary beach holidays of the past as a stimulus for their writing in literacy. Again work is blocked in two-year cycles of studies and,

although no lessons were seen, there is evidence of a good range of work on Settlers and World War 2. Visits and visitors enhance the curriculum. For example, on their residential trip to France Year 4 children visit Roman ruins and some of the front line sites. They have also visited Duxford Air Museum and work on Settlers was enlivened by a 'Saxon' visitor. The subject leader provides good leadership and is keen to develop the subject further.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

81. These subjects were not a main focus for the inspection and are not reported in detail. One lesson was seen in **design and technology**, two in **music** and one in **physical education** during the inspection. No lessons were seen in **art and design**, although plenty of art was on display around the school. Discussions were held with teachers, children were heard singing in assembly. The choir was also heard to sing and a DVD of a recent performance was seen. In addition, inspectors saw teachers' planning and children's completed work. There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement about provision in these subjects, although it is clear that the performing arts are beginning to have a very positive impact on teaching and learning and children's motivation.

82. In **art and design** children enjoy taking part in an interesting range of activities and the requirements of the National Curriculum are being met. Displays around the school indicate that all aspects of art and design are taught. Children learn a variety of skills and paint in the style of different artists, such as Monet and Picasso, focusing on the effective use of colour, tone and texture. Children from Year 1 to Year 4 displayed considerable knowledge about different artists. They study paintings of rural and urban landscapes by famous artists and explore the different ideas, methods and approaches used by these artists in their own work. There are good links with other subjects, such as drawings in science and history. Assessment procedures are developing well and are beginning to be used appropriately to track children's progress.

83. Detailed and thorough planning shows that all aspects of **design and technology**, including food technology, are taught throughout the school. The National Curriculum requirements are met appropriately. Children complete design sheets, identify materials and discuss how completed models can be improved. Children display very positive attitudes and enthusiasm for the subject. They are able to explain clearly and with confidence how they approach their design planning, and choose suitable materials for making their planned object. This was seen in some Year 3 work where children investigated various materials in order to select the most suitable one for making a money container. Children are encouraged to evaluate their work and strive hard to improve. Work is set according to the needs of each child and this results in all pupils being suitably challenged.

84. Evidence shows that all aspects of **music** are taught throughout the school. All of the teaching is undertaken by the class teachers who follow a useful scheme of work. Children listen to music as they come in to assemblies and are always informed about the piece, the composer and sometimes the instruments being played. Children sing with great enjoyment and very tunefully in assemblies. As a useful addition to the provision there is violin tuition for six children. Both of the music lessons seen were very good and the teachers were most enthusiastic. In the Year 3/4 lesson the children learned to sing tunefully and with good diction and in Year 1 they improved their skills in playing untuned percussion instruments and wrote down the notation for their compositions. There is also a school choir and a performing arts club organised by two of the teachers who are very skilled themselves. The choir performs outside school by singing to the local elderly folk at Christmas. The performing arts club, together with the choir, stage performances of an extremely high standard as evidenced by their performance of the Snow Queen. The children involved come from Years 2, 3 and 4 and comprise over half the children in those years. Children really appreciate the opportunities they have to listen to and perform music and are keen and eager to participate in all activities.

85. School plans show that **physical education** is taught to all classes in the school and all aspects are covered including swimming. The one lesson seen was a good Year 1 swimming lesson. The children were kept extremely active throughout and enjoyed the various games played

to increase their confidence in water. All children learn to swim and many are able to swim at least 25 metres confidently by the time they leave the school. However, the changing arrangements are far from satisfactory, as children have to change in classrooms and other open areas. Children take part in competitive football and hockey against other local schools. To add to the provision there is also a football club, a performing arts club for dance, cricket, netball, line and maypole dancing and cricket coaching in the summer. At playtimes children are able to further hone their games skills and improve their coordination by using the equipment provided for them.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

86. The provision for personal, social and health education is **very good** and is a strength of the school. This area of the school's work is promoted through the very caring ethos and is a strong priority for all adults working in the school. In addition it is reinforced through circle time and specific lessons in each class although none were seen during the inspection. It is also promoted through activities such as the School Council, which is taken very seriously by those who participate. The PSHE programme includes work on health, diet and the misuse of drugs. It also helps children to recognise and manage their feelings. Assemblies also support children's personal development effectively.

87. The school works very hard to promote children's self esteem and gives them discuss their ideas and concerns. It also provides them with many opportunities to take on additional responsibilities to enhance their understanding of living in a community. As a result children have developed a real sense of the importance of the school community and their role within it.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	Grade
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	3

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