

INSPECTION REPORT

STUDLANDS RISE FIRST SCHOOL

Royston

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117331

Headteacher: Mrs Jan Saunders

Lead inspector: Mr Fred Corbett

Dates of inspection: 18th - 20th April 2005

Inspection number: 268004

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	156 (this includes 27 part-time pupils)
School address:	Studlands Rise Royston Hertfordshire
Postcode:	SG8 9HB
Telephone number:	(01763) 243 930
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Ruth Hully
Date of previous inspection:	12 th October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Studlands Rise is a small first school comprising 64 boys and 65 girls of five to nine years of age. Overall, on entry children's attainment is slightly above national expectations. Pupils come from homes that are predominantly privately owned in an area of relative advantage. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The cultural heritage of the majority of pupils is white British and there are currently no pupils speaking English as an additional language.

Eleven pupils need additional support in their learning. This is below the national average. Most of these pupils are slightly behind their peers. Three of the pupils have significant learning or behavioural difficulties and one pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There is a maintained Nursery for children aged three to four. This is open in the afternoons and has 12 boys and 15 girls on roll.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2508	Fred Corbett	Lead inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Science Physical education Religious education
9590	Roy Kitson	Lay inspector	
24658	Fiona Musters	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Information and communication technology Citizenship Geography History
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a satisfactory school with many good features. It is committed to including all pupils. While the school has been successful in getting nearly all children to the nationally expected levels when they are assessed at age seven, it has not been as successful in ensuring that the more able pupils reach the higher levels of attainment. However, most pupils now make satisfactory progress in their lessons and leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education. The school provides satisfactory value for money. The leadership shown by the new headteacher is good and she inspires confidence in all involved with the school. The governing body is very effective.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in reading, religious education, art and design and technology are good.
- Teachers plan very well and teaching and the curriculum, across the school, are good.
- Standards in writing are below average at the age of seven.
- Pupils' knowledge of number and in science is good but their ability to investigate and solve problems is only satisfactory.
- The school sets high expectations for pupils' behaviour and they behave well in class.
- Governors are committed to the best interests of the school and know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well.
- The school is good at identifying issues and taking appropriate action to resolve them.
- The school community has high levels of confidence in the new headteacher's approach to improving the effectiveness of the school.
- The school does not always make best use of the data available to analyse and evaluate the progress of all groups of learners.
- The feedback to pupils is not always good enough to enable them to improve their work.
- The support provided for pupils' care, welfare and security is good.

Since the last inspection, the school's results have not improved for the more able learners. The school has been subject to significant change of staff and new leadership, and rapid improvements have occurred in the last year. Improvement overall since the last inspection has been satisfactory, and the issues identified last time have been addressed, other than in developing more investigative approaches to learning. Provision has remained good in the Foundation Stage, and information and communication technology (ICT) provision has been improved. Planning is much improved and teaching has shown improvement, with more lessons that are now good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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' achievements are satisfactory. Most pupils reach the expected standards by the end of the Foundation Stage. The published data on the school's test results at the age of seven show that pupils generally achieve as well as those in other schools. Most pupils now make satisfactory progress and achieve above-average standards in reading. Results in mathematics and writing have been below average but standards of work observed in the school show that this has been addressed in mathematics. While most pupils in the school reach the expected Level 2 in all subjects assessed, the lower-than-expected results in the table above are because the school has not been doing as well with more able learners. This is being addressed and those pupils make

good progress in Years 3 and 4. The current standards of work in Year 4 are average in English and are above average in mathematics and science. Standards in ICT are average by the time the children leave the school.

Pupils' attitudes and their spiritual, moral, cultural and spiritual development are good. Behaviour in the school is also good; attendance is above the national average and punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education, with the quality of teaching being good. There is much good teaching across the school and some very good teaching, especially in the Nursery and in Key Stage 2. This good teaching has a significant impact on pupils' learning and their behaviour. It is beginning to have an impact on the issues identified by the school and the progress of more able learners is now satisfactory and in many lessons it is good. No lessons were unsatisfactory. The teaching staff is stable and well supported by enthusiastic and experienced teaching assistants. They make a significant impact when they are deployed to work with less able learners. Pupils respond well to the confident, well-organised teaching in the school. They apply themselves well to their learning, concentrate and behave well in class. More challenge could still be provided for some pupils but their learning is good overall. Day-to-day assessment is satisfactory in lessons but not enough attention is paid to feedback and marking that would help pupils understand better how to improve their work. The school provides a good, broad and balanced curriculum.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The recent appointment of the headteacher has provided a new energy and enthusiasm to take the school forward. Those working in the school, parents and the pupils, express great confidence in the headteacher's ability to lead the school and address the issues it has identified. Planning is very effective but the school is only recently making appropriate use of the large amount of data it collects to analyse pupil progress and evaluate the actions it takes. Subject leadership is having a mixed impact: it is good in relation to planning and contributing to the strategic direction of the school but lacks impact in relation to monitoring learning and consistently providing role models of very good practice. The governing body is very effective, well led and organised. It clearly meets its statutory responsibilities and is very good at analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the school and ensuring that appropriate action is taken. The governors monitor the finances carefully and exercise effective oversight of the budget.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are satisfied with the school, but a significant minority had concerns about the lack of information they receive about their child's progress and when there is a staffing difficulty. The inspection team understands the concerns felt during times of significant staff change but recognises that the school deals with these matters appropriately. There is no evidence of any break in continuity of staffing having an adverse effect on pupils' progress. Overall, the responses from parents during the inspection were overwhelmingly positive about the school about the way it is trying to keep them well informed, the way new children are inducted into the school and the preparation of pupils to move on to their next school. Pupils, whose opinions were sought, like school and think their teachers are fair, effective and challenge any bad behaviour. They appreciate the range of activities the school provides and are positive about their learning.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise pupils' attainment in writing.
- Provide more challenging activities in investigative and problem-solving areas.
- Further develop the contribution subject leaders make to monitoring learning and teaching.
- Make better use of assessment to help pupils understand how to improve their work.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils are reaching average standards by the end of the Foundation Stage. The published school results show that pupils achieve about the same standard as those nationally by the age of seven and **progress overall is satisfactory**. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. By the time children leave the school at the end of Year 4 they make satisfactory progress but more able learners, who did not achieve well in their Year 2 assessments, make good progress and their standards are good. At the age of seven, standards are average in English, mathematics, science and ICT. At the age of nine the picture is similar, although good standards are reached in the knowledge of mathematics and science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have been erratic in recent years but nearly all pupils reach Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics by the age of seven.
- By the age of seven, standards in writing and in mathematics are below those seen in similar schools because too few children reach the higher Level 3 in their assessments.
- Pupils in the lower ability groups do not always make the progress they should in English.
- Reading results are above average by the age of seven and pupils continue to make good progress and achieve above-average levels by the time they leave the school.
- Standards in the Nursery are above average.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- Pupils' skills in carrying out investigations in science are not as good as they should be.
- Standards are above expectations in art, design and technology, physical education and in religious education.

Commentary

1. Following the last inspection, there was a decline in aspects of the school's performance when compared with similar schools nationally. By the age of seven, standards in English, mathematics and science fell to well below average in 2001 but recovered in reading to average levels. Writing standards have been below average in three of the last four years, and mathematics standards have been well below average in those same years. This has been almost entirely because of the lack of progress made by the more able learners. The school is addressing this issue and progress is much better in Key Stage 2 when children achieve well, making above-average gains in mathematics and science.

The school's results in national assessments

2. As this is a First School, with children leaving when they are nine, caution needs to be used in judging the performance of the school purely on the results in the national assessments at the age of seven.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.6 (16.2)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.2 (14.5)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.3 (15.2)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 25 pupils in the year group, 10 boys and 15 girls. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. The tables show that standards in the Year 2 assessments in 2004 were above the national average in reading and at about the national average in writing and in mathematics. Girls and

boys performed in similar ways in these assessments. What the tables do not indicate is the trend in performance. Between 2002 and 2004 girls' performance was below the national average in writing and mathematics. The school's focus on improving the performance of more able learners during the past year has been effective in raising standards other than in writing. This has been most marked in Key Stage 2.

Inspection findings

4. Pupils come into school with a broad range of pre-school experiences, have a good Nursery experience because of the very good teaching and are well prepared for formal schooling. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, and most reach the expected standards on their transfer to Key Stage 1.
5. Across the school, pupils make at least satisfactory progress in English but standards in writing remain unsatisfactory by the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils reach above-average standards in reading by the age of seven and good standards by the age of nine. Able pupils, particularly girls, do not reach the above-average standards in English and mathematics that would be expected but progress well in Key Stage 2. Good support, well tailored to the needs of the very small number of children with special educational needs, helps them to make good progress, especially in reading. The school does not do enough to analyse the results for different groups of pupils to ensure that they are targeting their resources to enable all pupils to make the progress they should; this is now more apparent for the lowest-achieving groups.
6. The good personal, social and health education (PSHE) programmes provide frequent opportunities for thoughtful discussion. This has developed pupils' capacity to put forward a point of view, and listen to and consider others' opinions and perspectives. However, there is still much to be done to enable pupils to achieve well in speaking and listening, where standards are average.
7. In mathematics, standards are average by the age of seven and most pupils make adequate progress. In some aspects of the subject, standards are average where the pupils are not skilled in applying what they have been taught to new contexts. This is largely because teachers have focused on some aspects of the subject, particularly number skills, to a greater extent. Standards in number skills are good, especially in Years 3 and 4.
8. Pupils make satisfactory progress in science and standards are average by the age of seven and above average by the age of nine. Their skills in carrying out investigations are not as good as they should be, and this impedes progress to higher levels of achievement, particularly for the more able. Standards in ICT are average.
9. Based on the work seen during the inspection, standards are good in physical education (PE), religious education and in art and design and design and technology. Insufficient evidence was seen to enable a judgement about standards in history, geography, citizenship or music to be made.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to their work, each other and the school are **good**. Their behaviour, attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- School has high and consistent expectations for pupils' behaviour.
- School develops the pupils' abilities to differentiate between right and wrong.
- Insufficient opportunities for pupils to be enterprising and take responsibility.
- Insufficient opportunities to encourage pupils to learn for themselves.
- Attendance and punctuality are good.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Commentary

10. Pupils have good attitudes to learning, with those of children in Nursery and Reception classes being very good. Pupils of all ages enjoy their lessons and engage in the activities provided by the school. All pupils spoken with expressed how much they enjoy the clubs that the school has to offer.
11. The overall behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is good, and very good in Nursery and Reception. Whilst some parents raised concerns about this area, no evidence of poor behaviour was seen during the inspection. There were also no signs of aggression, bullying or racial intolerance. There are consistently applied high expectations for good manners and respect and these result in the good behaviour. If there is any misbehaviour, it is quietly, calmly and effectively dealt with. Pupils value having the free choice of activities in Golden Time as a reward for good behaviour and enjoy the opportunity to make friends during that time with pupils from other year groups. Pupils have good relationships with teachers, support staff and one another. They confidently report to their teachers or supervisors if they feel someone is being unkind to them or their friends, secure in the knowledge that the concern will be promptly dealt with.
12. Lunchtimes are well-organised social occasions. In the playground they play happily together. Midday supervisors ensure good behaviour on the playground and record any incidents which class teachers are subsequently able to follow up during afternoon registration. The headteacher has clarified expectations of all adults working with the children and now they are seen to deal calmly and fairly with any misdemeanours or concerns. Behaviour and supervision at lunchtime by midday supervisors were areas of concern raised by parents. Governors have been involved in evaluating these issues and evidence from the inspection indicates that these have been resolved. In group work, pupils listen to each other, take turns and share equipment well. Pupils usually acknowledge and celebrate the efforts of other children.
13. Adults in the school work successfully to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem and use praise effectively. Pupils respond well to receiving a Leaf of Achievement, which is the school's recognition of things pupils have achieved or done well. They speak with confidence about the school and how they feel about their work. Some of the pupils of lower ability expressed concerns about their abilities and displayed a lack of confidence in certain areas, for example, independent reading activities. Pupils are polite to visitors and keen to hold conversations with them.
14. Pupils treat property with respect and are encouraged to do so by staff. They value and enjoy the playground equipment such as the playtime games and use them sensibly. Pupils care for their environment, for example, by planting bulbs in the school grounds.
15. Pupils take satisfactory levels of responsibility with roles such as class monitor and taking registers back to the office. Some Year 4 pupils take responsibility for the school library and its care and upkeep while others are responsible for counting the many tokens pupils have collected to enable the school to obtain play and sports equipment and ICT hardware and software. Year 3 pupils 'buddy' children in Reception and walk with their buddy to and from assembly. Currently there is no school council for pupils to develop their sense of responsibility further but the school has identified this as an area to develop. During the inspection, very few examples were seen of pupils being given opportunities to exercise choice in play and in curriculum areas.
16. Through their personal, social and health lessons, pupils gain an understanding of moral and social perspectives and learn how to keep themselves healthy. In keeping with the ethos of the school, children have a good sense of moral behaviour; they know right from wrong, and teachers praise positive and discourage selfish actions. Through religious education lessons and assemblies, they understand different religious beliefs. Pupils show a good understanding

of the school's discipline system and agree that it is fair. The pupils have been actively involved with raising money for identified charities.

17. The attendance rate is above the national average for primary schools. Pupils come to school regularly and on time. The school's good attendance rate is achieved through its effective arrangements for promoting and monitoring attendance. The school reports that some of the authorised absences are due to parents taking holidays in term time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.1	School data	0.0
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

18. In the latest reporting year there have been no exclusions for inappropriate behaviour.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – any other mixed background
Parent/pupil preferred not to say
Total

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
150	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0
156	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. There is much good teaching in the school but, in too many cases, pupils are not challenged sufficiently by the way work is presented to them. Day-to-day assessment is being used well by most teachers to plan work for different groups of pupils but not enough feedback is given in lessons or through marking to help pupils understand how to make their work better. The school provides a good, broad curriculum that fulfils the requirements for the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum, and this is well supported by the provision of a wide range of interesting extra-curricular activities. The support provided for pupils is also good; they are very well cared for and kept safe.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good** across the school. The quality of assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most teachers make good use of their expertise to make learning successful.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the quality of teaching and learning.
- Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are consistently good especially in the Nursery.
- The work planned for more able children is often not challenging enough in the way it is presented.
- There are weaknesses in the teaching of writing.

- Teachers know which children have succeeded in lessons, mark work and use the information to inform their planning. However, few children have yet developed the ability to know how to improve their work.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	8 (22.2%)	14(38.8%)	14 (38.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

- Teaching and learning are good in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. Teaching and learning are also good in Key Stage 2, where there are more very good lessons. All lessons are well planned and organised. Teachers take trouble to plan for different ability groups and have met with success in tackling the school's identified problem of under-performance amongst their more able learners. There is an increasing use of ICT as a tool to enable children to produce work of high quality but this is currently limited to art and mathematics. In literacy lessons, teachers select from a wide range of interesting and relevant texts to engage children in stories and to enjoy their reading.
- Teaching is most successful in practical lessons such as those in physical education and design technology. In the very good lessons seen, the teachers build on previous work, make sure they explain what the lesson is about and ensure that children are fully engaged by giving good feedback on how to improve their work. Challenges are set and children are given sufficient time to explore the task, discuss what they are doing, explain their approach and share their findings.
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are thorough and appropriately targeted to help teachers to plan suitable work. Teaching assistants do not always know what is in the IEP for children they are working with. There are a small number of children with learning needs in each class who are not getting the additional support they need because there is not enough time available from the teaching assistants. However, the very good partnership between teachers, teaching assistants and parents helps pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall.
- Under the guidance of the class teachers, teaching assistants teach literacy skills well to small groups. They help pupils in mathematics lessons to follow the lesson and complete the work. They often have individual strengths in supporting the particular needs of pupils they are linked to. This support has a positive impact on the pupils' behaviour, concentration and productivity and on their confidence to make progress in school. The teaching assistants make a very positive contribution to the quality of the pupils' learning and the progress they make. Their current deployment does not allow for them to work full-time with each class and support the consistent progress needed for the least able groups.
- Because of the effort given to covering all topics in the curriculum, teachers tend not to provide enough opportunities for pupils to plan work for themselves or make choices about activities and equipment. There is a tendency to make some introductions and explanations overly long and not provide sufficient activity and variety in the lessons. This was the most frequent barrier to making more lessons good and very good.
- As a result of the increased attention to the needs of more able learners, they are achieving well in most areas of the curriculum. Pupils work well together and lessons are generally harmonious and productive. Behaviour management is very good in all lessons and even where children with challenging needs require additional attention this does not break the pattern of lessons and the engagement of pupils. There are some weaknesses in the

approaches to teaching writing and in providing sufficient challenge for the more able learners. Some lessons are not as successful as they should be because teachers do not always integrate investigation and problem solving when they could and their questions are too closed to develop pupils' thinking.

25. The school recognises that it does not monitor learning as much as it should and therefore it does not have a good understanding of where assessment is not being used effectively. Day-to-day assessment is satisfactory, and it is used to focus teachers' planning but it is not used well enough to set appropriate targets for pupils. Teachers usually identify which children have succeeded in the lesson and marking is encouraging. However, only occasionally is the information used to fine-tune lessons as they progress to give children an understanding of some of the ways they can improve their work. Only very occasionally is there evidence of marking and other assessment aimed at helping pupils understand how to improve their work. Some good examples were seen, however, in PE and in design and technology.
26. The good quality of teaching explains why the parents are satisfied with the way their children are taught and that the school has high expectations for their children. Discussions with pupils point to them being happy with lessons most of the time; they recognise that sometimes their teacher needs to be strict and they prefer interesting lessons to easy lessons.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is good, as are opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources to support the curriculum are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good curriculum planning and the links between subjects.
- Very good curriculum in Nursery.
- Insufficient attention to opportunities to develop writing.
- Wide range of extra-curricular activities, including specialist coaching for older pupils.
- Safe and attractive accommodation which is well resourced, but limited outdoor opportunities for Reception class.

Commentary

27. The school provides pupils with a balanced and broad curriculum that fosters their academic achievement and personal development. This includes sex and relationship education and attention to drug misuse, taught as part of the programme for personal, social and health education. Careful consideration is given to the links between subjects. This is effective in helping pupils to use the knowledge from one lesson to illuminate another subject. In some subjects, for example, art, teachers have made adaptations to the curriculum to enhance the learning and make it more interesting.
28. Since the last inspection the school has accomplished some detailed planning of the curriculum and each subject is now very carefully planned by the teachers. Planning outlines the skills, knowledge and understanding that children are to gain and ensures that the accommodation and resources are used effectively. The school makes sound use of the national guidance for teaching literacy and numeracy, however, there is insufficient focus on the teaching of writing to ensure that pupils make good progress and have a range of writing experiences which will motivate and inspire them.
29. The very good curriculum for the Foundation Stage provides children with a good balance of activities for direct teaching and for them to choose activities for themselves. This contributes to the high standards seen in the Nursery.
30. Extra-curricular activities are many and varied and include sports and arts clubs which contribute well to pupils' learning. The coaching in racket sports for older pupils is very popular and enables them to experience high quality specialist teaching.

31. The accommodation is safe, clean and bright and enables all aspects of the curriculum to be taught. The staff and governors intend to further enhance the building in a number of ways. Currently the access to the outdoors for practical and physical activities is limited for children in the Reception class. The plans to bring Reception and Nursery classes closer together will enable all children within the Foundation Stage to have equal access to outdoor education.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes very good care of its pupils. It provides good pastoral care and good academic guidance. The school listens to and values pupils' views but there is as yet no formalised structure for this to be undertaken.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- School promotes and supports healthy living.
- School enhances pupils' self-esteem.
- Very good procedures to ensure pupils work in a healthy and safe environment.
- No formalised structures to involve pupils through seeking and acting on their views.

Commentary

32. Staff know pupils very well and care for them accordingly. Staff are vigilant and note pupils who may not be feeling well or who may be going through some emotional upheaval. There are good links between parents and staff, with opportunities to informally discuss pupils' achievements and well-being at the end of the day. Incidences were observed during the inspection of parents and teachers discussing any concerns raised in relation to particular pupils' needs. The school operates an 'open door' policy and during the inspection, parents spoken to felt that staff were approachable and easy to talk to.
33. Good systems are in place for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs. Parents are involved in discussing progress through the review of the pupil's individual education plan.
34. Child protection procedures are good. The headteacher is the named person and all staff have had relevant child protection training. Procedures for registration are implemented consistently and the school monitors attendance appropriately.
35. The school is a safe, secure site. Effective health and safety procedures, as well as risk assessments, ensure that the pupils enjoy a safe and pleasant learning environment. There are several first-aiders in the school. Staff know the special medical needs of specific pupils. The school actively promotes healthy eating and pupils at the school have access to water and additional fruit as part of the "Five-a-Day" initiative. Pupils are supervised well at lunchtimes, with midday supervisors being proactive in ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. They respond promptly to pupils' concerns.
36. Pupils have good trusting relationships with adults in the school. Children aged five speak positively of having a 'buddy' from an older year group who acts as a friend to them. Pupils felt that they would go to different adults for different concerns. The registration period is used well by teachers and pupils to talk through any concerns pupils might have or to celebrate pupils' achievements.
37. Teachers promote pupils' self-esteem through the effective monitoring of their progress and personal development. Since September 2004 targets for future attainment have been set and teachers are well aware of these targets. This helps them keep a tight focus on moving pupils on at a good rate. Teachers discuss with pupils their strengths and target areas. The achievements of pupils are celebrated in the school either by praise or by the awarding of a Leaf of Achievement or certificate. Pupils respond well to these.

38. No formal arrangements exist for obtaining the views of pupils but there are satisfactory opportunities for them to express these during Circle Time and assemblies. This is an area identified for development by the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, other schools and the community are all good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships with parents are good.
- Good provision of information to parents about the school and pupils' standards and progress.
- Insufficient guidance at present for parents on how to support pupils' learning at home.
- Effective support links with other schools in the area.
- There are effective links with the local community.

Commentary

39. The quality of information provided to parents is good. Parents are invited to consultation meetings in spring and autumn and there is an open day held in the summer. The consultation evenings are very well attended. Pupils' annual reports are sent out towards the end of the summer term. The reports meet statutory requirements. They have sufficient information for parents to judge their children's academic and personal development and also enable them to see the learning targets set for their child for the next year. Parents expressed concern on the questionnaire that they did not receive enough information about progress but inspectors were of the opinion that the school provides sufficient opportunities, both formal and informal, for parents to be updated on their child's progress.
40. The school's prospectus and the governors' annual report are well presented. Several newsletters are sent out each term. These are good opportunities for parents to keep up with all aspects of school life. Notices displayed on some of the classroom doors and windows show items of relevant information but are not accessible by parents who do not collect their own children from school. The school has identified a need to keep parents routinely updated with relevant information and has planned to make greater use of a school website. This is part of the school's approach to developing parents' ability to make a greater contribution to their child's learning. A significant minority of parents at the parents' meeting with inspectors expressed concerns about the lack of continuity in staffing and in relation to the information they receive about their child's progress. The inspection team understands the concerns felt during times of significant staff absence but recognises that the school deals with these matters appropriately.
41. The contribution of links with parents to support their children's learning at school and at home is satisfactory overall. This is an area for development identified by the school. Parents help the school by ensuring that their children attend school regularly and promptly and are dressed in their school uniforms. Some parents use reading diaries effectively as a means of communication with the class teacher and several parents come into school to help in lessons. The school is keen to help parents support their child's learning through events such as planned curriculum evenings in maths and reading. Each term a list of subject areas to be taught is sent home to parents.
42. The school has membership of the Royston Education Forum and Royston Heads' Forum. These are mutually beneficial arrangements with schools to share resources, ideas and training sessions. Teachers in the school are benefiting from these close collaborations and the transfer of children between schools at the end of Year 4 is effectively organised and transition aided by the knowledge the staff have of the other schools.

43. The school has good links with the community, the clergy, police and the fire service. Pupils visit the mosque, local churches and museums. These visits have a positive impact on pupils' learning and development. During the inspection, members of the local churches assisted in the school, provided refreshments for members of staff and visitors and led an assembly.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides energy and enthusiasm to tackle the issues the school faces. The governing body is very well led and organised. It clearly meets its statutory responsibilities and is very good at analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the school and ensuring that appropriate action is taken. The governors monitor the finances carefully and exercise effective oversight of the budget.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the school is committed to running an inclusive school, in which each individual matters.
- Subject leaders have a clear sense of how they want their subject to improve but are not yet making sufficient impact on the quality of learning and the achievement of pupils.
- The school leadership inspires, motivates and has a real impact on the performance of the staff and pupils – there is a very high level of confidence in the headteacher's ability to bring about further improvement.
- Governors are very committed to the school and engage very effectively in the evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses; this is helping them be very effective in providing strategic leadership for the school.
- The school undertakes a rigorous self-evaluation - but it does not use data sufficiently to analyse the performance of both the highest performing and lowest performing groups of children.
- Performance management is effective and is beginning to make an impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The performance management of support staff is not sufficiently systematic.

Commentary

44. The headteacher, with very good staff and governor support, has worked tirelessly to identify the key issues in the school and create a strong team committed to further improvement. This is very effective. She has an inclusive vision for the school that is strongly shared by the staff and by governors. She constantly seeks out initiatives and the support of the LEA and other schools. While the impact is not yet evident in the school's results, the good quality of teaching, the very good planning and the progress being made in Key Stage 2 are evidence of the early impact of the leadership of the school. The headteacher, as the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), provides able leadership and gives clear direction to secure good provision for all pupils and as a result, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their reading. There is a very able group of teaching assistants supporting individual pupils and classes. They are a strong team but have insufficient time with each class. Their skills are not used as extensively as they could be to support the learning of a broader range of pupils across the ability range.
45. Leadership is being developed across the school. The subject leader role, while satisfactory, is not yet making sufficient impact on the quality of assessment, the tracking of all pupils and on the level of challenge in some subjects. However, subject leaders know their subjects well, are clear about strengths and weaknesses, plan very well and make effective use of professional development opportunities.
46. Governance is very good. The governing body is very well led and organised. It is well informed about the performance of the school and carries out its own analysis of issues. The very effective use of the lead governor in areas such as literacy, numeracy and special educational needs is aiding this. The chair of governors is providing good leadership and has

moulded the team into a corporate body using the range of skills in the team. Governors have undertaken a detailed self-review of their functions and as a consequence are aware of their responsibilities and work hard to carry them out conscientiously. Their commitment is of great benefit to the school. They analyse the results of the school, carry out evaluations of some key issues and provide very good challenge and support to the headteacher and to subject leaders.

47. The headteacher draws up very good plans for the actions to be carried out each year to manage school improvement. This is based on effective reviews of what needs to be done and is underpinned by the data on the school's overall performance. At present, the analysis is not being based on a close enough scrutiny of detailed tracking data about the achievements of different groups of pupils. Staff and governors take part in the improvement planning process, and their involvement is based on a planned regular cycle.
48. Teachers are deployed well, with special attention given to the skills and interests of the staff concerned. Performance management is carried out rigorously for all teachers. Teaching assistants work successfully with individual pupils and small groups to help improve their skills in reading, mathematics and ICT. Throughout the school, adults provide good role models for the pupils. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the school but they feel that the appraisal of their work, while sound, is not sufficiently focused on their contribution to improving learning.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	464,979	Balance from previous year	33,363
Total expenditure	431,329	Balance carried forward to the next year	67,013
Expenditure per pupil	3,027*		

* Based on 142.5 full-time equivalents

49. Financial planning is effective, spending is prudent and the school's spending decisions relate to priorities for improvement. Governors keep a close watch on the budget. The growth in school balances is being managed effectively to support planned improvements. Arrangements for checking the impact of major spending decisions and the rigorous use of the principles of best value are well developed. The management of the very attractive school site is effective and staff and governors work well together to monitor the site and bring about improvements to the learning environment for the pupils. There are very good plans in place to bring about further improvements to the building and site to support further improvements in pupils' learning. The school meets its statutory responsibilities.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

Children start school with standards slightly above those expected for this age group. They achieve well in the Nursery and make appropriate progress in the Reception class. By the end of the Foundation Stage the majority of children achieve the early learning goals and many have commenced aspects of the National Curriculum programme for Key Stage 1.

Most children attend a playgroup before starting in the Nursery and the majority transfer to the Reception class when they reach five years of age. The transition is smooth because teachers pass on good records of children's achievements.

The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and in the Nursery the teaching is very good. This is because the staff are good listeners and use talk effectively to help children explore and express their ideas. They sensitively challenge children's thinking, observe and assess their responses and keep good records. These are major factors in ensuring the good provision for these children. The provision for children with special educational needs is good and the children make good progress.

The Foundation Stage is satisfactorily led and managed and the school has maintained the good provision identified in the last inspection report. The curriculum is very good, with a range of stimulating and exciting experiences and some high quality resources. Teachers achieve a good balance of adult-led activities and those from which children can choose. The Nursery outdoor area is used very well for practical and physical activities across all the six areas of learning. Opportunities for outdoor education are more limited in the Reception class but this is being addressed through the plans to locate the class in the area adjacent to the Nursery.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between children are good.
- Children are encouraged to take responsibility at an early stage.
- Children's behaviour is consistently very good.
- Children concentrate well when their interest is engaged.

Commentary

50. Most children reach the expected goals by the end of the Reception year. They make a very good start in Nursery where children develop high levels of independence and confidence. They come into their classes cheerfully and quickly settle into the daily routines.
51. Because all the staff work hard at promoting good relationships the children are happy and relaxed. They work alongside one another, amicably sharing equipment and taking turns. This helps develop good attitudes to learning.
52. The planned balance between direct teaching and children making choices enables them to develop their concentration and involvement in learning. The high expectations of the staff and the interesting and stimulating activities help children to achieve well and to ensure that their behaviour is consistently very good. The good teaching, with interesting and stimulating

use of resources supports children to develop good levels of concentration. These are important in creating the good quality of learning.

COMMUNICATION LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given many good opportunities to use language in their play.
- Reading in the Nursery is taught very well.
- Children's independence in writing is not sufficiently encouraged.

Commentary

53. Most children achieve the goals expected at the end of the Reception year. Children develop speaking and listening skills well through the many and varied activities. They quickly learn the new words they need when playing in the hospital corner or the role-play office.
54. Children in the Nursery share books individually with their teacher and with parents at home. In response to their reading, children draw pictures and parents write their views; this helps children to see the connections between reading and writing. There is a good programme of teaching sounds to letters but the pace of learning in Reception is sometimes too slow. Children like listening to stories and enjoy books because of the teachers' clear enthusiasm for story telling and reading.
55. Very good attention is given to the development of early independent writing skills. It is characterised by a good supply of pencils, paper, envelopes and reference material such as alphabet charts. This good independent start is not maintained because children then move into a phase of copying adults' writing, which inhibits their confidence and spelling development.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many practical activities in which children learn mathematics.
- Children use numerals and counting at an early stage.
- The good teaching enables children to make good progress in the Reception class.

Commentary

56. Most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the Reception year. In the Nursery children make a good start with reciting numbers in order, counting objects and recognising numerals. Staff use the outdoor Nursery area well for the development of early mathematical skills. They explore numbers, use games and identify shapes. Children across the Foundation Stage learn about capacity through filling and emptying containers in the sand and water and the space is well used for these practical activities.
57. Children in the Reception class are making very good progress in their ability to read a traditional clock face and understand about time. They can identify some tasks that they do at certain times of the day such as knowing they come to school for 9 o'clock. The good teaching of maths challenges and engages the children's interest, enabling most children to

make good progress. Games on the computers help children to reinforce their mathematical learning.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities for building and constructing.
- Investigating materials using their senses.

Commentary

58. Most children are likely to achieve the goals expected at the end of the Reception year. Teachers provide good opportunities for the children to develop their skills. The children are enthusiastic constructors and builders and confidently use a range of equipment. In the use of computers they learn how to use directional keys and to control the mouse. Children in the Reception class use tape recorders for listening to stories. They are learning about the role of emergency services and those who help us. The arranged visit of a fire engine to school enthralled the children.
59. They enthusiastically and confidently handled new equipment, listened attentively and were encouraged to use different senses to examine a range of materials. Children in the Nursery notice and describe similarities and differences between the materials they use for their collage work. Work in books and on display demonstrates that children have also learnt about the past through their topic 'toys' and compare old kitchen equipment with that of the present day.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

It was not possible to make an overall judgement on the provision and standards in this area of learning as only one organised physical activity lesson was seen.

Commentary

60. Standards of physical movement in the Nursery are very good because the teaching is challenging and enjoyable and children listen and respond well to instructions. The Nursery outdoor area is used to good effect for many physical activities. Children handle tools and equipment sensibly and with good dexterity. They demonstrate careful control in their use of paintbrushes, pens and printing equipment.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-resourced role play areas.
- New songs are quickly learned.
- Sometimes children are not given adequate chances to express their own ideas.

Commentary

61. Most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the Reception year. Areas for creative development are very well resourced to support imaginative play. Teachers use the resources well to provide many opportunities for children to explore colour, shape and texture through a range of attractive and well-presented materials. Clay and play-

dough are manipulated with ease and interest. Adults in the Nursery watch the children carefully and give them as much independence as possible. They are on hand to guide and suggest changes where necessary and as a result children build good levels of confidence.

62. Songs, chants and rhymes are used effectively during the day to draw children together. They experience a range of good quality musical instruments and are quick to pick up new tunes and words, which they sing expressively.
63. At times children's involvement in imaginative play is under-developed because they need an adult to model the actions for them. Occasionally the art activity is too prescriptive, leaving children with too few choices to make or ideas to express.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good standards and progress in reading.
- Standards in writing are not high enough.
- Effective and detailed lesson planning.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour.
- Steadily increasing number of opportunities to link writing with other subjects.
- Insufficient use of discussion and drama.
- Insufficient observation of lessons by subject.
- Underdeveloped use of pupils' learning targets.

Commentary

64. For pupils aged seven, results of National Curriculum assessments in 2004 show standards in reading to be above the national average against all schools but in line with the average for similar schools. In writing, results are in line with the national average for all schools but below average against similar schools. Writing standards are well below average at the higher Level 3. The inspection evidence shows that all pupils make satisfactory progress from the time they leave the Reception class but in writing, pupils of lower ability require more support to make greater progress. The results of the 2004 National Curriculum assessments show that boys in the school were working above the national average for boys in both reading and writing whereas girls were close to the national average in reading but below in writing. Standards in speaking and listening are average. Pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject and, in response to some good teaching, work hard in lessons and take care with the presentation of their work.
65. The difference between standards in reading and writing was identified in the last inspection. The school has maintained the above-average performance in reading but standards in writing are not as good as at the time of the last inspection.
66. Throughout the school, pupils show great enthusiasm for reading. They enjoy being read to and reading for themselves. Standards attained by seven-year-olds are above those expected and this is maintained so that by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4, standards are above average. Some very effective small group reading sessions, led by the teacher, were observed during the inspection. In independent reading, while the small focused reading sessions take place, most pupils have just the right level of reading book to enable them to progress at a good rate. Some pupils of below-average ability, however, struggle with their reading books and say that they need more help to tackle the book. Parents regularly come into some classes to assist with the reading half-hour, which is undertaken four times a week. Little variety of reading activities to further develop pupils'

reading confidence, competence and enjoyment was seen during these sessions. A reading record book goes home with pupils and provides a valuable means for parents and adults in school to engage in a written dialogue about a pupil's progress in reading. All classrooms have a good selection of fiction books, which are arranged and presented according to pupils' reading ability.

67. The school has identified the need to improve writing further across the school. Standards in writing of the present seven-year-olds are below average, with the percentage of pupils on track in March 2005 to reach the expected Levels in writing being below that expected. There are also no pupils yet reaching the higher level 3. The school has, rightly, identified the need to ensure consistency in the use of a cursive script and improve aspects of grammar and punctuation as well as spelling. The current Year 4 pupils have made good progress and are performing at nationally expected levels in writing for their age.
68. In Years 2 and 4, good examples were seen of pupils' extended pieces of writing, such as the retelling of the story of Hansel and Gretel. Pupils have the ability to manipulate and explore language, seen in the example of a higher-ability pupil in Year 2 who wrote 'We decided to go in the cave. Fairies surrounded us and glitter filled the air'. Pupils lack sufficient opportunities to develop this type of writing. Teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities to use discussion and drama to explore their ideas prior to writing.
69. Opportunities to develop speaking skills are limited, although pupils are articulate and confident in expressing their views. The very good relationships in the school, together with the strong and successful emphasis on promoting pupils' self-esteem, have helped develop pupils' confidence in speaking.
70. Teaching and learning are good at both key stages, with the teaching of reading being more effective than that of writing. Teachers prepare lessons thoroughly and this is demonstrated in the very good planning. Teachers use both the learning objectives and format for termly planning from the national primary literacy materials. Teachers are adapting the format of the Literacy Hour but, as yet, have not maximised its potential by using some of the additional materials relating to teaching methods. Very little evidence was seen of the use of ICT in teaching and learning. Teachers make good use of the plenary in lessons to review with pupils what has been learned.
71. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use time well in lessons, make effective use of resources, vary the activities and ensure that a good pace is maintained. Good use is made of teaching assistants when they are available in lessons. They work with different ability groups and planning identifies that they contribute to assessment of identified individual pupils. Teachers have appropriate expectations for pupils' work. At times, however, there is too great an expectation placed on some of the lower ability pupils.
72. Most pupils respond well to the teachers' high expectations of behaviour and tackle tasks positively but sometimes without much enthusiasm. This academic year, the school has established a useful assessment and target-setting system for tracking pupils' progress. This system enables the school to carefully monitor pupils' achievement, put in place any necessary interventions and ensure that pupils make appropriate progress in their speaking and listening, reading and writing by the setting and reviewing of targets related to attainment levels.
73. The lack of a consistent approach to teaching writing has hindered the development of this aspect of English but there are now sound and developing procedures in place for assessing pupils' attainment in writing. Half-termly assessments of different types of writing and the creation of a school portfolio of writing are starting to prove a useful means to help teachers assess pieces of work and decide on pupils' improvement targets. Marking by teachers is inconsistent across the school and tends to focus on feedback to pupils about their effort, as opposed to what they have done well and what they need to improve.

74. Subject leadership is sound, with some good aspects in terms of evaluation of aspects of teaching, resourcing the subject and developing the assessment of pupils' work. The subject leader monitors planning but has not had regular opportunities to observe lessons and note strengths and areas for improvement. This is hindering progress in improving standards of writing. The subject leader has a clear idea of the developments required in the subject.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

75. Pupils enjoy linking their writing with other subject areas such as history and geography. The linkage of literacy with other subject areas provides pupils with a chance to apply their writing skills and knowledge. Pupils find it difficult to identify a clear purpose for some of their reading and writing and lack enthusiasm for some of the types of writing they need to develop. Currently the school is starting to extend the teaching of literacy in other subjects. It has appropriately identified this as a development area.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress in their number work and reach good standards by the time they leave the school.
- Lessons are well planned and organised, and the teaching of number is good.
- The curriculum is not well balanced to cover all aspects of mathematics systematically.
- Good use is made of ICT to enhance mathematical learning.
- In lessons, there is a lack of challenge in using and applying mathematics, particularly for the more able.
- Teaching assistants and in-class parental support make a valuable contribution to the teaching and learning of mathematics.
- Not enough attention is given to giving feedback to pupils to help them understand how to improve their work.

Commentary

76. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The results of the national assessments in 2004 were well above the national average for pupils in Year 2 attaining Level 2 but were not as good as similar schools when comparing the average points achieved. This shows that more able learners were underachieving. However, tracking pupils' work in Years 3 and 4 shows that they make good progress and reach good standards in number, shape and measures and in handling data. They reach satisfactory standards in using and applying mathematics. Girls under-performed in the national assessments but currently boys and girls reach similar standards. During the inspection, it was evident that effort was being put into the achievement of girls and of the more able learners and their achievement is average in Key Stage 1 but above average in Key Stage 2. This is because the teaching is better differentiated and the needs of the higher-performing pupils are properly targeted. Most pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress because of the targeted support from both the teachers and teaching assistants.
77. In most lessons observed during the inspection, standards were about average and pupils made satisfactory progress, with above-average standards and achievement in Key Stage 2. Overall, most pupils are developing a good range of calculation strategies. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 made adequate progress. However, there is little evidence of pupils being given enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in new contexts.
78. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. Strengths in teaching and learning include:
- planning and organisation of lessons;

- learning objectives explained clearly at the beginning of the lesson;
 - effective use of teaching assistants; and
 - good use of ICT to support mathematical learning.
78. However, some weaknesses are hindering pupils reaching consistently good standards:
- insufficient challenge for all pupils;
 - insufficient planning for and use of mathematics in other lessons; and
 - over-emphasis on number operations in Key Stage 1.
79. The curriculum is satisfactorily structured and there are good resources to cover all aspects of mathematics. The effective use of a range of activities and resources, including games and practical equipment, helps pupils to grasp new ideas and develop new skills. Teachers tend not to provide enough opportunities for pupils to make choices about activities and equipment. The school has successfully introduced the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) and teachers feel it has helped them improve aspects of their teaching. Teachers make good use of the unit plans provided by the strategy. The plenary session at the end of lessons is often brief. It is well used to assess levels of understanding in the lesson but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to consider and explain what they have achieved. Lower-achieving pupils are generally well supported by teaching assistants or parent helpers and they make satisfactory progress.
80. Assessment in mathematics is sound. Pupils' work is marked conscientiously and comments often show how well pupils have done, but it is not made clear what they need to do to improve. Teachers regularly assess pupils' progress against the key objectives and national assessments. The use of optional tests in Key Stage 2 has not been consistent and this information is not always used effectively to track individual progress and set targets for all pupils.
81. The subject is well led, and the subject leader is knowledgeable and enthusiastic for the subject to be successful in the school. The work planned for the year has focused on appropriate key issues for mathematics: further developing numeracy skills, raising standards, particularly for the more able, further develop the use of ICT in mathematics, identify under-achievers and ensure greater consistency in teaching and learning, especially in application and problem solving. The school evaluates needs well and is progressing well in addressing the needs.

Mathematics across the curriculum

82. There are some opportunities for pupils to use mathematical skills in other subjects. In Year 4 there is good use of ICT to introduce, demonstrate, practice and explore mathematics. However, opportunities are not planned on a regular basis to enable pupils, across the school, to consolidate and extend their mathematical skills in a broad range of contexts.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy science lessons and are making steady progress at Key Stage 1, and good progress at Key Stage 2.
- The progress pupils make in investigative work is not as good as in other aspects of science.
- Most teachers are confident and enthusiastic about teaching science and plan an interesting range of activities.
- Pupils who have low standards of writing find it difficult to communicate their understanding of science.
- Good links are made with other subjects, particularly design and technology.

- Assessment in science is not sufficiently targeted on how children improve their science work.

Commentary

83. Standards in science are average by the age of seven. Standards are good by the time the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. The 2004 assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 in science indicate that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level is well above that nationally and in similar schools. However, the number of pupils reaching higher levels does not reflect the ability of the more able learners in the school. This is still reflected in the work seen in lessons and in pupils' recorded work. The standards of work are average but not enough attention is being given to scientific enquiry. In each year group in Key Stage 2 pupils are making good progress in gaining scientific knowledge through well-planned activities. A good range of investigations is being provided but progress in this important aspect of science is only satisfactory for all pupils. Teachers are enthusiastic about science and are confident to teach the scientific content the curriculum requires but the lack of focus on scientific investigations means that the quality of teaching is only satisfactory at both key stages. Teaching assistants, when they are available to support science, are effective in helping small groups of pupils. Linking the good work in science and design and technology in the Year 3 class working on pneumatics shows the good progress that can be made when the work in different subjects complements each other.
84. Lessons are very well planned and ensure the needs of different abilities are taken into account, and there is a clear focus on ensuring pupils know what they will be learning in the lesson. In a Year 4 lesson, investigating materials that conduct electricity, pupils were given a good range of materials to investigate, and more able pupils demonstrated the ability to record their observations and explain their observations.
85. In a lesson in Year 2, also investigating simple electric circuits, pupils made satisfactory progress but the opportunity to focus on developing enquiry was not taken because the teaching was overly directed and gave insufficient chance for children's own ideas to come through. The evidence from looking at the work children recorded in their books also shows that investigative work is at times too structured by the teacher. Not enough opportunities are being given for able pupils to develop all that is required for confident performance at Level 3 in scientific enquiry. The work being carried out in Year 3, linked to the design and technology theme on pneumatics, demonstrates the way very good teaching excites pupils and encourages them to ask questions. It also enables all pupils to succeed and challenges more able learners to work at higher levels. There was no evidence of the use of ICT to support work in science.
86. Assessment in science is not yet sufficiently well used in helping pupils to understand how to make their science better. It is very encouraging and motivates pupils to engage in the tasks. Teachers know whether children understand the lessons but they do not have enough precise information about progress in developing scientific enquiry.
87. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The science subject leader is aware of the areas for development and has sound plans for carrying out the changes needed. However, the plans do not take account of the continuing shortcomings in scientific enquiry, which was also an issue in the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching seen was good.
- Some emerging good links with other subjects.
- Subject leadership is under-developed.

Commentary

88. As at the last inspection, standards are in line with national expectations in both key stages but there are signs of improvement. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection but some work involving information and communication technology was seen in all classes. In these lessons the quality of teaching was at least good and enabled pupils to make good progress in the lessons. It is very good when it makes demands of children's thinking through effective questioning and sets a good pace with challenging tasks.
89. Pupils now use computers more frequently to assist their learning in some other subjects. For example, they make graphs for their study of the local environment, create very effective computer-generated artwork for the topic on 'The Great Fire of London' and use maps in geography lessons. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the pupils' learning. They show great enthusiasm for using computers and are confident to do so. They concentrate well and they are starting to think about using the computer as a resource for the presentation of their work in other subjects. The use of ICT in mathematics is helping provide a stimulus for practising numerical and spatial skills and this is helping pupils make good progress in aspects of that subject.
90. A number of other improvements have been made since the last inspection. The curriculum for ICT is now clearly defined and teachers plan their lessons well. The use of the computer suite ensures that pupils regularly receive direct teaching of skills and knowledge. Computers elsewhere in the school enable pupils to have access during other lessons. Children enjoy using the computers because the resources and teaching are good. They listen attentively to instructions, concentrate well and sometimes help and learn from one another.
91. The new, knowledgeable subject leader has not yet had sufficient opportunity to implement the many good plans for improvement across the school. However, her enthusiasm and modelling of good practice are important contributors to the good progress seen in Year 4 and in giving confidence to all teachers to use ICT in teaching some subjects.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

92. Overall the use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory but it is not well enough developed as yet to make a good contribution to the children's learning. There is evidence of the use of ICT across the curriculum in art and in mathematics. This is an area for development identified in the school's planning.

HUMANITIES

It is not possible to judge the provision for **history and geography** because it was only possible to see one lesson in geography and no lessons in history.

Commentary

93. Examples of pupils' work in books and on the walls and the teacher's planning show that standards meet expectations and pupils are making steady progress. Good opportunities are taken to link work across history and geography. For example, the history topic of Anglo-Saxons is linked to map work in geography by locating regional towns with Anglo-Saxon names. Lessons are enriched by visits to places of interest in the locality such as Royston Cave and King James' Palace. As yet the leadership of these subjects is under developed.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons adhere closely to the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus.
- Effective use of resources, pictures, artefacts and visitors.
- Knowledgeable teachers.
- Good integration with other subjects such as art.

Commentary

94. Only one lesson was observed in each key stage so it is difficult to judge the quality of teaching overall. Teachers demonstrate an interest in the subject and are knowledgeable about the key aspects of the religions they are teaching. They make the work accessible for the children and their enthusiasm helps pupils reach good standards and make good progress. Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning the subject. The work in Year 1 on 'special books' was well prepared, and stimulated children to explore other 'special books' but also to understand the focus of the lesson on the Torah. They showed respect for the views of others and respect for the ceremonies and artefacts they saw. Following on from an in-depth topic on Christianity, Year 4 children showed real interest in the Five Pillars of Islam as this was introduced in a lesson. They understood the ideas underpinning faiths and related the Islamic ideas to their own experience and their understanding of other faiths. The teaching was overly focused on the knowledge to be learned and opportunities for some deeper understanding of what we learn from studying a religion were missed. Nevertheless, work in children's books and on display showed that other such experiences had been well used and standards are consistently good.
95. There are effective uses of art and design to support the children's learning especially in Key Stage 1 where children were making their own 'special books' and models of the Torah and had created pieces of art in different media using the symbols representing the major religions they study.
96. Effective links are made with the local churches and children have a good understanding of churches in their community. A strength in the school's provision is the close adherence to the Agreed Syllabus and work is well supported by visits and visitors. This gives teachers a clear structure and supports them in enabling the pupils to make good progress.
97. The subject is well led and managed and the subject leader is hoping that the way religious education is taught can become more exciting in its presentation and that greater use of ICT can be developed. These are appropriate targets.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Music

Too little teaching of **music** was observed to make an overall judgement on provision.

Commentary

98. Because of timetabling constraints, not enough lessons were observed to give a definitive judgement on standards, teaching and learning in music or improvement since the last inspection. Evidence was gathered from two lesson observations, planning and discussions with the subject leader, a visiting music teacher and pupils.
99. One lesson in the upper part of the school was observed where teaching and learning were good. Pupils demonstrated both developing performance skills and confidence in trying out new ideas. Relationships were very good; if pupils made a mistake, no one worried. Behaviour and attitudes were good even though the pupils were very excited about the work they had to do.
100. Visiting teachers for brass instruments and recorder provide tuition for those pupils in Years 3 and 4 who wish to learn to play these instruments. Pupils are able to take part in performances for the rest of the school.
101. The subject leader provides sound leadership for her colleagues. She plays the piano in assembly and takes the school for singing practice. She monitors planning but the next step is to observe teaching and learning. The subject leader has introduced a scheme of work which supports all teachers in developing pupils' skills in music.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good resources to support high standards of work.
- Standards of work are above expectations in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- There is good use of ICT to support the work in ICT.
- Lessons in art are not monitored sufficiently.

Commentary

102. No lessons were seen in art and design and on the limited evidence available it is not possible to make a judgement on teaching and learning in the subject. Evidence was gathered by looking at planning, displays of pupils' work, pupils' art portfolios in Years 3 and 4, the subject leader's file and discussion with pupils, teachers and the subject leader. The subject is well resourced.
103. Attractively presented displays of artwork around the school show pupils have opportunities to use a good range of media in a variety of contexts. Standards of work in displays and in pupils' portfolios are above the levels expected and show good progression in pupils' skills, especially in observational drawing. Pupils use a variety of media and are encouraged to experiment. Good use is made of ICT to support the subject. Pupils in Year 3 make good use of sketchbooks.
104. A recent visit from an author/illustrator inspired the pupils and many spoke very enthusiastically of this visit. The new scheme of work promotes the study of a wide range of artists.
105. The subject is well led, with appropriate ideas for its future development. The subject leader provides a good role model for other staff. A good scheme of work is in place that supports teaching and ensures the development and progression of pupils' skills.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils are inspired to be inquisitive and to investigate.
- Good evaluation of their work by pupils.

Commentary

106. Only two lessons of design and technology were observed during the inspection and both of these were in Years 3 and 4. The judgement on provision in the subject is based on teaching and learning, standards and achievement for the older pupils. In addition to the lessons observed, evidence was gathered from displays of pupils' work and discussions with pupils, teachers and the subject leader.
107. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 reach a good standard in the subject and make very good progress. This is a result of the well-planned lessons and very good teaching, which provides opportunities for pupils to investigate and experiment. Pupils are enthused by this and it creates in them a desire to learn more for themselves. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils investigated which objects could be lifted by a pneumatic system and were amazed at the results. At the end of the lesson, pupils were seen animatedly sharing their discoveries with classmates. In a Year 4 lesson, pupils were provided with the opportunity and resources to discover how different switches work on an electrical circuit and to design circuits to work a switch and alarm for a model house. Pupils responded well to skilful questioning from the teaching assistant who led this session. They showed considerable perseverance overcoming difficulties and in applying knowledge to refine their designs. Pupils explained they enjoy the subject because it allows them to learn through discovery and because it is linked to other areas of the curriculum, in this case, science.
108. Evidence was seen of the pupils in Years 3 and 4 developing increasing skills in being able to plan, execute and evaluate their designs. A good and appropriate range of work is covered.
109. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in that the school now has assessment at the end of each unit of work. Other improvements suggested by the evidence gained during the inspection include a greater emphasis in Years 3 and 4 on the evaluation and improvement of designs. This has led to the good standards of work seen.
110. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. The subject leader monitors planning to ensure there is sufficient coverage and progression of the subject and has prioritised the monitoring of lessons, auditing resources and reviewing the policy for immediate developments.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching by teachers and the sports coach.
- Pupils make good progress and reach good levels of skill.
- A good, broad PE curriculum provided for all pupils.
- Good assessment in lessons.

Commentary

111. The PE curriculum offers a broad range of activities over the course of the year. This year the school has employed a specialist coach to support physical education to try to use PE and sport as a catalyst for children's wider health needs and physical well-being. The programme is planned around the National Curriculum unit for games. This approach has only been in

operation for a short time but already the benefits are becoming clear and standards in PE are good. Lessons are carried out at a good pace, children's aerobic exercise is improving and skill levels are good. Pupils respond well to different adults, with good skills and enthusiasm for their subject, and are highly engaged in their PE lessons. Pupils like PE and sport. They participate in athletics, games, gymnastics and for Years 3 and 4, and swimming is taught in a three-week intensive period. Football, country dancing and gymnastics after-school clubs further extend children's opportunities to take part in sport.

112. The two lessons observed were well planned and the children made discernible progress with their throwing and catching skills. They were encouraged to warm up thoroughly and pupils listened carefully to instructions and suggestions for improvement made by the teacher. Pupils use the opportunities provided by the teacher's interventions to improve their performance. In the Year 1 lesson pupils' performance was good and the teacher provided good evaluative feedback. During a Year 4 lesson the teacher took digital photographs of children's activity and balance to use for evaluations back in the classroom. This good practice is helping children achieve above expected standards. Physical education receives sufficient curriculum time and the subject leader provides good support for the subject. Monitoring lessons and evaluating the impact of the use of the sports coach is part of the PE development plan.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHCE)

Provision in PSHE is **satisfactory**.

113. There is a clear programme and this is now seen as important in supporting the children to explore their feelings and attitudes but it is also an opportunity to improve literacy skills. PSHE is taught through discrete lessons as well as through many other school activities. It is also highlighted through a programme of themes used in school assemblies. Children are developing a good understanding of the responsibilities of living in a community. This is exhibited in the respect they show for each other around the school.
114. The school is actively developing involvement in the Healthy Schools Programme. It has embraced the work with enthusiasm and it is beginning to have some positive influences on children's attitudes and on their engagement in learning. The school uses the programme as a vehicle for developing key ideas in citizenship. It promotes healthy eating and the importance of drinking adequate amounts of water. Work in this subject is supported by themes covered in geography and science where children learn about the importance of care of the environment, healthy eating and exercise. These activities are making a valuable contribution to the pupils' learning in the school and their understanding of important issues to do with their health, themselves as learners and sustainable resources.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4

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

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	3

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