

INSPECTION REPORT

HOBLETTS MANOR JUNIOR SCHOOL

Hemel Hempstead

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117097

Headteachers: Mrs S Short and Ms L Williams

Lead inspector: Mr A C Jolly

Dates of inspection: 15-17 November 2004

Inspection number: 267030

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Junior
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 7 – 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 235

School address: Adeyfield Road
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Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire
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Telephone number: 01442 251805
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of Mrs C Gruber
governors:

Date of previous 15 March 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hobletts Manor Junior School, situated in the town of Hemel Hempstead, is an average size school providing education for 235 pupils aged between 7 and 11. The majority of pupils come from the immediate area and live in a mixture of council and privately owned housing. The school has progressively drawn a higher proportion of pupils from more deprived areas. The attainment on entry is below average. Both the headteacher and deputy have been absent for fixed periods on maternity leave and became joint headteachers in September 2003 in a job share arrangement. The school has experienced a major turnover of teaching staff. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs is average, although the percentage that has statements of special educational need is below average. Their needs are mainly moderate learning difficulties. Five percent of pupils are believed to have English as an additional language, which is higher than is generally found. Pakeri is the most frequent minority language, which is spoken by three pupils of Pakistani origin. The numbers of pupils who come from ethnic backgrounds represent a number of different native origins and all groupings are small.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8750	Mr A C Jolly	Lead inspector	English History Physical education Personal, social, health education and citizenship English as an additional language
19342	Mr T Heavey	Lay inspector	
26405	Mrs C Bond	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Music Religious education Special educational needs
19897	Mr A Evans	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Information and communication technology Geography

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This school is **satisfactory** after an uncertain period when there was a major turnover of teachers and successive short-term changes to the leadership team. Good leadership is being provided under the new structure of two joint headteachers, supported by a more effective governing body than at the time of the last report. The quality of teaching is good overall. Although standards have fallen in a few subjects since the last inspection, the achievement of pupils is good, particularly in the key subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- standards in English in national tests in Year 6 are above average;
- standards in art and design are above average;
- the headteachers and key staff provide good leadership;
- standards in information and communication technology are below average;
- standards in religious education are below average;
- the quality of teaching is good overall;
- all pupils achieve well;
- levels of attendance are below average;
- the school has too high a budget surplus;
- the provision for personal, social, health education and citizenship is very good and very good notice is taken of pupils' views.

The school has made a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection overcoming the significant obstacles of a very high staff turnover and a succession of short-term changes to the leadership team. Pupils join the school with lower levels of attainment than at the time of the last inspection. Although good progress has been maintained, particularly in English, mathematics and science, standards are no better than average, which reflects a decline in mathematics and science. Standards have similarly fallen in religious education and information and communication technology. Only one teacher remains from the last inspection. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching remains small and the percentage of teaching which is good or better is slightly less than at the last inspection. Assessment and target setting processes, key elements of teaching, are, however, now better and the marking of pupils' work is good. The school has responded well to the key issue in the last inspection by ensuring that the governing body is more involved in school development planning and in monitoring and evaluating provision and standards. The leadership at the time of the last inspection has now been restored and is having a positive impact on the drive to raise standards.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	A	B	B	A
mathematics	C	C	C	C
science	A	B	C	C

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 6.*

Achievement overall is **good**. Pupils join the school with levels of attainment that are below average. They make consistently good progress in Years 3 to 6, particularly in the key areas of literacy, numeracy and scientific understanding, to attain average standards overall. Pupils who have special educational needs, or for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. The results in the table above indicate that pupils have at least performed as well as other pupils both nationally and in schools in a similar context. In English the school has attained impressive results where standards in national tests in 2004 were above the national average and well above those found in schools in a similar context. Results have dipped in science for the last two years but the school has analysed the reasons for the fall and implemented strategies to reverse the trend. Results in English and mathematics have broadly followed the national trend since 2000. The school's overall performance in tests compared to pupils' prior attainment is above average.

Standards in the work seen in English, mathematics and science are average, reflecting good achievement. Standards are below average in information and communication technology and in religious education, which does not meet sufficiently the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Standards in art and design are good and standards in all other subjects are average.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. They have a positive approach to school life and their behaviour is generally good. They take part enthusiastically in lessons. However, pupils' attendance levels are below average and their punctuality is only satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good overall. The teaching of numeracy and literacy is consistently good and the needs of pupils of different abilities and cultural backgrounds are well addressed. There are good processes to assess pupils' progress and to set them individual targets to improve. This ensures that the pupils' learning advances by Year 6 to a level higher than would be expected from their prior attainment. There is a satisfactory curriculum with good opportunities for enrichment. The school fosters well the welfare of pupils from very varied backgrounds and arrangements for care, health and safety are all satisfactory. Relationships with parents are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The governance of the school is satisfactory. Parents, pupils and staff respect the two headteachers who work well together. They have a clear understanding of the improvements needed to raise standards further. The governors have improved their effectiveness as a corporate body, and have satisfactory procedures to monitor provision and standards. There are good management routines in place.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents expressed positive views about the school. They believe the school has high expectations, provides a good range of activities, listens to their views and that teaching is good. The pupils like school and appreciate the opportunities they are given to show initiative and the importance given to their views.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise standards in information and communication technology;
- raise standards in religious education;
- allocate the accumulated surplus for appropriate spending with greater urgency;
- raise levels of attendance.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

Pupils' achievement is **good** overall. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average. By Year 6, standards are average in the key subjects of English, mathematics and science and most other subjects, reflecting good progress. Standards have fallen however, in mathematics and science since the last inspection report. They have also fallen in religious education and information and communication technology, where they are below average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English, in the Year 6 2004 national tests, were above average when compared nationally and well above average compared to schools in a similar context.
- The school's performance in the Year 6 national tests in 2004, compared to the pupils' prior attainment was above average.
- Standards in mathematics and science fell in the Year 6 national tests in 2004 and standards of work seen have also fallen since the last inspection.
- Standards are below average in religious education.
- Standards in art and design are above average.

Commentary

1. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average, representing a lower starting point than at the time of the last inspection, which clearly has an impact on lower test results, in Year 6.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.2 (27.6)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	26.9 (27.5)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	28.7 (29.6)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 58 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The standards pupils attained in the national tests in Year 6 in 2004 were average in mathematics and science and above average in English. When the pupils' results are measured against their prior attainment, standards remain average in mathematics and science, but were well above average in English.
3. Able pupils are particularly well targeted in English so that they performed very well in the Year 6 national tests in English. Just over two-fifths of the pupils attained the higher Level 5, a proportion that is well above the national average. This largely explains why English results were better than those for mathematics and science.

4. The results in science reflect a two-year decline, which the school has viewed seriously. It has made a full analysis of the results and identified which pupils had not achieved their potential. This information is now being used in teacher's planning and guidance in order to reverse the trend.
5. From 2000 to 2004, standards in the Year 6 national tests have been average in mathematics, above average in science and well above average in English. Results in English and mathematics have broadly followed the national trend but they have fallen in science. There has been no discernible difference in the performance of boys and girls, when compared against their own gender nationally.
6. Standards in the work seen in English, mathematics and science are average, reflecting good achievement related to their below average starting point. Standards in art and design are above average and pupils benefit from the expertise of a specialist teacher. Standards in information and communication technology are below average. The newly appointed coordinator has a very clear vision for the future, which is already leading to clear improvement. The work in religious education does not fully include the entire locally agreed syllabus and standards are below average. Standards in all other subjects, where there was sufficient evidence to form a judgement, are average. These findings show a decline from the last inspection report in mathematics, science, information and communication technology and religious education.
7. Nevertheless, achievement is good throughout the school. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language are at an advanced stage of language acquisition and they are making similarly good progress as the other pupils. This is as a result of the effective focus on their needs within lessons, particularly in literacy. Pupils who have special educational needs also receive effective support within lessons and the tasks set are well matched to their needs, ensuring they make good progress. The school has a register for gifted and talented pupils and has identified successfully pupils in most curriculum areas. There is helpful guidance to inform teachers so that the needs of those pupils are met effectively and they also make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The provision for pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. They display **positive** attitudes towards school and their behaviour is **good**. Attendance is **unsatisfactory** and punctuality is just **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' have positive views about school and good relationships with teachers.
- Pupils behave well and teachers are good role models.
- Pupils' are eager to take responsibility.
- The school is unable to secure the full support of enough parents in ensuring that their children attend school regularly and on time.

Commentary

8. The very positive responses in the pupils' questionnaires reflect the warm relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils respect adults and are eager to please them. They concentrate well and persevere with their tasks, which helps to raise standards. They are not afraid to ask questions or to express an opinion. These good attitudes enable pupils to work productively in pairs or in groups. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lessons, groups of pupils were asked to set questions on bus timetables for other groups. They grasped the challenge of competition, enjoyed working in teams and consolidated their learning.
9. Most pupils respond well to good teaching and behave appropriately. They are clear about the standards of behaviour expected. Occasionally, however, in a few classes, a minority of pupils display challenging behaviour that disrupts the learning of other pupils. In the dining hall pupils generally display good manners and tolerance: outside play is sensible. The school does much to ensure trouble-free play by allocating a separate playground to those wishing to play football. An effective awards system provides an additional incentive for pupils to behave well, and there have been no exclusions for the past five years. There are effective systems to deal with harassment and bullying and these are not issues.
10. Pupils' moral and social development is good. There is a 'School Circle', which allows a small number of pupils to represent the views of their peers. Pupils feel valued in school because teachers listen to and are sympathetic to their ideas that they think will bring about improvements. Older pupils take their duties as monitors seriously. The recent introduction of the 'Buddy Stop', a seat in a quiet part of the playground for pupils without a friend, gives older pupils the opportunity to demonstrate their concern for other pupils. Adults in the school effectively promote the personal development of pupils by giving them the chance to help out in various jobs around the school. For their part pupils demonstrate their concern for the disadvantaged in society by raising considerable sums of money for charities and a local Emergency Night Shelter.
11. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. For example, the school holds an 'International Day', which raises the pupils' awareness of cultural diversity and all year groups are familiar with the works of certain famous artists. Good opportunities are taken in assemblies to stress everyone's value and the importance of teamwork. Due emphasis is given to spiritual matters and pupils reflect on important issues appropriately.
12. The school's attendance rate is below the national average, while the rate of unauthorised absence is well above the national average. The main reason for the high figure for unauthorised absence is because the school operates a system whereby any pupil who arrives ten minutes after the registration bell is marked as an unauthorised absence. Analysis of attendance figures identifies a few families as frequent offenders. The school is reluctant to lay the blame with pupils who depend on their parents to get them to school on time, and is now working with the Education Welfare Officer to engage the parents or carers responsible for those children. The school acknowledges that it should close its registration procedures later so that the rate of unauthorised absence reduces. Punctuality overall is satisfactory.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.8
National data	5.1

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.5
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 quality of education is **good** overall. This reflects the findings of the last inspection. The school has a **satisfactory** curriculum. There is good enrichment of the curriculum.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** overall. Assessment is good and there are good procedures to measure pupils' progress and set targets for future improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very good between teachers and pupils.
- Pupils have good subject knowledge.
- There are good systems to assess pupils' progress and their work is well marked.
- Pupils are often encouraged to discuss what they are learning although sometimes these discussions can be overlong.
- Information and communication technology is not used regularly enough to support learning in other subjects.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 35 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	8(23)	13(37)	12(34)	2(6)	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 good overall. This reflects good processes to ensure the learning needs of pupils from a wide range of abilities are met successfully. The quality of teaching is not as impressive as at the time of the last inspection but there are a significant number of less experienced teachers on the staff who show considerable potential to improve further. Three-fifths of teaching is at least good and almost one quarter of the total is very good. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was centred on one class.
- The teaching of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and scientific understanding is consistently good and occasionally very good, ensuring good achievement. There are particularly good systems, for example, to develop pupils' reading, which is the basis for their understanding of other subjects. The teaching of other subjects is less consistently good. This is particularly evident in information and communication technology, which could be used to much greater effect to support learning across the curriculum.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and the school makes good use of specialist teachers who work on a part-time basis. This has had a particular impact in art and design, which has resulted in above average standards and is also evident in music.

16. Almost all classes include a minority of pupils with challenging behaviour. Most teachers manage all pupils well so that relationships are generally good. When the teaching is less effective and specifically when it is unsatisfactory, it is because the misbehaviour of a small group of pupils has been allowed to disrupt the learning of others. For example, in a Year 4 class, poor preparation by the teacher and ineffective use of computer technology meant that the lesson proceeded too slowly and, as a consequence, the pupils became restless and disobedient.
17. The school has been very responsive to the views of pupils who have reported in discussions and by questionnaire that they learn better through small group discussion and by techniques such as role-play. This often works well and creates interest and involvement. The discussions are at their best when teachers keep to the strict time limits they set. On a few occasions when this is not the case, pupils lose concentration and their learning is disrupted.
18. The school is generally successful at integrating pupils from a wide range of abilities and cultural backgrounds. Good systems have recently been introduced for identifying the best support that can be provided for pupils who have special educational needs. A specialist teacher also provides targeted help for small groups of pupils who have special educational needs. Teacher assistants give good support. Their input is enhanced by the use of very good feedback sheets, which gives them guidance on the work that is planned and it provides a template to record what has been done.
19. When the teaching is very good it is largely because of good subject knowledge by the teacher and the clear planning on how to develop the pupils' learning. The specialist art and design teacher gave a very good demonstration in printing and early use of watercolour and monitored carefully the progress of all pupils to stimulate good standards. In a very well taught lesson to Year 6 on poetry, the teacher ensured that support was given to all pupils in a lower ability group, so that the work was not only matched to their capabilities but also extended them further.
20. In contrast, occasionally some teachers plan tasks that are too difficult for the pupils' age and experience, which causes them to miss vital steps in their learning. When the task is inappropriate, there tends to be frequent interruptions to explain it further. Many pupils then miss the key elements of the planned lesson and are unable to build upon their learning appropriately.
21. There are good homework arrangements, which are appreciated by parents. A well-attended homework club held after school, one day a week, for all Year 5 and 6 pupils gives them the opportunity to complete their homework in a quiet and orderly environment. There are good assessment systems. The pupils' work is conscientiously marked and pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve. All pupils understand the National Curriculum levels they are working at in English and mathematics and they are given their target level each half year. These are pasted in the back of their books, and they are often seen referring to them. They are also given clear individual targets. When their work is marked, the teacher invariably outlines whether the pupils have attained the learning outcome through a simple well-understood coded system. These procedures are making a significant impact on the pupils' involvement in their own learning and the good achievement in the school.

The curriculum

The school offers a broad curriculum, which affords a **satisfactory** preparation for secondary school. Accommodation and learning resources are **good** overall.

Strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for enrichment.
- There is very good provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship.
- More use could be made of information and communication technology and mathematics across the curriculum.

Commentary

22. The school's curriculum has a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy, which are taught in groups based on ability to match work more closely to pupils' needs. The school meets statutory requirements for all subjects of the National Curriculum, for religious education and for collective worship. Total weekly teaching time is average for pupils of this age. The school constantly seeks to develop the curriculum further, taking account of national and local initiatives. A regular 'International Day', for example, raises the pupils' awareness of cultural diversity. There are good opportunities for instrumental music tuition. Curricular planning is satisfactory. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching of art and music and visiting coaches take some physical education lessons. The school is trying to develop a more topic-based approach to learning and is aware that, at present, more opportunities could be provided for the pupils to use their information and communication technology skills and their mathematical skills in other subjects.
23. A wide range of extra-curricular activities allows the pupils to pursue their interests outside lessons. Some of these are led by outside specialists and have to be paid for. There is a good number of well-attended sports clubs. Football and netball matches are played against local schools. About 30 pupils participate as members of the choir. There is a homework club for pupils in Years 5 and 6. A wide range of school visits enriches learning further. Many visitors enhance learning through their knowledge and expertise, including parents and governors who give early career talks for pupils in Year 6.
24. Despite a very high turnover of teachers during the past two years, there are sufficient teaching and non-teaching staff to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Administrative members of staff provide very good support. The accommodation is good overall. Its strongest features are good-sized classrooms, a large, well-resourced library, a large hall and stage, information and communication technology suite, and a good-sized sports field. Disabled access is generally good, although there is no disabled toilet at present. The swimming pool has been out of action for a long time and that part of the building is an eyesore and is an attraction to vandals. There is a good range of resources to support teaching and learning in all subjects, except in music, where they are adequate.

Care, guidance and support

The school's procedures for the welfare, health, safety and personal security of its pupils are **satisfactory**, as they were at the previous inspection. Teachers in the school provide **good** levels of support advice and guidance for those in their care. Arrangements to seek, value and act upon pupils' views are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's effective assessment procedures help it to track its pupils' progress accurately and to set appropriate targets.
- The activities of the School Circle help pupils to feel fully involved in decisions that affect their educational experience.
- The use of questionnaires to canvass pupil opinion helps them to feel that the school values their contribution to school life.

Commentary

25. Nearly all parents responding by questionnaire felt that they would feel comfortable about approaching the school with a question or concern and a high percentage felt that the school would respond positively to a suggestion or complaint.
26. The school knows its pupils well because it makes a careful analysis of their academic performance in order to chart their progress through the school. As a consequence the school is able to set targets that are individual to each pupil's particular needs, and can offer good quality guidance to help them achieve their goals. More general targets are also shared with parents in the annual reports on pupils' progress so that they can support at home what their children learn at school. Aspects of pupils' personal development are also included. Their personal development is also promoted by encouraging them to accept responsibilities and to follow the school's behaviour code. There is an opportunity during informal class discussion or circle time for pupils to develop self-awareness and sensitivity to the needs and wishes of their classmates.
27. This is a caring school where pupils and their views are valued. The School Circle represents the collective views and interests of all pupils. Classroom representatives are elected and these in turn elect an executive committee. Teachers in the school take pupils' views seriously and value their contribution to school life. They frequently seek the views of pupils about planned improvements that might affect them. Such high levels of involvement make a very good contribution to pupils' wider education.
28. Health and safety, first aid, and child protection procedures meet legal requirements and are satisfactory. The arrangements for helping pupils settle into school life and the arrangements for pupils to move on to other schools are also satisfactory.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has maintained the **good** links with parents identified at the previous inspection. Links with the community and with other schools are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents express very positive views about most aspects of school life, indicating a good level of satisfaction.
- Annual reports are of good quality and keep parents well informed about their children's progress.
- Parents say the school deals well with any concerns or complaints.
- A small number of parents do not support the school's efforts to improve the attendance of their children.

Commentary

29. Views from parents at their meeting and an analysis of parental questionnaires indicate that parents are pleased with how the school runs and there is little that they would like to see changed. Parental questionnaires indicate a high level of support for most categories. However, a minority of parents are failing to support the school in its drive to improve attendance levels by regularly failing to get their children to school on time.
30. The good quality information provided by the school for parents is epitomised by the comprehensive annual reports on pupils' progress. These are thorough documents that indicate not only what pupils can do, but also comment on homework and identify targets for improvement, so that parents can better support their children's learning. There is an informative prospectus and a readable governors' annual report to parents. A helpful newsletter that is published every two months identifies key events and dates in the school's calendar. Parents are also given the opportunity one day each week to go into their child's class after school to look at the work they have completed. Parents are supportive of school events and parent consultation sessions are well attended. Such good links with parents are proving effective in helping to raise standards at the school.
31. The school has satisfactory links with the community and other local schools. The school football and netball team take part in matches against other schools and The School Sports Coordinator Partnership provides a link with the local high school in an effort to improve procedures to assess pupils' progress. Visitors from the local community, such as personnel from the emergency services, musicians and theatre groups enrich the pupils' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **good**. The governance of the school is **satisfactory** which reflects an improvement on the findings of the last report.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The two headteachers have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have a clear vision of the future;
- The subject coordinators generally lead and manage their subjects well;
- The school has too high a budget surplus;
- The governors have responded well to criticisms in the last report;

- The leadership has maintained good standards through a period of instability.

Commentary

32. The headteacher and deputy headteacher who led the school at the time of the last inspection have both returned to the school after absence on maternity leave. In a change to the leadership structure, they returned in September 2003 as joint headteachers in a job share. The difficulties brought about by an unsettled period in the leadership have been compounded by a major staff turnover that has left only one teacher remaining from the last inspection.
33. Leadership is good by the headteachers, helping the school's provision and standards to remain on course. Although standards appear to have fallen by Year 6, compared to the findings of the last inspection report, it is clear that the attainment on entry to the school is also lower than at that time.
34. The self-evaluation of the school, led by the headteachers, is accurate and perceptive and they have a clear vision of what needs to be done to improve further. There are already good assessment and target setting processes in place. One headteacher gives good leadership to the management of provision for pupils with special educational needs. There is a race equality policy and due emphasis is given to creating an ethos in which all pupils are welcomed and valued.
35. Good guidance has been given to subject coordinators and their files follow a common helpful format so that they can monitor provision and standards effectively. Most coordinators share a common grasp of their role. Even in information and communication technology, where standards are currently below average, the new coordinator is providing very good leadership to ensure standards improve.
36. The school development plan is a satisfactory working document that drives the school. It has been improved significantly by an addendum that gives much greater emphasis to improving standards. The success criteria, however, are at times too vague and need to be clearer and more specific.
37. The governors have responded positively to criticisms in the last report. They are now more involved in school development planning and in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The chair and a central core of governors have been pro-active in monitoring provision and there have been visits to observe the work in English, mathematics and science. One particularly interesting and valuable initiative is the annual strategic day for governors when they listen to informed speakers in the morning, meet the staff at lunchtime and observe various aspects of the school in the afternoon.
38. It has been difficult for the school to recruit governors since the last inspection but better induction¹ arrangements have been introduced and a four-year programme of work outlined. The governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and give good support. They are aware of their need to challenge and be critical and this role needs to be developed further.

¹ Induction refers to the arrangements to receive pupils who are new to the school, helping them to settle into school routines and to make friends.

39. The most recent auditor's report recognised that the standard of financial monitoring is very good in the school. There are effective arrangements to monitor the budget on a regular basis. However, the governors have allowed too high a budget surplus to accumulate. There are satisfactory systems to ensure that the school achieves best value.
40. The management of the school is good overall and it operates efficiently. There are good arrangements for monitoring performance data, reviewing patterns and taking appropriate actions. Performance management² arrangements are good and the school makes a satisfactory contribution to initial teacher training. Induction³ arrangements for new staff are good, which is critical with the high turnover of teachers. The school is committed to achieving Investor in People status.
41. One of the strengths of the leadership and management is the way pupils are involved in the life of the school and their views inform the school's self-evaluation processes. It has also been successful in maintaining the confidence of parents through an unsettled period of considerable change.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	604,559	Balance from previous year	94,047
Total expenditure	622,126	Balance carried forward to the next	76,480
Expenditure per pupil	2,659		

² This refers to the arrangements to evaluate the work of teachers and help them improve.

³ Induction here refers to the arrangements to receive teachers who are new to the school, briefing them on the school's curricular and organisational policy and procedures so that continuity of learning is maintained for the pupils.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the Year 6 national tests in 2004 were above average.
- Standards in the Year 6 national tests in 2004 were well above those found in schools in a similar context.
- Able pupils performed particularly well in the Year 6 national tests in 2004.
- All pupils achieve well in English.
- There are good systems to assess pupils' progress and set them targets for improvement.
- Opportunities for discussion are frequent but sometimes they are too prolonged.

Commentary

42. The results in the Year 6 national tests in English were impressive in 2004 and the performance of pupils in those tests from 2002 has been well above average. Both boys and girls have performed equally well. Pupils with English an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups, attain in line with their peers.
43. Standards in the work seen in Year 6 are average, which is the same as at the time of the last inspection. This reflects good achievement because pupils join the school with standards of attainment that are below average.
44. Standards in reading are average. There are daily opportunities for pupils to practise their reading both individually and in guided reading groups led by the teacher. Reading logs are used regularly throughout the school to record what pupils read and parents, particularly of younger pupils, give appropriate support. There is a good range of reading resources, supplemented by a very good, accessible library where reading material is graded for different abilities. A few pupils struggle with reading fluently but they receive good support to help them develop effective strategies. More able readers can quickly sum up the plot and characters in stories and predict outcomes.
45. Standards of writing are currently average and improving, reflecting the good performance in last year's national tests. The school had introduced extended, independent writing tasks into lessons but, after some analysis, found that this was failing to motivate significant numbers of pupils, particularly boys, so that the emphasis is now being given to writing tasks across the curriculum. Writing tasks are now more varied and most pupils have responded by writing both imaginatively and accurately, showing good progress on their low prior attainment.
46. The standard of handwriting in the school is satisfactory and pupils' work is appropriately presented. The standard of pupils' spelling is also satisfactory. Spelling mistakes are systematically identified and corrected. There are weekly spelling tests which link to keywords related to the work pupils are doing. Spelling logs have been introduced recently in Years 5 and 6. These are useful books, which give some guidance on spelling and letter sounds and provide opportunities for pupils to enter the correct spelling of words that they regularly use. The school gives considerable emphasis to speaking and listening. Pupils often have discussion partners and enjoy taking part in role-play. Standards are average overall.

47. The promotion of equal opportunities is good. The needs of the few pupils for whom English is an additional language and those from minority ethnic backgrounds are well addressed and their progress is assessed effectively within lessons. Appropriate support is given to pupils who have special educational needs, particularly by well-judged tasks related to their needs and targeted support from teacher assistants. All pupils make good progress in English. The needs of able pupils are particularly well targeted which is reflected in the impressive number who attained the higher Level 5 in last year's national tests.
48. Teaching is good overall. Almost all the teaching in higher ability groups in Years 5 and 6 is very good. The only unsatisfactory teaching was limited to one Year 4 group. This broadly reflects the findings of the last inspection.
49. At the heart of this good teaching is a commitment to involving pupils in their own learning. Teachers explain to each pupil the National Curriculum level at which they are working and where they need to improve to reach at least one-third of a level higher. The pupils understand the level at which they are working and their individual targets. They can be seen referring regularly to target sheets pasted within their books.
50. Teachers generally have good relationships with pupils that foster a good atmosphere for learning, posing open questions during interesting and stimulating introductions to lessons. Plentiful opportunities are provided for pupils to discuss their ideas in pairs and groups. This helps their understanding and only occasionally, when these discussions are too long, do pupils lose concentration. When the teaching is unsatisfactory, it is because discipline is insecure and prolonged discussions lead to inappropriate behaviour, disturbing the learning of others.
51. Pupils discuss what they need to do to complete successfully the task they are attempting. When pupils make occasional incorrect statements, they are corrected sensitively, which steers them towards a better understanding. When teaching is less satisfactory, it is because the pupils are given unclear guidance, for example, when a teacher gave a confusing explanation of how to recognise where a piece of writing should be divided in separate paragraphs.
52. When the teaching is very good, the teacher gives the pupils a clear understanding of the skill to be learnt. For example, in a well-taught lesson in a Year 6 lower ability group, the teacher modelled an example of a style of rhyming poetry. He then gave the pupils a supporting, structured task to enable them to write similarly and almost all pupils produced amusing examples.
53. The marking of pupils' work is good and regular, helpful advice is given on how to improve. The subject has been well led and managed so that all pupils achieve well.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

54. The provision for language and literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. The school has increasingly recognised the value of providing opportunities to write at length in other subject areas. This is particularly noticeable in history where Year 6 pupils, taking on the role of evacuees in the 1940s, have written letters home to their parents. They have also written diaries about the Blitz in 1941 and newspaper articles about dramatic events in World War 2, such as the bombing of Coventry. There are good reports of football matches on display and letters written to the council about local conditions. There are good links with personal, social, health education and citizenship that feature sensitive writing about special friends, and why it is that some people are special.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and this enables all groups of pupils to achieve well.
- Subject leadership is very good and is a significant factor in the good provision.
- There is insufficient use of mathematics across the curriculum.

Commentary

55. By Year 6, all pupils achieve well. Standards are broadly average. They were above average during the previous inspection but the intake of pupils has changed and there has been considerable staff mobility. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of numeracy, such as equivalent fractions and percentages. They use all four number operations competently to make quick mental calculations and make satisfactory use of written methods of long multiplication, including decimals. Higher attaining pupils apply their knowledge and skills satisfactorily to solve word problems related to real life. Others, including many girls, find this more difficult. Higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of data handling and area and perimeter, but others are less confident with this. The pupils plot coordinates in all four quadrants and they investigate the effect of translation on a shape's position.
56. The quality of teaching is good and this leads to effective learning. Lessons begin with brisk oral sessions, in which the teachers use a variety of effective strategies in order to develop the pupils' mental calculations. These strategies include the use of counting sticks and games, which make learning fun. There is a strong focus on the use of correct mathematical terminology and on developing the pupils' problem solving skills, which give a good foundation for mathematical understanding. The teachers ensure that all pupils are fully included in learning. Explanations of key concepts are generally clear and this impacts well on learning. In a Year 6 lesson, this helped the pupils in finding the difference between quite complex numbers by adding and adjusting. The teachers organise group work well, deploying learning support assistants effectively and ensuring that tasks are matched closely to the pupils' widely varying needs. Higher attaining pupils are appropriately challenged, whilst those with special educational needs are given suitable tasks that enable them to make good progress. A few teachers are less successful than others in managing the challenging behaviour of a minority of pupils, which has a direct impact on the pupils' quality of learning.
57. The teachers mark pupils' work positively, offering ideas as to how improvements might be made. They ensure that the pupils are aware of the level at which they are working and their targets for the future. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to enhance learning.
58. Subject leadership is very good and is a significant factor in the quality of the provision. The coordinator has led training for colleagues and she has monitored the quality of teaching, providing colleagues with useful feedback. There are good procedures for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress. These allow the pupils to see clearly where they stand in relation to National Curriculum levels of attainment.

The coordinator carefully analyses information from assessments and from national test results to highlight areas of weakness and to plan subsequent work. This has led, for example, to greater challenge for higher attaining pupils, a stronger focus on mathematics investigations, better use of mathematics vocabulary and making word problems more relevant to girls. There is a clear action plan to raise standards further.

Mathematics across the curriculum

59. Insufficient opportunities are provided for the pupils to make widespread use of their mathematical skills in other subjects. In science, pupils in Year 5 draw accurate bar charts of plant growth under varying conditions and in geography, pupils in Years 3 and 4 use simple coordinates and directions to locate map features. Overall, however, these tend to be isolated examples.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good throughout the school.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Information and communication technology is not used enough to extend pupils' learning and experiences.
- The format for writing about investigations is cumbersome.
- The subject coordinator has taken effective action to address the issues that caused the recent decline in standards.

Commentary

60. Standards in this year's national tests were lower than in previous years but are still at the levels expected for pupils in Year 6. Almost half the pupils attained the higher Level 5 in the tests. Standards of work seen in the current Year 6 are average. They are not as high as they were at the time of the last inspection, but pupils now enter the school with lower levels of attainment than at that time. Pupils achieve well due to effective teaching and a good curriculum that focuses appropriately on the key skills of experimental and investigative work.
61. The attention now paid to promoting science investigation across the school is improving pupils' attitudes and understanding. Pupils enjoy practical work, and work well together when carrying out these tasks. They have less enthusiasm for recording their findings, as the current format requires extensive application of literacy skills. Improving this aspect is a focus for the school this term. At present there is too little balance between over-elaborate practical sessions such as role-play to illustrate the circulation of the blood, and the writing sessions, which are sometimes too long.
62. The quality of teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching in Year 5. Teachers promote the use of scientific language well throughout the school. This is introduced, explained and reinforced during lessons with teachers expecting pupils to use it in their own explanations and recording. In Year 5, for example, pupils are able to talk knowledgeably about how sound travels; Year 6 pupils learn about oxygenation of the blood. In the best lessons, teachers ask relevant and challenging questions to extend learning and help pupils to think deeply about their work. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English. Work is appropriately matched to their needs and class teachers and other pupils give effective support. Some use is made of information and

communication technology to extend pupils' learning, but this is an area for development.

63. The subject coordinator's effective leadership has enabled teachers to develop strategies that will rectify the issues of underperformance by certain pupils which have been identified from last year's test results. She has created good systems for checking progress and analysing data, which are well used. Resources are well organised and of satisfactory quality.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils underachieve and standards are below average.
- There is insufficient cross-curricular use of information and communication technology.
- Subject leadership by the recently appointed coordinator is very good and is helping to improve provision.

Commentary

64. By Year 6, pupils underachieve and standards are below average. Standards were average during the previous inspection but there has been considerable staff mobility and a changing intake of pupils. Until recently, there has been no subject leader for two years. The new information and communication technology suite has only just opened and a new scheme of work has recently been adopted.
65. The pupils access the Internet to research information in a number of subjects, but there is no evidence that they bookmark their favourite websites. Whilst higher attaining pupils have satisfactory keyboard skills, others are less confident. Some find it difficult to log on and to access files without help. The pupils' word processing skills are variable. Whilst higher attaining pupils alter the style and size of font to suit the purpose of their writing, others are less imaginative, with little combining of text and graphics. They find it difficult to use their word processing skills to edit work. The pupils use spreadsheets satisfactorily and they make interesting multi-media presentations.
66. Teaching is generally satisfactory. The teachers are developing their knowledge and expertise in the use of information and communication technology and this helps to develop confidence in the pupils. Explanations of key teaching points are clear. In a Year 5 graphics lesson, this helped the pupils to design a school playground. The teachers organise lessons in the information and communication technology suite satisfactorily and they ensure that all groups of pupils are fully included in learning. Some teachers are more successful than others in managing the challenging behaviour of a minority of pupils. The teachers encourage the pupils to work independently, although, in practice, many pupils constantly ask for help.

67. The newly appointed coordinator has made a very good start in leading the subject. Her enthusiasm and expertise are significant factors in improved provision. She has not yet had the opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching, but she helps and advises colleagues as necessary and this is helping to develop their confidence in using the new suite. She has worked very hard to overcome teething problems in the suite. The newly adopted scheme of work incorporates assessment procedures which are closely linked to National Curriculum levels of attainment and which allow the pupils' progress to be tracked carefully. The coordinator recognises that standards are not high enough and she has developed a clear action plan to bring about improvements.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

68. Insufficient opportunities are provided for the pupils to use their information and communication technology skills widely in other subjects. The pupils access the Internet for research and pupils in Year 6 make satisfactory use of their word processing skills in history, in order to write about aspects of the Second World War. In a lesson for pupils in Year 5, a graphics program made useful links with geography and lessons in Year 4 made useful links with art. There is very little evidence of the widespread use of information and communication technology to enhance work in data handling and in other aspects of mathematics.

HUMANITIES

69. **Geography** was not being taught during the inspection. There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on provision for the subject or on pupils' achievement. Limited evidence indicates that the pupils are making satisfactory progress in developing their mapping skills and in using atlases to locate places. They use the Internet and other sources to research information about countries such as China, Australia and France. The pupils investigate aspects of local geography, including land use, transport and public amenities. They discuss what they like and dislike about living in Hemel Hempstead and they make satisfactory use of their literacy skills to write letters about this. They argue the pros and cons of having an industrial area close to their homes.
70. Subject leadership is satisfactory. The coordinator ensures that there are sufficient resources to support teaching and learning. There are satisfactory procedures for assessing the pupils' progress. The coordinator has not yet monitored the quality of teaching.
71. No **history** lessons were observed and so it is not possible to make an overall judgement on teaching and provision. However, from the scrutiny of work in all years it is clear that standards are average by Year 6, which is in line with the findings of the previous inspection. Effective use is made of a range of approaches to develop historical skills and knowledge. For example, pupils in all years use both books and the internet to research information. In Year 6, pupils are encouraged to develop empathy by taking on the role of a historical person when writing diaries and letters.
72. The school has taken on a new approach to teaching history by having more regular history lessons and linking it to other subjects, rather than teaching history in 'topic

weeks' which hindered continuity in the pupils' learning. A range of trips and visitors enhances the curriculum. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily with helpful guidance on appropriate resources for topics.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum covers all major faiths.
- Too little time and effort is given to teaching religious education in some year groups.
- The subject coordinator has not kept effective and regular checks on pupils' learning.

Commentary

73. Standards are below expected levels for pupils in Year 6. At the time of the last inspection, the oldest pupils in the school exceeded the standards indicated in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils currently in the school have too little opportunity to build up their learning into a satisfactory body of knowledge.
74. All major faiths are studied as pupils move through the school. Year 3 pupils, for example, took part in a Christian 'wedding service' conducted in school by the local vicar. They talked about the differences between that and the ceremony for those of the Buddhist faith, and were able to think about promises as part of commitment. Year 4 pupils considered the relevance of messages in Hindu stories to the world today, and Year 5 pupils have thought about the importance of the Qu'ran to Muslims.
75. With help, pupils in Year 6 are able to talk about some of the festivals of Muslims and Hindus. They know that Buddhists believe in reincarnation, and can link Judaism to the plight of Jews in the Second World War. They are confused about the Easter story, however, and have little understanding of the concepts and symbolism of Christianity. Much of their knowledge is superficial, and they are unable to express views on religious issues or the application of religious traditions to everyday life.
76. Although teaching is satisfactory overall, not all year groups have regular and appropriate lessons. Teachers' planning indicates that religious education is taught in blocks of several lessons in a short space of time, using the school's scheme of work, which is adapted from the locally agreed syllabus. In effect, this does not always happen as planned, particularly for Year 6. Lessons such as the Year 3 'wedding' are not part of the scheme of work, and aspects such as 'friendship' and 'vision of heaven' do not reflect the locally agreed syllabus. Consequently, some lessons are too challenging for pupils' age and experience, or too superficial. There is no consistent and relevant build up of key learning across the school, which has a detrimental impact on pupils' achievement and progress, and on their attitudes to the subject.
77. Subject leadership is unsatisfactory. The subject does not feature as a priority in this year's development plan, and has a low profile in the school. Checking on the quality of teaching and learning by the coordinator is ineffective, particularly since the introduction of a new topic approach, and there is no suitable assessment procedure in place. There are some good resources, which are well organised.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision for art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Very good teaching enables the pupils to achieve very well.
- Subject leadership is very good and is a significant factor in provision.

Commentary

78. All groups of pupils achieve very well. Standards are above average, which reflects the findings of the previous inspection. The subject coordinator, who is a specialist art teacher, teaches every class in a dedicated art room. The pupils clearly benefit from this expertise. They are making very good progress in developing their skills in two and three-dimensional work, using a variety of techniques and media. They produce good quality observational drawings of objects, paying close attention to detail, line and tone. Year 5 pupils' drawings of grasses, based on the work of Masson, are particularly effective, as are Year 3 pupils' paintings of flowers, in the style of Chagall. The pupils have a good understanding of how famous artists, such as Van Gogh, Brennand-Wood and Goldsworthy, use pattern and texture in their work. The pupils show good skills in printing, weaving and frottage.
79. Teaching is very good and this leads to effective learning by all groups of pupils. The coordinator's expertise helps to develop the pupils' confidence. She encourages them to experiment and not to be afraid of making mistakes. Resources and visual stimuli are well prepared. Clear demonstrations of skills and techniques impact well on learning. Whilst the pupils are encouraged to work as independently as possible, the teacher monitors progress carefully, making timely interventions when appropriate. Learning support assistants and other adult helpers are deployed very effectively. In a Year 6 lesson, this enabled some pupils to continue with their printing work based on a healthy eating poster, whilst others refined their skills with watercolours. In a Year 3 lesson, this helped the pupils to engage in a variety of plaiting and weaving activities. Opportunities are provided for the pupils to discuss their work, so that problems and solutions are shared.
80. The newly appointed coordinator leads the subject very well and this is a significant factor in the high standards of work. The subject is well resourced. There are good procedures for assessing progress. The subject makes a positive contribution cultural development. For example, pupils in Year 5 create effective Arabesque patterns and all year groups are familiar with the works of some famous artists.
81. Very few lessons were observed in **design and technology**, **music** and **physical education** and so they were only sampled. As a result, no overall judgement on the quality of teaching or provision is possible.
82. Very little work has been completed in **design and technology** so far this term, due to curriculum arrangements. However, teachers' planning and work displayed around

the school indicate that pupils experience the full design and make process and are able to evaluate the success of their completed article satisfactorily. Year 4 pupils studied mechanisms in children's storybooks, and were able to make their own good examples of moving parts in pictures. Pupils are enthusiastic about the subject, and many are proud of their achievements.

83. The newly appointed coordinator is very enthusiastic, and has worked hard to ensure that the subject has a high profile in the school. She has good subject knowledge and is aware of developments that have to be made, including them in a comprehensive action plan for this year. Resources are satisfactory and well organised.
84. The teaching of **music** is provided by the local education authority's peripatetic music service, under new arrangements that began this term. All lessons take place on Wednesdays when a gifted specialist music teacher provides thirty minutes of very good tuition to every class. Her enthusiasm and unusual approach have a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to singing and playing instruments. Consequently, many pupils also take part in instrumental tuition in school time, and attend choir practice after school. Singing is of a high standard in the school, and pupils derive great enjoyment from their music making. Standards in Year 6 are at the levels expected for pupils of that age at present, but the competence and skill of all pupils when involved in lessons indicate that standards are set to rise rapidly. Class teachers give good support in lessons, ensuring that all pupils are able to participate fully in the briskly paced lessons.
85. The school is aiming to raise the profile of **physical education**. It has a satisfactory scheme of work and allocates sufficient time to the subject. Pupils have a balanced programme of activities. All Year 4, 5 and 6 pupils have one swimming session a week for a term and almost all pupils can swim at least 25 metres.
86. The School Sports Coordinator Partnership provides a link to a local high school and is part of an associated action plan to develop the necessary procedures to assess pupils' progress. The school provides clubs for netball, football and rounders and is aiming to improve provision by using professionally qualified coaches and building links with other external sports providers. There are good resources and the accommodation is also good with a good size hall and outside areas.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

87. Provision for personal, social, health education and citizenship is **very good**. There are regular opportunities for the pupils to discuss relevant issues such as self-respect, solving arguments, environmental pollution and world poverty. The pupils learn about the need for good hygiene and a balanced diet as part of a healthy lifestyle. The school is working towards the Healthy Schools award. The pupils learn about the dangers of alcohol and drugs misuse. There is formal sex education for pupils in Years 5 and 6. There are good opportunities for the pupils to develop social skills in clubs, in school productions, on school visits and by carrying out tasks around the school. Elected pupils take part in decision making as part of the School Circle. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 learn road skills during cycling proficiency lessons. The pupils support many local and national charities.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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