

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LARK RISE LOWER SCHOOL**

Dunstable

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109528

Headteacher: Mrs S Attard

Lead inspector: Mr N Sherman

Dates of inspection: 11-13 October 2004

Inspection number: 267186

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 category:             | Community                                  |
| Age range of pupils:         | 3 - 9                                      |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed                                      |
| Number on roll;              | 246  |
| School address:              | Cartmel Drive<br>Dunstable<br>Bedfordshire |
| Postcode:                    | LU6 3PT                                    |
| Telephone number:            | 01582 607852                               |
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| Appropriate authority:       | Governing Body                             |
| Name of chair of governors:  | David Clarke                               |
| Date of previous inspection: | 24 May 1999                                |

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in the town of Dunstable in Bedfordshire. The socio-economic circumstances of pupils are generally average. The children's attainment on entry is below average overall. There are currently 246 pupils on roll between the ages of three and nine and 32 children attend the Nursery on a part-time basis. The school is average in size. Almost all pupils are of white British ethnicity. The few who are not are from mixed ethnic backgrounds. No pupil has English as an additional language. Thirty-two pupils are on the school's special educational needs register. This represents 13 per cent of the pupil population and is about average. Eight pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need. This number includes four pupils who attend specialised language provision that is attached to the school. In 2003, the school received the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools Award, the NAACE Quality Mark for information and communication technology provision and the Effective Early Learning Award. The Investors in People award was also gained in 2003. The school is also a leader of one of the first Networked learning Communities set up by the National College for School Leaders.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |               |                | Subject responsibilities   |
|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------|--|
| 16493                          | Mr N Sherman  | Lead inspector | English<br>Information and communication technology<br>Art and design<br>Special educational needs |
| 19740                          | Mr A Smith    | Lay inspector  |  |
| 22147                          | Mrs A Holland | Team inspector | Foundation Stage<br>Science<br>Design and technology<br>Religious education<br>Music               |
| 19897                          | Mr A Evans    | Team inspector | Mathematics<br>History<br>Geography<br>Physical education  |
| 28163                          | Mrs R Boarder | Team Inspector | Special language provision   |

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The school provides a very high quality education for all pupils.** By the time that they leave the school at the age of nine, standards are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Achievement is very high. Teaching is frequently very good and there are examples of excellent teaching in all parts of the school. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Together with the deputy headteacher, staff and governors, her drive for excellence is to be seen in many aspects of the school's work. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- the leadership and management of the school are exemplary;
- there are very good levels of achievement by pupils of all abilities in many subjects;
- teaching throughout the school is very effective;
- the quality of education in the Foundation Stage is of a very high quality and results in the children getting a very good start to their education;
- the school provides an excellent and innovative range of learning opportunities for all pupils;
- pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is very good;
- there is an excellent team spirit amongst staff, and a very strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils in the school, including those with a high language need, achieve their best;
- the provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent;
- links with parents, the community and other schools are of a very high quality and have a positive impact on the pupils' learning;
- the school provides excellent levels of guidance and support for all pupils;
- not all pupils are fully aware of the importance of well-presented written work.

The school has made outstanding progress since the last inspection. The minor issues from the last report been fully tackled. High standards have been maintained. The continued drive for excellence has yielded considerable improvements. Teaching has improved because teachers ensure lessons proceed almost at an electric pace and because of the very effective use that is made of assistants. The school's innovative approach to planning and providing the pupils with rich and varied learning opportunities has led to noteworthy progress in the curriculum.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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*

**Overall, pupils achieve very well.** When children enter the school, their general attainment is below average for their age. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and almost all achieve beyond the national goals for early learning. By the end of the Reception year, a considerable number are well above average in terms of

their personal, social and emotional development. In 2004, the results of the national tests for seven-year-olds in mathematics were in the top five per cent of all schools nationally and also when compared with those of similar schools. The results from tests in 2004 reveal a picture of high standards in all subjects tested. Inspection evidence shows that almost all pupils in the current Year 2 classes are likely to reach well above average in all core subjects. However, standards of written presentation could be higher. Pupils of all abilities are achieving very well. By the time that they leave the school at the age of nine, standards are well above average in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology. Achievement in many other subjects is high. Pupils with special educational needs and those who attend the school because of a high language need, achieve as well as other pupils. Boys and girls do equally well.

**Pupils achieve very high standards in relation to their spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development.** They are very sensitive to the particular needs of others and respond extremely well to the work that the school does in the community. They greatly enjoy learning and respond well to the challenge and expectations that the school has of them. Relationships throughout the school are of a high quality and pupils respond well to the scope that the school gives for them to discuss issues of a moral nature. Pupils are well prepared for life in a multi-ethnic society. Attendance is well above the national average.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a very high quality of education.** Teaching and learning are very good and there is a high percentage of excellent teaching in many classes. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is very well geared to ensuring that the children learn through both imaginative and first hand experiences. In all classes, teachers make creative use of the skills, interest and enthusiasm of teaching assistants. Virtually all teaching is motivating, engages pupils' interest and stimulates high levels of curiosity in what they are learning. The school's novel approach to the curriculum, whereby pupils learn aspects of certain subjects each afternoon for a period of a week contributes much to their achievement. The school enriches its curriculum with an extensive range of educational visits that includes for the older pupils a residential visit to France. Such activities and special events bring learning to life and inspire the pupils. Standards of care are excellent and induction arrangements for pupils new to the school ensure that they settle in very quickly and comfortably. The links and partnerships with parents are excellent and add much to the strong sense of community. Pupils' learning is very much seen as a shared partnership.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are excellent,** and the headteacher leads the school with flair and imagination. Her work is highly influential within and beyond the school. Together with the deputy headteacher, who is equally as effective as the headteacher in her work, they have developed an educational culture where new ideas to improve pupils' learning are continually explored and evaluated for their success. A great team spirit is very much evident and members of staff, governors and parents share the senior management team's vision and endeavour to provide pupils with the highest quality of education. A vibrant programme of staff development further underpins the school's success. Governors fulfil their statutory duties very well.

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

**Parents and pupils are highly satisfied with the school.** Parents think that Lark Rise provides their children with a high quality of education and those parents of children who attend the school because they have a high language need are equally pleased with how

the school caters for them. Information to parents is of the highest order. The school's very attractive web site, for example, enables parents and pupils to download and return homework. Pupils value greatly the scope they are given to represent the school at national conferences where they talk about their day-to-day learning. Pupils are happy that there are adults to turn to if they are worried.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The area that the school needs to address to continue to improve even further is:

- raising all pupils' awareness of the impact that the presentation of work has on the reader.



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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

The achievement of the Foundation Stage children is very good. Pupils continue to achieve very well as they get older. By the time pupils leave school at the age of nine, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science.

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

- As they move through the school, pupils achieve very well from a below average starting point in many subjects.
- In English, mathematics and science pupils make very good progress.
- Pupils of all abilities have a very good understanding of what they have learned in many subjects of the curriculum.
- Foundation Stage children achieve particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development and many reach the expected learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.
- Pupils with special educational needs, and those with a high level of language need, are given very good levels of support enabling them to achieve as well as their classmates.
- Pupils apply well the skills they develop in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology to support their learning in other subjects.
- Standards in written presentation by some pupils could be higher.

#### **Commentary**

1. Standards have been maintained at the same high level since the previous inspection. This reflects the very good attention paid to developing the curriculum, which has contributed well to the level of achievement seen at the school.
2. The provision for those with particular learning needs is of a very high quality throughout the school. Consequently, those pupils with special educational needs, and those who attend the school because of the specialist support for those with a high level of language need, achieve very well. As a result of the support they receive, pupils with special educational needs achieve very well in relation to targets that they are set. However, the school is equally careful to ensure that higher-attaining pupils are challenged and monitored carefully in terms of the progress that they make. They too, make very good progress in many subjects as they move through the school.
3. The children's attainment when they start school is below average overall. A number of them demonstrate a low level of proficiency in their communication, language and literacy. In both the Nursery and the Reception classes, the children achieve very well and the quality of provision is such that the children get a good start to their education. Many children settle extremely easily into the school routines and learn quickly the expectations that the school has of them. Progress in their personal, social and emotional development is very good as a result. By the end of the Reception year, their attainment is above the expected level for their age in this area of their

learning. In all other areas, children are on course to attain or exceed the national goals for early learning by the time they enter Year 1. Higher-attaining children are often working at the lower National Curriculum levels in many subjects.

4. In 2004, the results of the Year 2 national tests were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In mathematics, standards were very high and in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Standards have been consistently very high over the past few years. When the results are compared with those for similar schools, standards in 2004 were high. There was no difference between the test results of boys and girls. The inspection findings confirm that this is still the case.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| reading       | 17.7 (18.1)    | 15.8 (15.7)      |
| writing       | 17.0 (18.1)    | 14.6 (14.6)      |
| mathematics   | 18.6 (19.1)    | 16.2 (16.3)      |

*There were 44 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

5. Current standards in English, including speaking and listening, and in mathematics are well above average. Pupils of all abilities achieve very well in English from a low starting point on entry to the school. This is due to the very good teaching and a very well planned and interesting curriculum that successfully promotes pupils' basic skills through other subjects. The weaker feature of pupils' achievement lies in how a significant minority of them present their written work. Higher-attaining pupils in particular are capable of better standards in this aspect of their learning.
6. In science, the 2004 teacher assessments indicated that standards were well above the national average in all aspects. Well over half of the pupils, for example, reached the higher Level 3. The inspection findings indicate that standards in science are still well above the national average, with many pupils continuing to achieve at the higher level. A notable strength in pupils' learning is the way in which they thoroughly enjoy and tackle work of an investigative nature.
7. In information and communication technology pupils reach standards that are well above average by the age of seven. Pupils achieve very well and this level of achievement is due not just to the effort that pupils apply in their work, but to the creative way in which teaching ensures that the pupils' information and communication technology skills are promoted through other subjects. Pupils achieve very well in all other subjects of the curriculum.
8. The inspection findings indicate that the pupils continue to achieve very well in Years 3 and 4. Standards in English are well above average. Newly introduced subjects such as philosophy give the pupils good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills and many pupils realise the importance of listening effectively to the views of others. By the time pupils leave the school at the age of nine, they are on course to reach standards in mathematics and science that are well above average. The close attention that the school pays to the promotion of pupils' numeracy skills through other subjects contributes well to the high standards reached in mathematics.

9. In information and communication technology, the pupils continue to make good progress in their understanding of the part that information and communication technology plays in their daily lives. By the time they leave the school, pupils are on course to reach standards that are well above average. The achievement of pupils in many other subjects continues to be very good.

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

The pupils have extremely positive attitudes to work. Behaviour is very good and pupils have a very good understanding of how their behaviour can impact on others. Attendance rates are well above average.

## Strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils have extremely positive attitudes to work and are fully involved in many aspects of school life.
- Standards of behaviour are very good.
- Provision for the pupils' personal development is very good.
- Opportunities for the pupils to appreciate the cultural diversity of British society are much improved since the previous inspection.
- Attendance is very good and the vast majority of pupils are punctual, ensuring a smooth start to the school day.

## Commentary

10. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. They enjoy coming to school and show great enthusiasm for learning. In lessons, they listen attentively, settle down quickly to work and try their best. Most of the pupils are eager to answer questions and to contribute constructively to discussions. A minority has weaker listening skills and a limited concentration span. A few less able pupils lack confidence when putting forward their own ideas.
11. Behaviour in and out of classrooms is very good and the pupils respond well to the school's approach to ensuring that little, if any, bullying takes place. There is no evidence of oppressive behaviour, including bullying, sexism or racism. The pupils move around the school in an orderly manner. They are friendly and polite. Relationships between pupils and teachers and between the pupils themselves are very good. Where appropriate, as in investigative work or physical education lessons, the pupils generally work well in groups or teams. They respect others' feelings and opinions. The pupils are very happy to take responsibility whenever it is offered. They help willingly with classroom tasks and older pupils provide valuable help around the school. Members of the school council take a very responsible, mature role in decision-making. During the past year, one pupil was excluded. This decision was taken after careful consideration and after all avenues of attempting to manage the pupil's behaviour had been explored.

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

| Categories used in the Annual School Census | No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| White – British                             | 262                  | 3                                 | 1                              |

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

12. The school makes very good provision for other aspects of the pupils' personal development and parents value this. There are many opportunities in acts of collective worship and in lessons for the pupils to develop spiritual awareness and to reflect on issues such as beauty in the world, happiness and helping others. At the start of some lessons, the teachers light candles for a few moments, in order to focus the pupils' thoughts. Philosophy lessons which are being trialled in Years 3 and 4 provide further opportunities for reflection.

13. Provision for the pupils' moral development is very good. The pupils contribute to the formulating of codes of conduct and they are well aware of the difference between right and wrong. The result of this is apparent in very good behaviour.
14. There is very good provision for the pupils' social development, particularly the award of a weekly *Kindness and Caring* cup. There are many opportunities for the pupils to develop social skills in small group work, in extra-curricular activities, on school visits and by taking responsibility. The pupils understand what it is to be a good citizen and they support a number of national charities. They help to sponsor a school in Uganda. Provision for the pupils' cultural development is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. Work in history, geography, art and design and religious education deepens the pupils' understanding of the cultures of Britain and other countries. This is enriched by visits to museums and art galleries and by visitors, such as a recent Philharmonic Orchestra workshop group. Weeks devoted to special themes, such as art and dance, enable the pupils to appreciate cultural diversity of British society.
15. Attendance rates are well above the national average. This data shows strong improvement from 2002/2003. Although the school has strived hard to make parents aware of the significance of full attendance and punctuality the major proportion of authorised absence is due to parents taking their children on holiday during term time. The overwhelming majority of pupils arrive in time enabling a prompt start to the school day.

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

| Authorised absence |     | Unauthorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data        | 4.4 | School data          | 0.0 |
| National data      | 5.4 | National data        | 0.4 |

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides a very good quality of education. Teaching is very good in the Foundation Stage and very good in Years 1 to 4. Assessment is exemplary throughout the school. The statutory curriculum is excellent and is very effectively enriched by an extensive range of additional learning opportunities. The school provides excellent levels of support and guidance and pupils' views are sought and acted upon. Links with parents, other schools and the community are excellent overall.

**Teaching and learning**

The teaching of Foundation Stage children is very good with excellent features. In Years 1 to 4, the teaching is very good overall and there are examples of excellent teaching. Throughout the school, assessment is excellent. Teaching for the pupils from the language provision is very good. This results in the pupils concerned achieving very well.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Teachers give pupils frequent opportunities to reflect on their learning.
- Children in the Foundation Stage are provided with good opportunities to learn through imaginative play.
- The expertise of learning support assistants is used well to support pupils in their learning.
- Pupils respond well to the very high expectations teachers have of them.
- Teaching is characterised by very brisk pace and a range of teaching strategies that keep pupils highly motivated.
- Copious records of the pupils' progress are kept to which good reference is made in planning the next steps in pupils' learning.
- Teachers are sensitive to the needs of pupils and plan in detail to ensure that learning matches the various age groups and abilities in each class.
- There is sensitive reflection and innovative practice by staff in using speech and language strategies throughout the curriculum.

## Commentary

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 41 lessons*

| Excellent | Very good | Good    | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 13 (32%)  | 20 (49%)  | 7 (17%) | 1 (2%)       | 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.*

16. There has been very good improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Much staff development has taken place in exploring the most effective ways to support the pupils in their learning. This, alongside the continued development of ways in which teaching and learning is evaluated, and shared, to ensure that it is of a high quality, has contributed to the improvement in teaching. Where subject managers teach their subjects, the quality of teaching and learning is often at its best.
17. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are very good with some excellent features that include the highly imaginative use that is made of structured play to support the children's learning. Children enter into such activities willingly and the pace of the lessons is such that their levels of enthusiasm for their learning remain high throughout lessons. Such skilful teaching is one of the main reasons for the children's high achievement. Assessment of the children's progress is excellent. The learning support assistants play a pivotal role in this process as the information that is gathered on the children is used well to guide the learning of both the children in the Nursery and in the Reception classes.
18. Throughout the school the teaching of English, mathematics and science is frequently very good. Basic skills in reading and writing are taught well. Literature is used imaginatively by teachers to fire the pupils' imaginations in both what they write and to encourage them to seek out further work by the author. Teachers make creative use of question and answer sessions to enable the pupils to refine their thinking, listen to the views of others and to develop the confidence in speaking aloud to a wider audience. Teaching is of a high quality in mathematics and science. In both subjects, teachers ensure that the pupils learn different ideas and concepts by planning frequent opportunities for them to participate in open-ended investigative work. The pupils approach such work with relish and, with careful guidance by teachers and learning support assistants, understand the importance of learning from the mistakes that they make.
19. There is very effective teaching to be seen in other subjects. When teaching in the school's computer suite, for example, the teachers plan imaginative ways to enable the pupils to develop their skills and knowledge through other subjects. Pupils use the Internet to explore aspects of religious education or discover information about the themes they may be exploring in history or geography. Explanations of how to use the range of software are very clear, ensuring that the pupils have a very good understanding of what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. In many lessons, the skills of individual learning support assistants are put to highly efficient use by teachers. The assistants guide the pupils' well, ensuring that they achieve highly in many lessons. In nearly all lessons, time is used crisply and many

sessions often move at breakneck speed. This helps to keep the pupils focused on their learning and achieving highly.

20. All members of staff have received training in language development and have acquired a high level of expertise in meeting the needs of pupils who have special educational needs. Teachers confidently and effectively plan their lessons with a firm focus on including all pupils in all parts of the lessons. At the start of each lesson pupils share learning objectives and reflect upon prior learning strategies. Key words and concepts to be developed within the lesson are explored and consistently reinforced throughout the lesson to ensure continued understanding. Clever questions from pupils and staff explore further hypotheses, bring pupils back to task, and clarify misunderstandings. Teaching activities match the pupils' learning needs based upon the targets agreed within their individual education plans. An example of this was seen in a Year 4 class where the pupil explained to the whole class how she had mastered the strategies to detect incorrect words. She later worked collaboratively with her peers to identify spelling errors within a passage of text.
21. The use of assessment throughout the school is excellent. From the Foundation Stage to Year 4, assessment is used to identify the specific learning needs of pupils. Assessment is flexible and responds to the continued understanding of all pupils' needs, including those with special educational needs. Arrangements for assessment are all-inclusive and include all subjects and all aspects of the pupil's progress. Assessment information is used continually at every stage both to meet pupil needs and to improve curricular opportunities. A key feature of the assessment arrangements that the school has developed is the way in which the pupils themselves are invited to evaluate their own work. Weekly learning logs are one of the tools in this process. As a result, the pupils are both familiar with their own targets and closely involved in setting them.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is excellent. A wide range of additional learning opportunities very effectively enhances the statutory curriculum. The accommodation and resources are very good overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very well planned curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage promotes their learning and personal development well.
- The innovative approach to the curriculum provides an imaginative curriculum that contributes well to the high levels of achievement.
- Lark Rise's curriculum for pupils from the language provision unit is innovative, inclusive and powered by teacher and pupil evaluation, passion and inspiration.
- Expertise from within and without the school is used very well to enrich curriculum opportunities.
- The curriculum is regularly evaluated rigorously to gauge the impact that it is having on pupils' learning.

### **Commentary**



22. The school has not only sustained the breadth and balance and the high standards reported at the last inspection but in many ways it has improved the provision. All pupils enjoy a very rich and varied range of curricular opportunities. All statutory requirements are met. Provision for information and communication technology is very good. Personal, social and health education enjoys a high status throughout the school and includes provision for sex education and drugs awareness. Links with other educational establishments are excellent which further enrich the quality of pupils' learning.
23. Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good with many excellent features. The curriculum is planned very carefully in line with national guidance. It promotes learning. Provision for personal, social and emotional development is of a very high quality. Teachers creatively ensure that there is good scope to learn through structured play and through guided, teacher led activities.
24. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 4 is excellent. After full discussion with the governors and the pupils, the school has adopted an innovative approach to the curriculum for science and the non-core subjects. These subjects are taught in weekly blocks for the full afternoon rather than for an hour per week for the course of a term. This results in pupils having good opportunities to explore aspects of a subject in depth. The literacy hour and the numeracy strategy are firmly embedded throughout the school and teachers are tireless in planning opportunities for pupils of all ages and abilities to extend their literacy and numeracy skills through other subjects. Subject managers and senior staff regularly and rigorously evaluate the provision within each subject in order to establish whether learning opportunities can be enhanced. Such is the value that the school places on the views of pupils that that these are taken fully into account when decisions about the curriculum are made. Pupils enjoy their learning and inform staff through their learning logs, dialogue and the school council what they enjoy and improvements they would like to see. Pupils are offered access to French and a recent initiative has included the introduction of philosophy into Year 4, broadening the scope for learning still further.
25. The school has a very strong inclusion policy and the headteacher and members of staff value all pupils highly as individuals. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs and those with higher learning needs in terms of their language are written collaboratively with the pupils and parents in collaboration with the class teacher. This sees pupils confidently using strategies to achieve their learning targets agreed within the plan. The enrichment of the curriculum of the many creative and 'hands on' activities for the pupils results in a high level of involvement in their learning. Evaluation challenges all to reflect on how to improve the development of learning within the whole school community; including pupils, parents, school staff and governors.
26. The school offers a very rich variety of additional activities to enhance the pupils' experience. These include a trip to France in Year 4 to support French conversation lessons and to widen pupils' understanding of life and day-to-day culture of people overseas. All classes have at least two educational trips a year to support learning of particular themes. These include trips to museums and places of interest, such as Hampton Court to support work on the Tudors. A wide range of visitors come into the school and the school organises theatre visits in relation to a variety of subjects

including science and history. Such experiences result in genuine enrichment of the curriculum. To support pupils' understanding of cultural variety within society, a multi cultural dance week was held. There are opportunities for pupils to be taught instruments by peripatetic music teachers and to participate in sport with other schools. The school also organises a wide variety of after school clubs for pupils.

27. The school has successfully tackled the issue at the last inspection concerning provision for the Reception year children. Accommodation for all the children in the Foundation Stage is now very good. Accommodation for pupils in Years 1 to 4 is good. It is well maintained by a hard working and dedicated site agent. The design and layout of the computer suite has been carefully undertaken and is used at all available points of the school day to support learning. The learning resource base provides a quiet haven for intensive work with pupils on some aspects of their communication skills. Hand crafted resources for teaching *accelerated communication skills* provide pupils with complementary learning resources. However, the majority of the resources are housed within the pupil's classrooms to benefit all pupils' learning. The match of teaching staff to the curriculum is very good and the match of learning support staff is excellent. Resources throughout the school are very good.

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

Arrangements for pupils' health and safety are excellent. The school's support and guidance of pupils is excellent. Pupils' make an exemplary contribution to the life of the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The tremendous quality of relationships between all supports pupils splendidly.
- Pupils are very quickly established into school life and well prepared for the following stages of education.
- The wide range of associations with other schools and the community broadens pupils' learning and personal development to a great extent.

### **Commentary**

28. Pupils' welfare, academic and personal developments are all considered equally as high priorities by every member of staff. Health and safety is held in high regard by the school. The strength of relationships between staff and pupils ensures that pupils are extremely well looked after and they feel so to the benefit of their confidence. Members of staff are extremely perceptive of pupils' individual needs. This sensitive ethos motivates pupils towards making very good progress. Pupils believe they are highly valued because all staff listen to and involve them in an admirable and mature manner. For example, the school council plays a first-rate part in involving them in decisions about their very active participation in the life of the school. Pupils receive excellent academic support and both the teachers and the members of the support staff have an extensive knowledge and understanding of the pupils' academic capabilities in many subjects.
29. Children's entry into school life is very well planned, fully involving parents and staff. Because of this they settle very quickly into the regular school routines, establishing

positive behaviour and top-quality interests in activities. Connections with other schools and agencies are very wide and dependable, with transfer procedures well set for pupils' later educational routes.

30. A wide range of professional visitors enhances pupils' awareness of their personal safety and hygiene. For example: police, dental nurse, and fire personnel. A high priority is given to child protection Attendance and punctuality procedures are very good. The regular monitoring and awareness campaign by school has made a significant improvement to attendance.
31. Parents who have a child at the school because of a high language need are complimentary about what the school does for their child in terms of care. Pupils play and laugh happily with their friends on the playground. They experience democratic citizenship, which contributes to the management of the school and curriculum innovation, through the student council. Pupils from the speech and language resource join in two 'energiser' sessions each day. They follow the complex direction by listening for key words and modelling the actions of both staff and pupils. Pupils around them call key words of encouragement in a friendly way.

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

The school's partnership with its parents and the community are of a very high quality. Links with other schools are exceptional in furthering the quality of the provision.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents have first class opinions about the school and the support they obtain to help their children with their learning.
- Information is of a high quality that helps to keep parents happily informed about their child's progress.
- Links with the community and other schools fully enrich pupils' lives, both academically and socially.

### **Commentary**

32. Parents have extremely high opinions of the school. There is nothing that causes them any significant concern. They believe that the school is very fair to all and strives hard for the benefit of their children, and that pupils are encouraged to be considerate of others. They correctly think that their children enjoy coming to school and are developing a mature approach to living in a diverse community and an awareness of the wider world.
33. The regular newsletters, which are replicated on the school's website, coupled with the daily contact availability with staff keep them fully aware of school expectations, procedures and many other events the school promotes, such as parental support classes. The school is energetic in informing parents about any concerns that they may have about individual pupils with their parents or carers. At the consultation meetings there are opportunities for individual discussion about pupil's progress and their learning. The pupils themselves are fully involved in this process. This helps to further cement the sense of partnership that typifies the school's strong links with the

parents. Parents support the school extremely well, with an admirable parent teacher association which raises funds for additional resources. For example, every pupil on leaving the school is presented with a dictionary.

34. The exceptionally powerful links with other schools in the area coupled with the well-established and positive links with the community, and the wide range of visits and visitors provide very good enrichment for the curriculum. These links support pupils' personal and social development as well as enriching their learning experience and give them greater opportunities to learn about cultural diversity and the needs of others. The partnership with other professionals and parents is open, honest and focused upon learning together.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are excellent and are major factors in explaining why standards are high and there is a very positive school ethos. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. The leadership and management of the key staff, including subject co-ordinators, are very good overall. The governing body provides very good governance for the school.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- There is excellent leadership of the school which results in pupils learning in a very effective learning environment.
- The deputy and the senior management team support the headteacher extremely well and the role of the co-ordinators is very well developed.
- School development planning is highly innovative and is underpinned by a continual quest of seeking new ways to make learning interesting.
- There are excellent systems for evaluating how well the school is performing.
- There is a very strong commitment to including all groups of pupils in learning, and the leadership and management of those with particular learning needs is exemplary.
- The governance of the school is very good.

### **Commentary**

35. Overall, the school is extremely well led and managed. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and steers the school with flair and imagination. Together with a very effective deputy headteacher, the headteacher provides a very clear sense of purpose. She is fully supported in this work by a highly committed and very conscientious staff. This results in all pupils being provided with a high quality, dynamic learning environment in which educational change is not only welcomed but it helps to establish a learning community where all can flourish. This has led to a much-improved school since the last inspection. Furthermore, the school's own drive for improvement has ensured that the move forward towards its own targets, and as a result of much work, has resulted in the school being awarded various national awards. The headteacher has a very perceptive understanding of the school's strengths and minor weaknesses. These insights have been gathered through the efficient and successful procedures to monitor teaching and learning, in which all co-ordinators are encouraged to play a full and active part. The school culture where all can achieve fully has led to very high levels of expectation for both the academic and

personal development of the pupils and for the inclusion of all groups of pupils in learning. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school's continued development that is shared by staff and the governing body, and which is clearly articulated in the school improvement plan that is shared with parents.

36. How the school is managed is equally of a very high quality. A key feature of management is fixed on developing teachers' skills and on enabling all staff to cope with change and with new initiatives. Staff development for all is full, regular, and finely tuned to meet both the professional needs of all who work with pupils and the goals that have been set for the school. All the teachers currently at the school were appointed as newly qualified teachers, but the careful programme of performance management and the way in which the school has implemented agreements on workforce reforms have provided good scope for teachers to develop their skills and expertise in their subjects of responsibility. Members of the support staff attest to the warm encouragement that the senior management team give to their professional development. This has resulted in some undertaking training to become teachers themselves. In addition, there are excellent procedures for helping new staff settle into the school quickly and for the training of student teachers. These high quality measures for the ongoing training of all staff, who value this provision, successfully underpin a school climate where the school's aims are successfully achieved. The work of administration staff is highly valued and the smooth and effective way they carry out their duties ensures that the headteacher and her colleagues are free to concentrate on improving teaching, learning and the quality of education for pupils.
37. The quality of improvement planning is excellent. The starting place for this process is very much rooted in close evaluation of how well pupils perform in national and other tests and in evaluating many other aspects of day-to-day provision. Financial management is very good and ensures that planned initiatives are carefully costed. The budget is very closely linked to school improvement planning, with the result that funds are used prudently to improve the quality of education and to achieve priorities. The governors, guided well by the headteacher, ensure that the school secures best value in buying services and resources.
38. Governance of the school is very good. Governors, who are well led by the chair, are fully involved and actively encouraged by the senior management in evaluating the school's performance. A regular programme of visits is embedded in the school's termly programme to gauge the quality of provision. This ensures they are well aware of the strengths and relative weaknesses of the school and they play a full part in school improvement planning, such as the developments seen in many aspects of the curriculum. The governors are very supportive of the school, whilst at the same time, questioning policies, practice and holding the school to account for the standards it attains.
39. The leadership and management of the strategic direction of arrangements for pupils with special educational needs and those at the school because of their high level of language need, is excellent. The leadership is such that those who oversee provision are helping to create motivating, enjoyable learning experiences for pupils and adults. Innovative ideas to develop speaking and listening across the curriculum are evaluated and good practice shared. There is a strategic focus on evaluating the most effective teaching styles to support the pupils' learning. Newly arrived teachers are

coached well to evaluate their language teaching skills, and to ensure that pupils enjoy their learning. The high standards achieved in the last inspection have been maintained and innovatively developed to increase this very effective provision. Future plans, identified by the school, include networking with local schools to share practice on speech and language provision and to increase further the range of professional development opportunities.

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

| Income and expenditure (£) |         |
|----------------------------|---------|
| Total income               | 708,004 |
| Total expenditure          | 707,314 |
| Expenditure per pupil      | 2,875   |

| Balances (£)                        |        |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Balance from previous year          | 32,822 |
| Balance carried forward to the next | 33,512 |

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

40. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good with many excellent features. There has been excellent improvement since the last inspection when provision for children in the Reception year was a minor issue. The building has been extended to provide very good accommodation for both the Nursery and Reception classes. There is an appropriate safe, secure outdoor area which is easily accessible for all three classes. Currently, there is no covered outdoor area to allow the children opportunities for learning to take place outside the classroom in more inclement weather. However, this is a priority in the current school improvement plan.
41. Children are admitted to the Nursery at the age of three. The older children attend in the morning and the youngest in the afternoon. They transfer to the Reception classes in September or January. Teaching is very well planned in line with the nationally agreed curriculum for children of this age and it takes very effective account of their needs. There is a very good range of resources in the classroom area and a good range in the outside area; these are used to provide a wide range of high quality activities to develop and engage the children in their learning. Children generally enter the Nursery with overall attainment that is below average for children of this age. By the time they enter Year 1, most will have achieved the national goals for early learning in each area and the majority will have exceeded them. All children, including those with particular needs, make very good progress over time. This reflects the high quality teaching and the very well planned curriculum that they receive.
42. The school has developed a very good induction programme, which is sensitive to the needs of the children. The newly appointed co-ordinator is a senior member of staff who holds the post of language provision teacher within the school. She has close links with the Foundation Stage as the majority of children requiring language support are currently in that stage. Leadership is effective as the co-ordinator is involved in the day-to-day planning, and there are plans in place for her to monitor teaching and learning in the unit. Assessment in the Foundation Stage is excellent. Children are constantly assessed through careful observations and this information is used to build up a comprehensive profile of each child. Provision is thoroughly and frequently evaluated in order to identify ways in which provision could be improved to support further development in teaching and learning.
43. One of the outstanding features of the Foundation Stage is the high level of commitment of teachers and support staff to raising standards and to providing the children with educational opportunities, appropriate to their age, which will enhance their learning and their ability to become independent learners. All staff constantly seeks ways in which their practice can be improved still further. As a result of the very high quality provision, the children are getting the best possible start to their educational life.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**



Provision in personal, social and emotional development is excellent.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Members of staff have very high expectations and the children respond positively.
- Children are developing very good attitudes to learning.
- The ethos in the classes is very strong.

## **Commentary**

44. Personal, social and emotional development is excellent. All the children are likely to exceed the national goals for early learning in this area. Achievement is very good reflecting the quality of teaching, which is at least very good and often excellent. Relationships are extremely positive. Children are developing very good attitudes to learning and equally importantly, they find learning pleasurable. They are highly keen to learn and as a result, their self-confidence, independence and self-esteem are increasing. They have many excellent opportunities to work in groups, to take turns and to share. Members of staff have high expectations of behaviour and use very good strategies to develop understanding of right and wrong. Children are very aware of routines and even the youngest sustain very good levels of concentration. In all three classes, music is used at various times, for example, to remind the children to tidy up; they respond very quickly to this familiar routine. By the time they reach the Reception classes, they are able to work independently at group activities. They quietly get on, helping each other, and can explain clearly what they are doing. In all three classes, the ethos is warm and welcoming, the children's views are highly respected and there is an overwhelming sense of security.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

Provision in communication, language and literacy is very good with some excellent features.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent.
- Speaking and listening skills are developed well by all staff.
- Children's reading skills are very well developed.

## **Commentary**

45. Most children enter the Nursery with levels of language below those that are typical for children of this age. A few children have significant communication and language difficulties; these children receive additional support and are making very good progress. Teachers and support staff in the Nursery and both Reception classes place a heavy emphasis on extending the speaking and listening skills. Children are encouraged to answer questions in full sentences. They are always given adequate time to express themselves and their oral contributions are highly valued in all three classes. Children from the Nursery onwards, listen very well in whole class sessions and they respond to stories enthusiastically.
46. In the Nursery, most children can make a very good attempt to write their own name, and those who are more able can write their name independently. Children in the Reception classes write their names automatically and most can write their surname too. Many opportunities are provided in all three classes for children to practise their writing skills, for example in the role-play areas. Children in the Reception classes are used to recording their work in their books. They are introduced to letter sounds in the Nursery. An excellent lesson was observed where these were introduced by the teacher through the telling of a story where the characters have names beginning

with the letters being learnt. Props were used to support the story and the children were totally engrossed. Children know that when writing letters you must start at the top and not take the pencil off the paper and they correct the deliberate mistakes of the adults sensibly. In the Reception classes, children are being encouraged to read simple texts and many of them can. Higher attaining children are reading simple texts with real confidence and they know the meaning of *title*, *author* and *illustrator*. Children are already applying their phonic knowledge to decode simple words. They share books with adults with confidence and are already able to discuss the text. This represents very good achievement. Most children are on course to exceed the national goals for early learning because of the very good teaching they receive.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good and characterised by creative use of practical activities, which are very well planned to support children's learning.

### **Commentary**

47. Most children are likely to attain or exceed the national goals for early learning in this area. The teaching in all three classes is very good and all children achieve very well. In the Nursery, a wide range of practical activities is available which support learning. For example, children paint using shapes and are encouraged to identify circle, square and triangle as they use them. Their attention is drawn to repeated patterns that they create. This approach is continued in the Reception classes. Children are encouraged to identify shapes, and to use mathematical language, for example, *large*, *medium*, *small*, *longer than* and *shorter than*. Most children can count up to 20 with ease and higher attaining children can count beyond. In a very good lesson, the teacher was encouraging the children to think of different ways in which they could sort objects. No opportunities were missed to introduce any relevant mathematical term and by the end of the session, the children could explain very sensibly how to sort by size and by colour, and they knew how important it was to count objects carefully. Group activities are very well planned to support learning in the subject.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

Provision in knowledge and understanding is very good with some excellent features.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is lively and stimulating and ensures that children reach their full potential in this subject.
- Children are provided with frequent opportunities to use the school's computer suite to extend their learning of information and communication technology.

### **Commentary**

48. Most children are working above the levels expected for their age and children achieve very well. A very good range of appropriate and interesting activities are planned to stimulate the children's curiosity and to enhance their understanding. In the Nursery, children are introduced to learning new ideas by using sand and water. They have good opportunities to use the outside area to look at plants and insects. They are learning to make sandwiches and they know they must wash their hands before they handle food. In a very good lesson in the Reception class, children were observed making shortbread. The teacher was very careful to exploit the mathematical opportunities offered in the lesson. For example, the children discussed why they needed scales to ensure accuracy in weight; they read the number related to the quantities required and they measured the ingredients out themselves. The level of discussion and understanding was well above that expected for children of this age.
49. Teaching is frequently very good with some excellent features. In an excellent lesson with a history focus in a Reception class, the teaching was so lively and dynamic and the subject introduced in such an exciting manner that the overall learning involved several aspects of the curriculum and the children sustained interest for a lengthy period. Children are introduced to other religions in a very exciting way. Children understand aspects of a Christian wedding. They are introduced to a Hindu wedding through the skilful use of relevant artefacts including dolls representing the bride and groom. There were several occasions during the inspection when a real sense of awe and wonder was present in the children's response to this aspect of their learning.
50. Children in all three classes have access to computers which they use very well. There are some excellent examples of information and communication technology work within their folders and the children have frequent access to using the school's computer suite in support of their learning. Children know how to use the mouse, click and drag pictures and to access programs. This area of their learning makes a very positive contribution to their social, cultural and spiritual education.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching in structured lessons is of a very high quality.

### **Commentary**

51. In all three classes, many lessons commence with jogging and exercise in the outdoor area and, already, children understand that exercise is important to their health. They know that their hearts beat faster when they have been jogging and running and that this helps their brains to keep fresh. All three classes have regular access to the outdoor area, even during the inspection when the weather was inclement; activities were still taking place outside. For example, a lesson on the letter *t*, was continued outside with children using construction apparatus to form the capital and lower case *t*. An excellent lesson in the hall was observed. The children are clearly building on skills previously taught; they already know how to put out small apparatus including

mats and their regard of health and safety rules and the way they behave whilst waiting their turn to use apparatus is impeccable. During the lesson, the teacher introduced them to a trestle and with the help of a child, demonstrated its use. The teaching is of such high quality that the children's learning in this class was well above that expected for children of this age. No time was wasted and the pace of the lesson was maintained throughout. In all three classes children develop their manipulative skills well by handling dough, scissors and brushes. They have a variety of construction equipment which improves their manual dexterity. All children are on course to meet the national goals in this aspect, and many will exceed them. Overall achievement is very good.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good and excellent use is made of imaginative structured play to enhance learning.
- Activities are used well to support learning in other areas of the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

52. All children are on course to attain the national goals in this area of their early learning and children achieve highly. The teaching is very good and the activities are planned to support other aspects of the curriculum, for instance, in the Nursery, children paint patterns using wood block shapes. In all three classes, paints are readily available and children hold brushes correctly. Opportunities to cut and glue are readily available and by the time children are in the Reception classes, they manage these activities with confidence. Displays indicate that children are introduced to variety of materials and techniques. There are role-play areas in all rooms and these are used very well to further extend children's language skills. Music is used throughout the day, children sing simple rhymes and music is used to indicate 'tidy up' time and the children respond well.

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

### **English**

Provision in English is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils attain very high standards by the time that they leave school and throughout the school all pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good and there are examples of excellent teaching.
- Teachers make creative use of the expertise and interest of learning support assistants in helping pupils learn.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good, and highly effective use is made of assessment information to plan pupils' subsequent learning.

- Not all pupils present their written work with sufficient care.

## Commentary

53. The school has maintained the high standards noted at the time of the previous inspection. In the national tests for 2004, most seven-year-olds exceeded the nationally expected level in both reading and writing. Inspection findings confirm the high standards reached by pupils in Year 2. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well. Pupils continue to make very good progress in Years 3 and 4 and by the time they leave the school, pupils are on course to attain standards that are well above average. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
54. Pupils successfully build on the good progress that they make in the Foundation Stage in speaking and listening in Years 1 and 2. They make good progress and many achieve high standards and are confident speakers by the time they leave the school. Teachers plan very carefully to promote pupils' confidence in speaking and listening both within small groups as well as in full class discussions. Pupils learnt to value and appreciate the views of others as a result. Equally good attention is given by teachers to promoting pupils' reading skills and their appreciation of reading as a pleasurable activity. Teachers use a wide range of literature to simulate pupils' interest and they learn that reading can take many forms from books to poetry to newspapers and non-fiction text. Every encouragement is given to pupils to take books home and many parents and other adults give valuable support in both reading to and exploring books with their children. The structure of many lessons ensures that pupils have repeated opportunities and enough time to write for a wide range of purposes. Pupils make very good progress as a result of how writing is used to communicate and that is varied to meet the needs of different audiences. Every encouragement is given to pupils to construct and read through what they have written and to consider how redrafting work leads to an improvement in its quality. Pupils regularly practise their handwriting and many use a joined script by the time they leave the school. However, a small proportion produce untidy work and this mars the overall quality of what they produce.
55. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and some examples of excellent practice were seen. Teachers have a very secure knowledge and understanding of the principles that underpin pupils' language development and plan many interesting activities that enthuse and spur the pupils on in their learning. Philosophy lessons in Year 4, for example, allow pupils to explore and discuss issues of a moral nature. This cultivates well the pupils' understanding of the need to listen and appreciate others' views, even if they are different from their own. In many lessons, excellent use is made of the expertise of support assistants who are guided well by teachers in how best to support the pupils they are working alongside. In many lessons, assessments of the pupils' progress is regular and this information is used well to both monitor and track pupils' progress as well as feeding back into planning pupils' subsequent learning. Very good use is made by teachers in allowing the pupils themselves scope to evaluate their learning. Weekly writing tasks, which the pupils then explore to gauge their own improvement, help them to see and build on the progress that they are making.

56. There is very good leadership and management of the subject. The co-ordinator provides astute leadership and has led educational developments in the subject well since the previous inspection. Ways to assess the pupils' progress and the use that is made of both National Curriculum assessments and the dovetailing of this with the staff's own day-to-day assessments are excellent. In addition, staff development where a regular programme of training in how pupils can become more engaged in their learning takes place. This helps to ensure that all members of staff have a secure grounding in the most effective ways to promote pupils' confidence in using their knowledge and understanding of language in their day-to-day learning.

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

57. Teachers are highly creative in how they plan and provide the pupils with scope to practise and develop their language skills in other subjects. In information and communication technology, for example, pupils use the Internet to research their ideas and use word processors to present their findings. In art and design, they explore the work of different artists and then note down their views in their day-to-day sketchbooks. Other subjects such as science and history are used equally well to enable pupils to make notes or jot down ideas as a foundation for later work when their efforts may be presented more formally.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision for mathematics is **very good**.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good, sometimes excellent, and this enables all pupils to achieve very well.
- Standards are well above average by the end of both Year 2 and by the time pupils leave the school.
- Very good use is made of the potential within other subjects to promote pupils' learning.
- Subject leadership is excellent and is a significant factor in the high quality provision.
- Assessment arrangements are excellent and the management of the school makes very good use of the information to plan improvements.
- There are inconsistencies in the presentation of pupils' work.

### **Commentary**

58. In the national tests for 2004, most seven-year-olds exceeded the nationally expected level. The results were in the top five per cent of schools in the country. Inspection findings confirm the high standards reached by pupils in Year 2. By Year 2 and Year 4, all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Standards are well above average, which reflects the findings of the previous inspection.
59. In Year 2, the pupils use quick mental recall of number facts. Basic numeracy skills are very good. For example, the pupils have a very good understanding of place value, of half and quarter and of addition and subtraction of two-digit numbers. The

pupils use these skills to solve simple problems, though lower attaining pupils find it difficult when the problems include more than one operation. The pupils have a very good understanding of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. They draw accurate graphs to represent data. By Year 4, pupils have very good understanding of basic numeracy skills and apply these well in solving a range of everyday problems. They demonstrate high levels of proficiency in doubling two-digit numbers and they use inverse operations to check their answers. They have a very good understanding of fractions. They solve word problems about money, measurement and time. Their data handling skills are very good and they ably use a wide range of information and communication technology software to aid them in this aspect of their work.

60. Throughout the school, presentation of work is inconsistent and can be untidy; this spoils the overall quality. Although the pupils are aware of how squared paper should be used accurately to record numerals, in practice, this does not always happen. Even some higher attaining pupils place their numerals in a haphazard manner, which is unhelpful in their understanding of place value and in the construction of number sentences.
61. Teaching and learning are very good and result in high levels of achievement by all groups of pupils. There are examples of excellent teaching. There is a strong focus on developing skills of mental calculation. The teachers employ various strategies to achieve this, including games and interactive displays. Explanations of mathematical concepts are very clear and this enhances understanding. The teachers use questioning very effectively, in order to make the pupils think carefully. They encourage the pupils to use correct mathematical terms, which helps, for example, in comparing measurements and in ordering numbers. The teachers match work extremely well to pupils' differing needs and this provides an appropriate challenge for all pupils enabling them, including those with special educational needs, to make very good progress. Learning is enhanced by the use of practical apparatus and information and communication technology. Learning support assistants work very effectively with individuals and groups. Whilst progress is carefully monitored, the pupils are encouraged to be independent learners. In a lesson in Years 1 and 2, the teacher encouraged the pupils to challenge themselves by setting themselves progressively harder tasks. The teachers use plenary sessions very effectively to assess progress and to consolidate learning. They mark pupils' work positively, often suggesting ways in which improvements might be made. Homework is offered in an innovative way, through downloading from the school's website. Many of the pupils are keen to complete this and it adds a further layer to their understanding of how information and communication technology can be used to communicate information.
62. Subject leadership is excellent. The co-ordinator leads training for colleagues, which contributes significantly to increased expertise and to high quality provision. He monitors standards and teaching and has developed excellent systems for tracking the pupils' progress. Information gained from assessments is used very well to plan the next steps in learning and to set targets for further improvement. In addition, the management of the school makes satisfactory use of the information to plan whole school improvements.



## **Mathematics across the curriculum**

63. The teachers plan very well to provide the pupils with numerous opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other subjects. In science, for example, the pupils record their leg and finger measurements by means of accurate block graphs. In design and technology and in history, they use computer-generated bar graphs of the best designed vehicles and of their favourite famous people respectively. In geography, the pupils draw accurate block graphs of their favourite places in Dunstable, of temperatures in Dunstable compared with those in Paris and of holiday destinations visited.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some teaching in Year 4 is excellent and characterised by the strong emphasis by teachers on promoting the pupils' understanding of scientific language.
- Standards at Year 2 and by the time pupils leave the school are well above the national average and achievement is very good.
- Pupils are encouraged to record their own findings in such a way that the reader can follow the line of their thinking.
- There are occasions when work is carelessly presented and this spoils the overall quality of their work.

### Commentary

64. The Year 2 teacher assessments in 2004 show that the school has sustained the very high standards it has achieved in recent years in the subject although not quite so many pupils achieved the higher Level 3 as in 2003. Because of the timing of the inspection so early in the school year, there was little evidence of work done by the current Year 2 pupils. However, an analysis of work completed last year indicates that standards are well above average. There is a very clear focus on providing a wide range of experience across all aspects of the subject. This is underpinned by the very good use by teachers of enabling the pupils to develop their learning by undertaking investigations. These very high standards are sustained in Years 3 and 4, where the more able pupils are working at levels well above those expected for their age. No differences were noted between the achievement of boys and girls; they all achieve very well, including those with special educational needs.
65. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and all planning shows a clear focus, which is finely tuned to meet the needs of both the age range and different learning needs of the pupils in each of the classes. Learning objectives are shared with pupils at the beginning of the lessons and consequently the pupils are clear about what they are expected to achieve. Pupils learn well; they concentrate hard, they show real interest and enthusiasm and a mature understanding of many aspects of science. In the excellent lesson, Year 4 pupils demonstrated a very good understanding of how a switch breaks a circuit by interrupting the flow of the electricity. The teacher's high expectations of the pupils and his effective questioning inspired the pupils; they responded to the challenge with lively enthusiasm. At the end of the lesson, they were able to articulate clearly and maturely what they had learned. In all three lessons, there was a very good emphasis on the use of subject specific vocabulary; as a result, pupils are developing a very good understanding of scientific ideas.
66. Science is taught in weekly blocks throughout the year to enable more continuous study of the subject over a longer period. An examination of pupils' books reveals that in all classes they are given clear and consistent opportunities to learn through practical activities and to predict outcomes. Pupils are encouraged to record their own

findings in their workbooks. However, there are occasions when this work is carelessly presented and this spoils the overall quality of what they produce.

67. Language skills are promoted very well through, for example, the discussion of possible outcomes in groups. There is very good use of information and communication technology to support learning in the subject and mathematical skills are developed while at the same time pupils use their measuring skills, graphs, and charts to record their findings. The grounds of the school and trips are also used to enhance learning opportunities in the subject.
68. The subject manager is recently appointed. She has a very clear understanding of the subject and the importance of regularly and rigorously evaluating the school's provision if high standards are to be maintained. Arrangements for assessing pupils' work are excellent. Work is marked regularly and pupils are set specific targets, some of which they help to set themselves, to further extend their understanding in the subject. The school has sustained the high standards reported at the time of the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- By the end of Year 2 and 4, standards are well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good leading to pupils having very positive attitudes to the subject.
- Subject leadership is excellent and very effective use is made of the computer suite to broaden pupils' learning.
- The information and communication technology technician makes a very positive contribution to both the day-to-day management of the subject and pupils' learning in lessons.
- Excellent procedures are in place to gauge and use assessment to plan subsequent stages in the pupils' learning.
- Information and communication technology is used extremely well to extend links with parents and the wider community.

### **Commentary**

69. Most pupils are on course to achieve well above the nationally expected levels in all aspects of information and communication technology by the end of Year 2 and by the time they leave the school at the age of nine. This maintains the high standards noted in the last report. Pupils' achievement, including those with special educational needs and who have a high language need, is very good. Although the provision found at the time of the last inspection was of a high order, the school has kept fully apace with developments in the subject since then. It has gained a nationally accredited award for information and communication technology provision and has developed a highly interactive school web site. Not only does this provide a wealth of information about the school and pupils' achievements, but also it enables parents and pupils to access and return homework that teachers place on the site.

70. Many pupils are confident users of and understand extremely well the part that information and communication technology is playing in their daily lives. Year 2 pupils, for example, confidently use a word processor to assist them in their learning and many confidently demonstrate the skill of cutting, pasting and moving clip-art around in their work. They understand well how the Internet can further promote learning. In addition, they explain how common day-to-day objects such as mobile phones, DVD players and cameras are very much dependent on microchips in order to make them work. In Years 3 and 4, pupils successfully build on the skills they learn in Years 1 and 2. They use graphic handling packages well to present and communicate mathematical data, and they confidently use a range of software to support them in their understanding of different subjects.
71. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teaching has improved since the last inspection due to the effective rollout of a rigorous programme of staff development. Many teachers and learning support assistants are highly competent users of information and communication technology and great care is taken in planning creative activities for pupils to explore. Most teaching of information and communication technology takes place in the school's extremely well resourced computer suite. Teachers explain work openly resulting in the pupils having a clear understanding of what they are to achieve by the end of a lessons. Pupils are given clear guidelines on how to use the network and they confidently move around the different folders to access their class and individual work that is stored there. Teachers carefully identify links with other subjects, and this ensures that pupils develop their skills both in information and communication technology and in the subject where the teaching of information and communication technology has a particular focus. In addition, teachers structure sessions carefully and ensure that a brisk pace is a key feature of the lessons. They demonstrate new skills and techniques effectively, making good use of projection equipment and interactive whiteboards to engage pupils' interest and involve them in the lesson.
72. The subject leader is extremely passionate about the subject and, together with the headteacher and full-time network technician, has been tireless in the drive to ensure provision is of a high quality and keeping pace with developments in the subject nationally. The co-ordinator has planned very thoroughly for these developments to dovetail seamlessly with the rest of the curriculum. The scheme of work has also been rewritten so that it provides improved direction for staff and gives very good 'in-house' support for all. The work of the technician is valued highly by all and her work ensures that teachers can concentrate on teaching and curriculum development rather than their time being eaten away She also monitors teaching and learning carefully in order to check that all elements of the information and communication technology curriculum are taught and to ensure that staff make use of information and communication technology across the curriculum as a whole.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

73. Teachers' and pupils' use of information and communication technology through other subjects is very good. Teachers have a good understanding and plan work well in information and communication technology so that pupils, when using computers and other related equipment, successfully develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and

other subjects such as religious education. In art and design, for example, pupils use art packages to explore the style of particular artists that they may be currently studying. This helps to reinforce the pupils' understanding of how modern technology can be used to create pieces of art.

## **HUMANITIES**

74. Little work was seen in geography and it is therefore not possible to make a judgement about the overall provision in this subject. Since the previous inspection, the school has ensured that the pupils explore geography in depth. A very good range of additional learning opportunities is provided. These draw well on the resources and facilities of the local area to support the subject further. The analysis of teachers' planning, pupils' work and displays around the school indicate that the curriculum is well organised and that the subject is taught regularly in all classes.

### **Religious Education**

Provision in religious education is **very good**.

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

- Pupils in all classes achieve well and standards are well above average in Year 2 and in Year 4.
- The school is very successful in developing pupils' understanding of spiritual and moral issues.
- The school is very successful in raising pupils' awareness of Christianity and other major world religions.
- Pupils' work and the two lessons observed show that teaching is very good and stimulates pupils' interest well.
- Highly effective assessment procedures ensure that pupils' progress in the subject is extremely well monitored.

### **Commentary**

75. Standards are well above those expected in the locally agreed syllabus in Year 2. These standards are sustained in Year 3 and Year 4. Pupils' achievement, including those with special educational needs, is very good. Developing pupils' understanding of spiritual and moral issues is central to the school's purpose. Planning in the lessons seen was closely linked to the agreed syllabus.
76. Two lessons were observed during the inspection, the teaching was never less than good and one lesson was judged to be excellent. The subject is taught in a stimulating way. A good example of this was the lesson on belonging linked to baptism when the teacher wore a variety of tops and asked the pupils to identify what these conveyed to them. Pupils could see the links between belonging to an institution and belonging to a religious faith. In a lesson on the symbolism of the candle for Christians, pupils had the opportunity to make their own candles and by the end of the lesson, they were very aware of why the candle is important to Christians.

77. During their time in the school, pupils effectively learn about different faiths including Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. They are encouraged to recognise the similarities and differences between religions and of the part that religion plays in many people's day-to-day lives. They learn that each faith has its own important symbols. Teachers are effectively raising the awareness of the diversity of faiths and cultures that exist in today's society.
78. A wide range of educational trips and visitors suitably enhances the curriculum. These include the vicar from the local church and a parent who demonstrated how a sari is worn. Visits are made to the local church but the pupils have not visited a mosque or a Hindu temple. The school is aware of this and is currently reviewing the possibility of including such visits into the curriculum.
79. Management of the subject is very good. The subject is taught in weekly blocks to extend the depth of knowledge and understanding of the pupils. The school's policy is evaluated regularly and the school has produced its own units of work in line with the locally agreed syllabus in order to enrich the experiences of the pupils. Assessment in the subject is excellent and is used to shape and improve provision in the subject. The co-ordinator has opportunities to monitor teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

## History

Provision for history is **very good**.

### Strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by Year 2 have improved well since the previous inspection.
- Standards by Year 2 and Year 4 are above average and all pupils achieve well in the subject.
- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is helping all pupils to achieve very well.
- Pupils' literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills are developed well through the imaginative way that teachers plan pupils' learning.

### Commentary

80. In Year 2 and Year 4 standards are above average. This is an improvement for Year 2 and reflects the findings of the previous inspection for Year 4. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Pupils greatly enjoy the subject and have very positive attitudes to the subject.
81. In Year 2, the pupils are developing a good understanding of how things change over time. They understand well how history is to be found from looking for clues from pictures and artefacts that tell them, for example, how seaside resorts and children's toys have evolved over the years. They know how a timeline places events in order. The pupils think about what makes a person famous. They know about some famous personalities, such as Florence Nightingale and Alexander Graham Bell. The way in which the school plans the pupils' learning, over the course of each afternoon for a week, contributes well to how well pupils learn about important events in British

history. These include the great fire of London. How the fire started, and its impact on the construction of houses. The pupils make good use of their literacy skills to describe differences between schools now and in Victorian times.

82. In Year 4, the pupils have a good understanding of the need to find evidence about the past from a variety of sources. They know, for example, how artefacts from Sutton Hoo provide clues about day-to-day life in Anglo Saxon times. They have a good knowledge and understanding about aspects of life in Tudor England, such as the differences between rich and poor. The pupils understand the problems facing Henry VIII and how he tried to resolve them. They understand that the Internet is a rich starting place in order to search and retrieve information as part their general day-to-day studies.
83. Teaching is very good and is much improved since the previous inspection. This enables all groups of pupils to achieve very well. The teachers maintain a very good balance between direct teaching and providing opportunities for the pupils to research information themselves. In a lesson in Year 3 and 4, this helped the pupils to make group presentations about aspects of life in Celtic and Roman Britain. There is evidence that the teachers make effective use of role-play to deepen the pupils' understanding of people and events of the past. An example of this was a recent Tudor Day held at school. The teachers provide opportunities for the pupils to develop their literacy skills, through speaking, listening and extended writing. A good range of visits and visitors enhances the quality of teaching further and this enriches the quality of pupils' learning experiences.
84. Leadership is very strong and contributes significantly to very good provision for the subject. The co-ordinator has good scope to monitor teaching and learning and the impact that this is having on pupils' achievements. There are very good procedures for assessing the pupils' progress and for using this information to guide future planning.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

85. The inspection focused on **physical education. Design and technology, music, and art and design** were not a main inspection focus, and not enough evidence was gathered to make a judgement about the provision in each of these subjects. However, both the work on display and that produced by pupils from the more recent past indicates that it is of a good standard, and shows that pupils make good progress as they move through the school in each of the subjects. The subjects are taught regularly in all classes, and teachers' planning is detailed and further supported by an extensive range of trips, visitors and visits to places of educational interest. All the co-ordinators for the subject provide a very clear direction to the school's work since the last inspection, particularly in terms of developing assessment procedures and in evaluating teaching and the impact that this has on pupils' learning.

### **Physical Education**

Provision for physical education is **very good**.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and this enables all groups of pupils to achieve well.
- Very good use is made of learning support assistants to help pupils in day-to-day lessons.
- Excellent subject leadership is a significant factor in rising standards.

## Commentary

86. Lessons were observed in gymnastics and indoor games. In Year 2 and in Year 4, standards in these aspects of physical education are above average. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well which is an improvement since the previous inspection.
87. Teaching is very good and there are examples of excellent teaching. The teachers manage changing sessions well and ensure that entry to, and exit from, the hall is very orderly. They ensure that the pupils are aware of routines in the hall, such as paying attention to safety and to the correct handling of physical education apparatus. Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure and lessons proceed with a very brisk pace from start to finish. Lessons begin with worthwhile and energetic warm-up sessions and the teachers ensure that the pupils have a good understanding of the purpose of these. Activities are very well planned and monitored, with learning support assistants providing valuable help for individuals and groups.
88. A further characteristic of the high quality teaching and the pace of pupils' learning is the way in which teachers often provide opportunities for the pupils to observe and evaluate the performance of others. This helps them to develop ideas and to improve their performance. This helped in the development of good movement sequences on both the floor and on small apparatus in a lesson in Year 1 and 2 seen during the inspection. The teachers emphasise the need for good starting and finishing positions, good body control and tension and for a smooth flow from one movement to the next. This impacts very well on performance. In Years 3 and 4, the teachers often provide frequent opportunities, in the form of games and obstacle courses, for the pupils to practise previously learnt skills of jumping, throwing and catching. Most pupils respond very well in lessons and they work hard to improve their performance and put into place the advice that teachers provide in order to improve their learning. A minority tends to be inattentive and silly at times, but the teachers manage these incidents very effectively.
89. Excellent leadership is a significant factor in provision for the subject. The co-ordinator has regular scope to monitor teaching and pupils' attainment and this gives her a good overview of how well pupils are achieving and the progress they are making. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to play competitive sports against other schools. Football and netball matches are played against local schools, often with considerable success thus developing the pupils' understanding of what it means to be a member of a team. The pupils make use of the school's own learner swimming pool in the summer term, although it is currently in need of some maintenance. Teachers' assessment indicates that the pupils reach the expected levels in this aspect of the physical education and some pupils achieve well above average standards.



## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Personal, social and health education and citizenship has a high priority in the school.
- Regular, thorough assessment of the pupils is undertaken to gauge the extent of their progress.
- The school council is a pivotal feature in developing the pupils' understanding of working together as a member of a team.
- Teaching is frequently very good, characterised by the way in which teachers and support staff value pupils' views.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very effective with the co-ordinator providing a firm steer to the strong progress in the subject since the previous inspection.

### Commentary

90. The school is very successful in how it promotes pupils' personal, social and health education. Pupils have regular, planned opportunities to broaden their understanding of general issues such as what to be aware of in order to keep them safe in their day-to-day life. Units of work are carefully planned to promote pupils' understanding of various social issues. These encompass how to develop a healthy life style, respecting those that help others as well as the need to think sensitively about the well-being of animals and other living creatures. In addition pupils are given good scope to ponder on social issues such as vandalism, pollution and why it is important for groups to abide by agreed laws and traditions successfully foster the pupils' social and personal development.
91. Teachers plan suitable activities for the timetabled lessons that all pupils have access to during the course of a school week. Since the previous inspection, much development of the school council gives pupils good opportunities to act on and speak on the behalf of others in representing pupils' views on aspects of school life that include how teachers plan the curriculum. Governors regularly join the council and this gives the pupils a voice in sharing with governors their perspective of the school. Inspection evidence points to very good teaching being evident. Teachers make effective links with other subjects, such as philosophy, science and physical education in order to ensure that the pupils develop a healthy lifestyle, and learn to respect the views of others. In many lessons, pupils are taught to listen effectively to the views of others, even though they may be different to their own.
92. Visits, special events such as the Year 4 annual residential trip to France add much to the quality of the pupils' learning. Through their physical education and science work, the pupils understand well what the benefits are of exercise and healthy lifestyles. This work has enabled the school to seek and achieve the Healthy Schools award. Members of the local community are invited to talk to the pupils and this gives the pupils a good understanding of how various local agencies both work in and support various members of the local community. They also care for elderly members of the

community and at many points of the year respond well to the good encouragement given by staff to collect for others less fortunate than themselves.

93. There is very good leadership and management for this aspect of the school's work. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic about the subject and keen to take on board new ideas to boost the quality of the pupils' learning. Ideas such as 'peer mentoring' where pupils are encouraged to work alongside others in order to give each other support are currently being evaluated with a view to strengthening the already high quality provision. The co-ordinator is also given good scope to monitor teaching and learning and this gives her a clear overview of the provision in each of the classes.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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