

INSPECTION REPORT

THE MEADS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Luton

LEA area: Luton

Unique reference number: 109558

Headteacher: Mrs Carmel Clarke

Lead inspector: Cheryl Thompson

Dates of inspection: 27 – 30 September 2004

Inspection number: 268078

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	298
School address:	Sawtry Close Luton Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU3 2UE
Telephone number:	01582 490905
Fax number:	01582 591343
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Cindy Williams
Date of previous inspection:	May, 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Meads is a larger than average primary school with 298 boys and girls on roll. The majority are white with their origins in the United Kingdom. There are small numbers of several ethnic minority groups represented in the school, mainly Asian or Asian British – Indian, Asian or Asian British – Pakistani and Black or Black British – Caribbean. Seven pupils have English as an additional language and are at the early stages of learning the language. The school serves its immediate neighbourhood which is mainly privately owned homes with some local authority housing. A high number of pupils also attend who live out of the school's catchment area. An average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with special educational needs is below average. Their main needs are identified as moderate learning, behaviour and speech and language. Attainment on entry to school is around average. The school was awarded Schools Achievement Award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22822	Cheryl Thompson	Lead inspector	English Music Religious education Special educational needs English as an additional language
12289	Susan Burgess	Lay inspector	
14806	John Stevens	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography History Physical education
23482	Diana Mackie	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Science Art and design Design and technology

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Meads provides a satisfactory standard of education and sound value for money. Pupils' achievement is good over their time in school. However, there are significant areas of underachievement in Years 1 and 2 and general underachievement in the lower ability groups for English in Years 3 to 6. Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but it is good or better in the Year 4 class and Years 5 and 6.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good use of booster lessons and good teaching has led to good achievement and usually well above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6
- The head, deputy and governors do not have a clear understanding of what goes on in school; consequently weaknesses remain and improvement happens too slowly
- Links with parents are unsatisfactory; parents are not encouraged to be involved in their child's learning and in the life and work of the school
- Pupils' personal development is good; they have very good attitudes and behave very well
- Provision is not organised well enough for pupils who need extra help with their learning

Since the last inspection in May 1999, improvement has been satisfactory. Standards attained by Year 6 have improved. Teaching has improved. Standards in ICT have improved from unsatisfactory to satisfactory. The school has not resolved the unsatisfactory links with parents noted at the last inspection, nor has homework been developed sufficiently to extend and support pupils' learning. Recent support from the local education authority has helped governors define their roles and responsibilities adequately.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	C	B	A	A
mathematics	D	C	A	A
science	C	B	A	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Pupils' **achievement is good** overall from an average start on entry to school. However, progress is not consistent and it is only in Years 5 and 6 that, overall, achievement is good and standards are above average. In 2004 tests, Year 6 standards remained well above average in English and around average in mathematics and science. Year 2 standards had been below average until 2003 when they rose to well above average in writing and average in reading and mathematics. In 2004, standards are about average in reading, but below in writing and mathematics. Throughout the school, inspection evidence shows good achievement in science and standards are above average. In reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2 standards are not high enough. The setting according to ability is not effective and has led to underachievement. In Years 3 and 4, in English and mathematics, standards are around average and achievement is satisfactory overall. In Years 5 and 6, standards are above and most pupils achieve well. In Years 3 to 6, achievement is unsatisfactory in the lower ability English groups. In these groups, the very wide range of pupils' abilities and great need for support to ensure good learning render even the very best teaching only partially effective.

Pupils for whom English is an additional language do not achieve as well as they should. Achievement in Reception (Four Plus Class) is satisfactory and standards are average overall, with above average attainment in speaking and listening, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is provided for well and their personal development is good. They behave very well in lessons and have very positive attitudes to learning. Relationships are very good. Pupils are thoughtful and responsible young people who show kindness and respect for others. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Meads provides a **satisfactory quality of education. Teaching is satisfactory** overall. It is predominantly good or better for the Year 4 class and Years 5 and 6. The very good teaching in these year groups is characterised by teachers' very high expectations and brisk pace. It is the group setting arrangements, rather than the teaching, that lead to patchy learning and some underachievement across the school. Pastoral care for individuals is good. A variety of clubs and very good sporting opportunities enrich the curriculum well. Parents are not helped and encouraged to be involved in their children's learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory overall. The strength is in the headteacher's delegation to enthusiastic and hardworking subject co-ordinators who work effectively with colleagues to raise standards. However, the head and deputy do not bring this good work together well enough to capitalise on successes and deal promptly and effectively with weaknesses. They do not make best use of information gained from assessment, nor do they check on teaching and learning regularly and rigorously. Governors understand their role and are supportive of the school. They do not have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and this inhibits their ability to challenge the school to do better.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are broadly supportive of the school. Their concerns centre around communication. They feel they do not get enough information to help them support their children's learning and they do not feel the school listens to their views and concerns. Pupils like school and their teachers. Pupils, too, feel that their ideas and concerns are not always listened to.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards and achievement further especially in Years 1 and 2
- Check on the work of the school rigorously and regularly and act decisively on the findings in a reasonable time
- Improve provision for pupils in the lower ability groups
- Improve links with parents

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

From their average start in the Four Plus Class to the time they leave at the end of Year 6, pupils' achievement is good. Standards are average overall in the Four Plus Class. There is a mixed picture of standards in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 and 4 they are average, and in Years 5 and 6, good overall. Achievement is satisfactory in the Four Plus Class but it is unsatisfactory overall in Years 1 and 2. Achievement is satisfactory for Years 3 and 4 and good overall for Years 5 and 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good and standards are generally high in national tests for Year 6
- The trend for improvement is above the national trend at Year 2 and Year 6
- Standards are above average and achievement is good in science across the school
- There is underachievement in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2 and in the lower ability groups for English

Commentary

1. The rapid progress in Years 5 and 6 is due to consistently good or better teaching and the judicious use of extra literacy and numeracy sessions and booster classes. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 6, standards are generally well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. A well above average proportion of pupils attain the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science. Inspection evidence shows in English and mathematics, more able pupils do particularly well in the 'top' groups set according to ability. Teachers of these groups set very high expectations and teach at a brisk pace so that pupils are moved on well in their learning. Pupils thrive on the high levels of discussion, challenges and probing questions. Standards in ICT, religious education and other subjects are around the level expected for Year 6.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.6 (28.4)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.4 (26.7)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.7 (29.7)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 51 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Standards attained by Year 6 have risen year-on-year since 2000, most noticeably in mathematics and science. Standards attained in 2004 are similar to those found at the last inspection. Standards attained by Year 2 had been below or well below average until 2003 when, in writing, standards were well above average and in reading and mathematics, average. Given their about average starting point in the Four Plus Class, these are more appropriate standards. Standards attained in 2004 are again below in writing and mathematics, but average in reading; these standards are lower than those found at the last inspection.

3. Science is planned and taught well; achievement is good and standards are above average throughout the school. The subject co-ordinator provides very good support for colleagues should they need advice as to lesson planning. Investigative and experimental science is

given a high profile so that pupils soon develop very positive attitudes and thoughtful approaches. They have a secure understanding of fair testing and predicting outcomes of experiments.

4. Achievement in the Four Plus Class is satisfactory overall. Children reach the expected goals in communication, language and literacy, physical development and creative development and they exceed them in personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Enthusiastic teaching seen during mathematics sessions was not reflected in literacy sessions; this adversely affected the learning of more able children in particular.
5. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is mixed. In science and religious education it is good; standards are above average in science and in line with those expected in religious education. In ICT achievement is satisfactory and standards are around those expected by the end of Year 2. In reading and writing, achievement is unsatisfactory and standards are below those expected. In mathematics, achievement is unsatisfactory, especially for the more able pupils; standards are around average but should be higher. In reading, pupils are not allowed to read their structured 'reading scheme' books at home, therefore great opportunities for practising, reinforcing and developing reading skills are missed. The main reason for underachievement in writing and mathematics is that the setting according to ability into mixed age groups constrains teaching and is not profitable. The group setting has not been checked on carefully enough to see how effective this system really is. The lack of monitoring and taking effective action is also the main reason that there is underachievement in the lower ability English groups in Years 3 to 6. In these groups, there is not enough adult support to ensure effective learning, even though teaching is pitched at just the right level.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.9 (14.8)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.2 (14.8)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.5 (15.6)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 42 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

6. Achievement of pupils for whom English is an additional language is unsatisfactory overall. It is satisfactory in their own class situations, but in group lessons these pupils tend to be grouped with the lower ability English groups and this is not appropriate, especially as there is a lack of support. There is insufficient use of assessment to check on these pupils' stage of language acquisition and provide appropriate support. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. When they work in small groups or individually with a teaching assistant they achieve well and have good self-esteem. These pupils, too, are grouped with the lower ability English groups and here they underachieve because they do not get enough support.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils' personal development is good. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The attitudes and behaviour of the vast majority of pupils are very good
- Children in the Four Plus Class make good progress in their personal development

- Although attendance is satisfactory, there is no system for first-day checking of unexplained absence
- Provision for pupils' personal development is good overall

Commentary

7. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally very good. Nearly all the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that their children liked coming to school and this was confirmed before and during the inspection in interviews with pupils and discussions with parents. In general, pupils are very interested in their work and sustain their concentration during lessons. Pupils enjoy the various clubs and activities on offer and willingly undertake responsibilities such as acting as school council representatives, prefects and monitors. Pupils are polite and confident with adults and are keen to talk about their work and views of the school.
8. Children in the Four Plus Class soon adapt to routines and gain good social skills so that they interact well with one another and with adults. They develop the ability to share resources willingly and soon form very good relationships with adults. Behaviour is very good and children's levels of concentration gradually increase so that they benefit from what the school has to offer. By the time they start in Year 1, children exceed the nationally expected standards of personal, social and emotional development.
9. Behaviour in class and around the school is generally very good. It is good or very good in assemblies and in lessons where teachers inspire pupils' interest and enthusiasm. However, both parents and pupils said they did not like the fact that a few pupils find it difficult to conform to the school's expectations of behaviour, feeling that these few let others in their class down and may affect their learning. Detailed support systems are in place for those pupils with identified behavioural difficulties and, although these are sometimes slow to create more positive attitudes and behaviour, there were no exclusions last year.
10. Attendance is satisfactory and is in fact just above the national average for similar schools. Unauthorised absence is in line with the national average. The education welfare officer offers valued regular support on attendance, punctuality and welfare issues. However, the school's monitoring arrangements do not include a system for following up any unexplained absence on the first day of non-attendance.
11. Pupils' social development is good and they have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong. It is satisfactory for their spiritual and cultural development. Through aspects of personal and social education, religious education, 'circle time' discussions and assemblies, pupils are encouraged to reflect on different ideas, faiths and principles. Teachers are often skilled in relating lesson or assembly themes to pupils' own experience to make the most of opportunities for discussion and the development of self-esteem and confidence. Pupils are also encouraged to consider others less fortunate than themselves by supporting charities such as Children in Need, Cancer Research and the Pasque Hospice. There is a clear code of behaviour for the whole school and each class devises their own rules at the start of the school year. Pupils are taken to a satisfactory range of destinations to enhance their knowledge of their own local culture and heritage. Occasional visitors to the school enhance pupils' experience of the wider world.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	5.3
National data:	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data :	0.4
National data:	0.4

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

Exclusions

There have been no exclusions in the past year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but is much better in the Year 4 class and Years 5 and 6. Pupils work from a sound curriculum enriched by a good variety of clubs and very good range of sporting activities. Pastoral care for individuals is good. Parents are not helped and encouraged to be involved in their children's learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in the Four Plus Class and Years 1 to 4. In the one Year 4 class and Years 5 and 6, teaching is good overall. Assessment is satisfactory overall and good in the Four Plus Class.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching for Years 5 and 6 is good or better; most pupils learn at a good rate
- In the 'set' groups in Years 1 and 2 and the lower ability groups for English, pupils' learning is not as good as it should be because the organisation hinders the effectiveness of teaching
- Relationships are very good; teachers set high expectations for behaviour which pupils try hard to meet
- Teachers work well together in their year group teams
- The use of homework is inconsistent and does not extend and reinforce pupils' learning

Commentary

12. Although almost two-thirds of the teaching observed during inspection was good or better, the group setting arrangements restrict its impact. In the Year 4, 5 and 6 classes, teaching is good overall and often very good which ensures good progress for most pupils. Teachers of these year groups set very high expectations for pupils to behave well, get on with the set work and produce high quality work. Teaching is lively, enthusiastic and occasionally excellent, as in a Year 6 science lesson when pupils were encouraged to think about where they would find micro-organisms on their bodies. Teaching has improved since the last inspection in Years 3 to 6 and has remained good in science throughout the school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	5 (14%)	17 (47%)	12 (33%)	1 (3%)	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.

13. Where teaching is excellent and very good it is characterised by very high expectations and lively and inspirational introductions which capture pupils' imagination and interest. In the one unsatisfactory lesson observed, teaching did not take sufficient account of pupils' levels of ability. Teaching in ICT is satisfactory overall and has improved from the unsatisfactory level found at the last inspection. Teachers now have at least sound subject knowledge

14. The quality of teaching in Four Plus Class is satisfactory; all staff have a secure understanding of the needs of young children. During the inspection, teaching lacked verve in literacy lessons, but interesting work from last year indicates that there has been good teaching in the past. Staff organise a carefully planned programme of stimulating activities, particularly in knowledge and understanding of the world, that extends and enhances children's learning. The nursery nurse plays a valuable role in the teaching programme. Regular day-to-day assessments are used effectively to prepare appropriate work for children.
15. Assessment has improved since the last inspection when it was judged to be unsatisfactory. It is now satisfactory overall and good in the Four Plus Class. It is in place for non-core subjects such as history and geography. In science and for the more able pupils in the set groups, assessment is good and used well to move pupils on at a good rate. Assessment information is used to set Years 1 and 2 according to ability for literacy and numeracy. The lack of rigorous monitoring to see the impact of this organisation on standards has led to underachievement. The levels of skills and understanding are too extreme in the majority of these groups for all to learn effectively; consequently, in spite of teachers' careful planning and often lively teaching, pupils' learning is unsatisfactory over time.
16. In the lower ability English sets for Years 3 to 6, learning and achievement are unsatisfactory. In a lesson observed for the Year 5/6 group, in spite of very good, enthusiastic teaching pitched at just the right level for introducing the task, pupils struggled when it came to recording their work or making sense of the simplest instructions. The work planned was entirely appropriate, but very few pupils were confident enough to have a go on their own. The only teaching assistant provided very good support for a small number of individuals, but for the group as a whole, there was not enough adult support to help pupils succeed. There is a very wide range of ability and stage of learning literacy skills in these groups, including pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school does not have an appropriate system in place for assessing the stages of English acquisition, consequently these pupils do not always have the correct support to help them succeed at an optimum rate.
17. In the main though, teachers' planning matches their pupils' learning needs reasonably well. The difficulty and reason for underachievement is that these pupils need a great deal of individual support to make sense of simple instructions and, importantly, reassure them that they are doing the right thing. Few pupils feel they can get on with their work independently and the great majority are very easily distracted. Furthermore, in these groups, there is a small number of pupils who find it difficult to behave. The time teachers need to spend on managing behaviour slows everyone's learning further. There has not been enough rigorous monitoring of the 'setting' arrangements to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
18. Throughout the school, relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good. Teachers set high expectations for behaviour which nearly all pupils try hard to meet. Pupils say they like their teachers and that they are fair. Pupils and parents value the time staff give to run clubs and sporting activities. There is a good team spirit evident in the year group teams. Teachers share the considerable work load of planning and their evaluations of planned work and make changes accordingly to improve their teaching and quality of learning opportunities for their pupils. Currently, though, there is not enough monitoring by the head and deputy to observe what goes on in classes and to take note of teachers' ideas and concerns so that they can act on them to bring about improvement.
19. In their response to the questionnaire and in meetings with inspectors, parents felt that the use of homework is inconsistent. Inspection evidence supports their views. Homework is not set regularly so opportunities for extending and/or reinforcing pupils' learning are missed.

THE CURRICULUM

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that is broad, balanced and enriched well. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is enriched well and there are very good opportunities for pupils to participate in sport.
- The development of literacy skills in Years 1 and 2 is not rigorous enough.
- The curricula for the teaching in the Foundation Stage, science, art and design and religious education are good.
- The organisation of teaching for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language does not help them achieve as well as they should.

Commentary

20. There has been satisfactory improvement in curricular provision since the last inspection and the school meets statutory requirements. Children in the Four Plus Class are generally well prepared for the next stage in their education. Due to the setting arrangements in Years 1 and 2, pupils do not develop secure literacy and numeracy skills and, therefore, are not well prepared for their junior stage of education. There is a good curriculum for pupils' personal, social and health education and for citizenship. Provision in ICT is better than in 1999, and the time spent on science has been adjusted appropriately. Over the last two years there have been well-focused staff meetings on the development of the curriculum for all subjects so that long-term plans are well understood and appropriate schemes of work are in place. The investigative approach is now promoted well in science, and curricular provision for science, art and design and religious education is lively and broad ranging. Subject co-ordinators have ensured that there is appropriate guidance for teachers on what has to be taught at each stage and how pupils' progress can be checked. This is working successfully in most classes, but is not sufficiently helpful in English in Years 1 and 2.
21. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage in the Four Plus Class has been introduced well. It is interesting and well organized, and children have good opportunities for independent learning. In Years 1 to 6, the literacy hour and daily numeracy lessons are firmly established. Staff make good links between subjects and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. All pupils, including those from ethnic minority heritages and those who speak English as an additional language, have equal access to all activities, but in Years 1 to 6 the organisation of pupils by ability does not result in enough support being provided for pupils of lower ability in English and for those for whom English is an additional language. There is a particularly clear process of support for children who speak English as an additional language in the Four Plus Class, but this is not continued through the school. The school does not have good enough systems for checking on the stages of English language acquisition or for providing these pupils with suitable support and resources.
22. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall and good when they work on specific tasks with teaching assistants. A small number of pupils have been identified as having particular talents and staff ensure that there are sufficient opportunities and programmes to meet their needs successfully; for example in providing instrumental lessons for pupils with particular capability in music.
23. There is a good range of clubs to extend and enhance pupils' interests and skills. Staff plan interesting enrichment activities well to enliven teaching and bring relevance to pupils' learning. Visits are linked appropriately to topics such as transport and journeys in the Four Plus Class. Visits to historical and other sites enrich teaching and learning in history and geography in Years 1 to 6. Theatre groups visit the school, and learning in science is enhanced by visits from specialists who present their knowledge in interesting ways. There are good opportunities for pupils to participate in artistic activities. The school enters competitions and wins prizes and commendations for pupils' well-designed posters and pictures, and pupil musicians and singers participate in local area concerts.

24. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers to teach the curriculum effectively, with an adequate number of support staff. The accommodation is adequate and well cared for, and it is improving as extra teaching areas are built. Resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with good provision in physical education. There are not enough graded reading books to support the school's drive to improve standards of pupils' reading. Provision for ICT has been improved and now matches that usually seen in most primary schools. The immediate locality of the school is used well as a resource in subjects such as geography, history and religious education, and there is good use of the school grounds in subjects such as science and art and design.

CARE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Overall, it offers them satisfactory support, advice and guidance. Pastoral support is good. Pupils' involvement in the life of the school is unsatisfactory.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- There are well-established systems of personal support for pupils that ensure individual needs are accurately identified.
- Pastoral support, particularly of Year 6, is good.
- Pupils feel safe and confident at school.
- The outside play area does not provide enough variety of activity and environment.
- Some aspects of pupils' welfare are not monitored closely enough by staff or governors.

COMMENTARY

25. The school provides satisfactory levels of health, safety and care for all pupils. Good child protection procedures are in place and training for all staff is up to date. If necessary, the school liaises with the Education Welfare Officer, or social services, to ensure that family support is provided.
26. Pupils are confident they would know who to go to with a problem or concern and say they feel safe at school. Although pupils who are ill or need first aid are well cared for on a day to day basis, records are not closely monitored to establish why the number of daily incidents is sometimes so high. The junior outside play area is bleak and uninteresting, with a shortage of space, and therefore, crowded when the field is not in use. There is no fixed play apparatus. The provision of shaded, quiet areas is at an early stage of planning.
27. Behaviour support programmes are introduced for pupils with identified behavioural difficulties which have proved successful in preventing exclusions. However, several pupils and parents mentioned, before and during the inspection, that these systems can appear unfair to the vast majority of pupils who consistently behave and work well. Some problems and misunderstandings in this respect arise from differences of opinion between the school and some parents on the subject of behaviour management.
28. The school has an adequate system for tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school. Currently, the school is not making careful analyses of the data in order to highlight areas where progress is not as good as it should be or if certain pupils are not making the expected gains in their learning. The data is used effectively for identifying pupils in Years 5 and 6 who need extra support to boost their attainment in the Year 6 national tests.
29. In the Four Plus Class there is a good induction programme for children and parents so that they feel welcome and children soon settle down to school life. Assessments are used

effectively to support children's learning. Support is good for children with special educational needs and any other children who need extra help.

30. Through the school council, pupils are beginning to have a satisfactory involvement in the life of the school now that regular meetings have been re-established and new guidance introduced. Pupils do not feel their ideas and concerns are listened to as very few ideas have so far been acted upon. Different surveys of pupils' views have been carried out in the past year, but pupils' involvement is not yet a prominent part of the school's life and development.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

There are satisfactory links between the school and the community, including other schools. The partnership with parents is unsatisfactory in all its aspects.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Parents are not given sufficient written curriculum information, even though this was a key issue from the last inspection.
- Homework is not set according to school policy and parents are unclear about how they can help their child's learning.
- There has been a breakdown in communication between the school and the PTA.
- Sporting and musical activities enhance links with the community.

COMMENTARY

31. Parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and attended the two meetings with inspectors were broadly supportive of the school. However, a significant minority felt that the school did not sufficiently seek parents' views, take account of their suggestions or concerns or provide appropriate homework and advice about how best to help children at home. Parents felt that individual teachers were approachable and helpful but they felt the head and deputy did not listen to and act upon their concerns and suggestions. Others felt that they were not well informed enough about how their child was getting on. Inspectors agree with parents that these are areas that need improvement if the partnership between home and school is to flourish.
32. The key issue of a lack of written curriculum information has not been satisfactorily addressed since the last inspection. As a result, parents do not feel they know enough about what is to be taught, or about teaching methods, to be able to help their children at home. The school does, however, provide a curriculum overview in the recently expanded information pack for new parents. The setting and marking of homework, especially for Years 3 to 6, is inconsistent and does not conform to the school's policy.
33. Although parents enjoy coming to events such as school productions or sports day, and almost all come to consultation evenings, more formal occasions are poorly attended. No parents at all, for example, came to the last governors' annual meeting. Only a very few regular volunteers help in class, but parents, if asked, do help with specific events such as school trips. The parent/teacher association (PTA) organises a range of events throughout the year through which it has raised a significant sum of money to support pupils' learning. However, a startling lack of co-operation or co-ordination between the school and the PTA has severely limited the effectiveness of this fund raising. Various misunderstandings have made it increasingly difficult to reach decisions on how best to spend the available money.
34. Links with the community and other schools are satisfactory. Pupils take part in a good range of sporting activities with other schools and in non-competitive fun music festivals such as

Singing Spectaculars, Fiddle Fiestas and Brass Bonanzas. There are effective links with the school's main feeder nursery and with Lea Manor High School. The transition mentor and the headteacher combine to support Year 6 pupils to help them settle to the High School routine and expectations, and arrangements are satisfactory. There are also developing school

council links with Downside Junior School. There are other limited opportunities for community involvement, including services at St. Augustine's Church and educational trips in the local area.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher, deputy and governors do not have a clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement
- Performance management is used well to develop teachers' roles and expertise
- Subject co-ordinators have brought about a rise in standards in some key subjects
- Teachers work well in year group teams

Commentary

35. The headteacher provides sound leadership with a strong commitment to the pastoral care of individuals. At the time of the last inspection, the headteacher was relatively new to the school and was seen to provide very good leadership with very clear educational direction. Since then there have been many staff changes and relationships with the governors appear not to have been productive. The rate of improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall, but two of the areas noted for improvement concerning parents have not been addressed.
36. The school has correctly identified that its self-evaluation is in need of improvement. Currently, the head, deputy and governors do not have an adequate understanding of the quality of education the school provides. Data collected about pupils' performance in tests and assessments is used profitably to form groups for booster classes and additional literacy and numeracy sessions for Years 5 and 6. These groups are effective and have been the main reason that standards attained by Year 6 have improved significantly in recent years. However, there are no probing analyses made of the data to question, for example, why standards in Years 1 and 2 are not always as good as they should be and doing something to improve the situation.
37. Teaching and learning are not checked on rigorously and regularly by the head and deputy; consequently, there is not a thorough understanding of what goes on in classrooms, or if a concern is noted, little is done to bring about improvement at a good rate. For example, pupils who have English as an additional language do not have their needs assessed properly and do not always have the right support, and a newly qualified teacher is expected to teach a lower ability group for literacy. Faced with such a wide range of age and skill level, understandably there are difficulties and these have not been tackled and resolved.
38. School improvement planning is comprehensive, but lacks clarity and a sense of purpose for bringing about improvement at a good rate. This lack of clarity is directly related to the inadequate self-evaluation by the head, deputy and governors. Furthermore, the head and deputy have delegated action planning to subject co-ordinators. Whilst co-ordinators are very enthusiastic about their subjects and check planning, few have had opportunities to look

carefully and regularly at teaching and pupils' books or to analyse data about their main subjects to look for strengths and weaknesses. As a result, their plans do not get to the heart of what needs to be done to bring about improvement. The exception to this is in mathematics, where the dynamic co-ordinator has brought about significant improvement in Year 6 test results. The science and ICT co-ordinators have also brought about a rise in standards by providing very good support for colleagues based on their very good subject knowledge.

39. The strengths in the leadership and management of the school are the commitment to professional development of all staff and the headteacher's delegation to subject leaders. Performance management is used well to ensure teachers develop their expertise and their subject co-ordinator roles. Co-ordinators for mathematics, science, ICT and religious education provide good, knowledgeable leadership for their subjects. Teachers work well together in year group teams, sharing planning and responsibilities to the benefit of all. The school is part of a teacher training partnership which has been profitable in helping staff develop mentoring roles and for recruiting newly qualified teachers.
40. Leadership for special educational needs provision in the school is sound. Individual Education Plans are good. The teaching assistant support organised for pupils with identified learning difficulties is good; in these individual or small group situations, pupils make good progress. It is in the much larger, lower ability groups where these pupils struggle and there has not been enough rigorous monitoring to analyse what is going on and do something about it.
41. The co-ordinator for the Four Plus Class provides good leadership and has a clear vision for the development of the curriculum. She nurtures an effective and committed team of staff.
42. The last inspection identified that the roles and responsibilities of the governors needed clarification. It would appear that little had been done to address this issue until very recently. The local education authority has taken a key role and a representative attends governor meetings to ensure everyone is clear about what is expected of them. This intervention has ensured good improvement in the short term. Governors are now aware of their role, but they have yet to develop a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the school.

Financial information

The school uses funds appropriately. Extensive building work costing around £180,000 is almost complete.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	843,870	Balance from previous year	41,748
Total expenditure	874,961	Balance carried forward to the next	10,657
Expenditure per pupil	3,193		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision is **good** in the Four Plus Class.

Provision for the Reception class, known at this school as the 'Four Plus Class', has been developed since the last inspection. There was no specific report on this age group in the last inspection. Children start school with overall levels of attainment that are broadly in line with those normally seen for this age group, but with above average ability in speaking and listening. They make sound overall progress in the nationally agreed Early Learning Goals. By the time they leave the Four Plus Class, most children exceed the nationally agreed goals in speaking and listening, personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world, and achieve them in communication, language and learning, physical development and creative development. Staff plan well for children to follow the 'stepping stones' of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. Assessment procedures, to measure children's progress through the curriculum, have been introduced and implemented effectively and they are used well in helping to plan future work.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PROVISION IS GOOD.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching ensures that children adapt well to school life.
- Relationships are very good.
- Children behave very well.

COMMENTARY

43. Teaching and learning are good. Children achieve well and their attainment is above expectations by the end of the Four Plus Class. With sensitive adult support, children concentrate for increasing lengths of time, and most children soon settle into the school's routines. They are guided and supported well and soon learn to be considerate for one another. Their self-control strengthens, and they gradually develop an understanding of what is right and what is wrong. Children become increasingly confident in asking for help when they need it, and become more responsible as they help to clear away after activities or get ready for outside play. Their developing self-esteem and improved levels of attention help them to acquire skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. They move around the school sensibly; for example, when they go to the school hall for assemblies.
44. Relationships are very good and children learn to respond positively to gentle reprimands when their behaviour is unacceptable. Staff are firm, sensitive and fair as they insist on good behaviour and encourage children to concentrate and persevere with tasks. Because of this, children soon behave very well and there is a purposeful atmosphere in the classroom. Children are encouraged to use their initiative, become increasingly confident and act responsibly; for example, when they go to the bathroom or put on coats to go outside. All staff take time to talk to children and use praise effectively to raise the children's self-esteem.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- There are many opportunities for children to develop their language skills.
- Children achieve well in speaking and listening.
- There is thorough teaching of letter sounds and shapes.
- During the inspection, teaching lacked enthusiasm and verve.

COMMENTARY

45. During the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory; teaching lacked verve and resulted in only satisfactory achievement and lack of challenge for more able children. Current standards are above those expected in speaking and listening and around average in the beginning skills of reading and writing. Scrutiny of work from last year shows that children reached the expected goals by the end of the Four Plus Class. Children enjoy saying rhymes and joining in the repetitive sections of stories. Because staff listen to them patiently, children acquire above average skills in speaking to express their ideas and join in discussions. They begin to use appropriate vocabulary, particularly in mathematics and literacy lessons. Staff provide a wide range of opportunities for children to talk, communicate and extend their vocabulary. Children gradually learn to handle books and turn pages carefully and enjoy reading. They gain increasing understanding of how print carries meaning and that it is read from left to right. Good teaching of letter sounds and shapes begins as soon as children start school. More able children recognise letter shapes and sounds and 'read' stories successfully by referring to the pictures. There is a good range of attractive story and non-fiction books and children develop a love of literature, which makes them want to learn to read.
46. Scrutiny of work from last year shows that there has been some good teaching, with regular motivation encouraging children to express their ideas by making marks and illustrating their writing. Most children make good attempts at writing their names, and by the end of the year, most children of average ability form letters correctly. More able children begin to write sentences independently and to illustrate their writing with lively drawings. Children become increasingly aware of print because staff label objects and displays well, point to the text as they read stories and rhymes and teach the shapes and sounds of letters of the alphabet. Staff introduce elements of the literacy hour in a gradual way so that children recognise links between reading and writing as they explore texts together. The nursery nurse is actively involved in teaching and provides good support for small groups. Manipulative skills for writing are developed effectively through regular practice in painting, in drawing and in play with construction kits.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

PROVISION IS GOOD.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to good achievement.
- Standards are above average by the end of the Four Plus year.
- Everyday situations are used well to develop children's mathematical understanding.
- Mathematical vocabulary is taught well.

COMMENTARY

47. Teaching and learning are good. Children achieve well and exceed the expected goals by the end of the Four Plus year. They develop mathematical skills in practical ways throughout the day. Through a wide range of sorting and matching experiences, they develop a growing vocabulary to express size, shape and colour. They learn about order by lining up to go outside or to go to other rooms and by taking turns. When they play purposefully with sand, children develop mathematical language such as 'more' and 'less'. There are good links with literacy; for example, when children sing number rhymes. Songs and games help children to gain knowledge and understanding of numbers to ten, and higher-attaining children count confidently to 20. Their understanding of sequence and order grows as they sit in groups to work with adults and play with well-chosen puzzles and games. More able children recognise larger numbers. By the end of the year, children begin to add small numbers together, and gain early understanding of addition and subtraction as they explore 'one more' or 'one less'. They name simple two and three-dimensional shapes. Slower-learning children are helped well; they rely heavily on adult support to express their mathematical understanding.
48. Teachers use an appropriate mix of direct teaching, questioning and stimulating activities to promote children's learning and to extend their mathematical vocabulary. Staff prepare appropriate activities so that children learn in a practical way. They engage well with the children in order to help them to sort out their ideas. Assessment of children's progress is good and the information is used appropriately to inform the planning of future work. In a good lesson, a teacher ensured that children handled solid shapes and thought about where they could see such shapes in the everyday world. As a result, the children achieved well in the lesson and saw how their learning related to everyday life. By the end of their time in the Four Plus Class, children record their investigations in simple ways and are ready to benefit from the more structured lessons and faster pace of work in Year 1.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

PROVISION IS GOOD.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff plan a wide range of relevant activities to engage children's interest.
- ICT is taught and used well to further children's learning.
- Children's vocabulary is extended well in this area of learning.

COMMENTARY

49. Teaching and learning are of good quality. Children achieve well and exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of their time in the Four Plus Class. They develop early investigative skills as they explore the school grounds, learn about seasonal changes during the year and find out about their environment. They sow seeds and learn to care for plants. Staff provide interesting activities which help children develop investigative skills. Children know that caterpillars turn into butterflies. As they make simple models with construction kits, they reflect their knowledge of the real world; they make cars, lorries and houses. Children enjoy cooking, and become more aware of the changes in materials that are cooked; for example, when they made gingerbread men. Staff interact well with the children, pick up their ideas and take their learning forward effectively. Learning is based firmly on experiences that are relevant to the children's daily lives. Scrutiny of work from last year shows that children experience a wide range of activities that help them to learn about their immediate surroundings and about the wider world. Staff plan tasks that prepare children very effectively

for subjects in the National Curriculum, such as science, design and technology and ICT. Visits and visitors enhance learning very effectively; for example, when children go to a farm.

50. Because of good levels of adult support, children acquire an increasing vocabulary enabling them to express their ideas and explain clearly what they know. They develop appropriate skills in ICT as they explore simple programs on the computer. In the computer suite, children use equipment confidently and are not afraid to try out new ideas; for example, when they used a simple drawing package and chose different colours and line widths to draw pictures of their families.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

PROVISION IS SATISFACTORY.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Activities are well prepared.
- Teaching is not focused enough during outdoor activities.
- Children are supported well to acquire the manipulative skills necessary for writing.

COMMENTARY

51. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Children achieve soundly and reach the expected goals by the end of their time in the Four Plus Class. They run, jump, climb and balance with confidence as they play in the well organised outside play area. They develop increasing levels of control as they ride tricycles and scooters, and move around with an awareness of space in a controlled and purposeful way. They have many opportunities to model with dough, use simple craft equipment, construct models from reclaimed materials, play with model vehicles and build with construction kits.
52. Staff plan well for the children to have regular exercise and opportunities for imaginative outside play. However, there is not enough attention paid to following planning and ensuring that children extend their skills progressively which slows progress. Staff tend to supervise rather than extend children's learning during outdoor activities. In the classroom, stimulating activities develop children's finer manipulative skills for writing, drawing and painting well. In the writing area, they write letters and record messages. Regular opportunities for drawing and painting help children to develop increased levels of pencil and brush control.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

PROVISION IS SATISFACTORY.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children use a good range of materials to express their ideas.
- Staff link work well to other areas of learning.
- Children's work is displayed attractively.
- Opportunities for large, bolder work are limited.

COMMENTARY

53. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Children, including those who have special educational needs, learn and achieve satisfactorily, and reach the expected goals by the end of their time in the Four Plus Class. Staff listen well to children, and creative activities provide valuable opportunities for children to discuss their ideas. Planning is good overall, but opportunities for larger, bolder work were not evident during the inspection. Children's artwork is valued and displayed attractively; this raises children's self-esteem. Early experimentation with paint and brushes leads to bright pictures and models as children explore colour, texture and shape in two and three-dimensions. They use a good variety of materials including paint, crayons and felt-tipped pens to make pictures. These often link with topics, and help to reinforce and consolidate language and learning. As they learned about families, children drew the faces of their parents, grandparents and siblings. Children roll, squeeze and shape malleable materials such as dough to develop skills and techniques for model making. Children sing tunefully, listen well and acquire a good repertoire of nursery rhymes and simple songs. In the role-play area, they play together happily and imaginatively; for example, when they pretend to be adults who care for babies.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high in Year 6.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in the lower ability groups and in Years 1 and 2
- Currently, spelling and handwriting are not taught effectively.
- Parents are not enabled to be as fully involved in their child's reading progress as they could be
- There are no dual language reading resources and too few books at a good interest level for older, struggling readers.

Commentary

54. At the time of the last inspection standards attained by Year 6 were well above average. Since then standards have fluctuated but, in 2003 and 2004, were again well above average. Achievement is good overall. More able pupils achieve particularly well with 40 per cent of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in 2004, which is well above average. Inspection evidence confirms these high standards in Year 6. In the remainder of the school, standards are, overall, average. Examination of Year 5 and 6 pupils' past work shows average and more able pupils have a good understanding of the conventions for writing. They demonstrate these in such tasks as persuasive writing as well as in story and play writing. More able pupils have a good knowledge of punctuation and spelling is sound. Standards of handwriting are not consistent. There are very good examples, but also some poor ones. Discussions with pupils and examination of current work show the majority Year 6 pupils like English. More able pupils like the texts and the challenges these bring. They read and write very well and with great enthusiasm. Less able pupils do not have a secure understanding of spelling strategies and punctuation is weak. They struggle with unfamiliar words and do not have many strategies for working them out. There are not enough books for them to choose from that reflect their age and interest level so they are not over-enthusiastic about reading.
55. Good use is made of assessment information to provide extra input for Years 5 and 6. Groups of pupils identified as needing a little extra support to move them, say, from Level 3 to Level 4 are given extra help. Booster classes are started early in the school year to move pupils to the higher Level 5. These strategies combined with good and very good teaching ensures that the

average and above average pupils do very well. However, pupils in the lower ability group do not achieve as well as they should.

56. Standards attained by Year 2 in reading and writing had dropped significantly since the last inspection, but improved in 2003 to standards similar to those found at the last inspection - average in reading and well above average in writing. Standards attained in 2004 are average in reading and below average in writing. Given pupils' average starting point on entry to school, these results do not show good progress over their time in Years 1 and 2 and indicate underachievement. Inspection evidence shows standards are below average overall and pupils are not achieving as well as they should. In general, pupils are not making the progress they could in reading because parents are not enabled to be as fully involved as they could be. Pupils' spelling and handwriting standards are mostly below those expected, therefore the presentation of their work frequently does not reflect their ability. The school has correctly identified that spelling and handwriting are in need of improvement.
57. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but ranges from unsatisfactory to excellent. The impact of teaching is constrained by the group setting arrangements in Years 1 and 2 and grouping all the lower ability pupils together for teaching in Years 3 to 6. Teaching is predominantly very good for Years 5 and 6. Average ability and more able pupils do very well in Years 5 and 6. In these year groups, teaching is characterised by very high expectations and good subject knowledge. Furthermore, these pupils rise to the challenge of complex texts and the high level of discussions they promote.
58. The current practice of setting groups according to ability in Years 1 and 2 does not lead to profitable learning for all and, therefore, pupils underachieve. There has been insufficient rigorous monitoring to check to see how effective this practice is. Inspection evidence shows the impact of group setting is that pupils do not always build on literacy skills systematically and cumulatively. Consequently, gaps can develop in pupils' knowledge and understanding of literacy skills and these are continued and exacerbated as pupils move through the school. For example, in a lesson for the middle ability Year 1 and 2, pupils only four weeks out of the Four Plus Class were expected to undertake similar work on reading and writing instructions to Year 2 pupils who had the background of a year's knowledge. Similarly, the whole group focus on learning about long vowel sounds (such as in 'hide') was not well matched to pupils who were not secure on basic letter sounds (such as 'i' in 'hit'). Thus, pupils are taught skills, but the underpinning knowledge is often missed out.
59. In the lower ability groups in Years 3 to 6, pupils have very wide ranging levels of literacy skills. In the lesson observed for the Year 3 and 4 group, an efficient team teaching arrangement ensured satisfactory teaching with appropriate tasks and well managed behaviour. However, pupils' learning was constrained because there was not enough adult help to ensure they could get on. Though the tasks were at the right level, a great many pupils needed reassurance they were doing the right thing or needed encouragement to keep them working hard. Similar difficulties were noted in the Year 5 and 6 group lesson. Although very good teaching ensured pupils' enthusiasm and involvement with their tasks and good self-esteem, there was not enough adult support to ensure good learning. In a short observation of the same pupils reading in groups, insufficient adult support meant that very few made progress in the session.
60. The great majority of pupils are keen to read and like talking about their books. In Years 1 and 2, great opportunities are missed to move pupils' on at a better rate. The school's policy is that parents are encouraged to hear their child read his or her book chosen weekly from the library stock. It is clear from pupils' record book that parents are keen to help and that the book is read, usually on the day it is brought home. The structured reading scheme books, however, are not allowed home. Therefore, opportunities are missed for pupils to practise on a daily basis in order to reinforce skills at the right level and help them make more rapid progress. The progress made with these graded books is slow simply because pupils do not get many opportunities to read them at school. The school's stock of reading books does not include

dual language books. A good number of books are outdated and need replacing and there are not enough books at the right interest level for the older, struggling readers, especially boys.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. Good use is made of pupils' literacy skills in recording, for example, science experiments. More able pupils write at length in subjects such as religious education, history and geography. The school is beginning to make good links between subjects; for example, Year 5 and 6 pupils make good use of adverbs and adjectives in their 'Peaceful River' poem related to their study of 'Water'. Currently, though, planning to teach specific skills, such as letter writing or note taking through and in other subjects is not in place. During inspection, little use was seen of word processing as a means of drafting or presenting work. Examination of pupils' past work showed limited use of ICT.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but with some good and very good teaching, especially in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 5 and 6.
- Most pupils have a very good attitude to the subject.
- Leadership of the subject is very good.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 underachieve.
- The use of homework needs further development.

COMMENTARY

62. Standards are average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. Standards at the time of the last report were average at both Years 2 and 6. Trends over the last 4 years show standards to be well below average in Year 2, with an improvement in 2003 to standards being broadly in line with the national average. Trends in Year 6 also show standards to be below average until 2002. In 2003 standards were well above average and the unvalidated results for 2004 show 43 per cent obtaining Level 5. This is attributed to the setting in mathematics in Years 3 to 6, and the good and very good teaching in Years 5 and 6. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. There is no difference in the performances of boys and girls.
63. Pupils enter Year 1 above average in mathematics, but they do not achieve as well as they should by the end of Year 2. The main reason for underachievement is the group setting arrangement. Greater challenge is required, in particular, for the higher attaining pupils to reach the higher Level 3 at the end of Year 2. By the time pupils reach Years 5 and 6, they achieve well as the recent results have indicated. By Year 2, the above average and average attaining pupils know the properties of shape and begin to know their number bonds. The more able can multiply single figures by 2, 3, 4 and 5. Books are marked, but the presentation of some books is rather untidy. By Year 6, pupils have good numeracy skills which they can apply to fractions and decimals, and to finding the area and volume of shapes.
64. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory although during the inspection some good and very good teaching was noted, especially in Years 5 and 6. It is the setting arrangements in Years 1 and 2 which restrict the impact of teaching. Since the last inspection,

teachers have addressed with confidence the three part structure of the numeracy strategy. They share the lesson intentions with the pupils and these are reviewed at the end of the lesson to ensure that pupils understand what has been taught. A key feature of the very good lessons is the brisk pace. Good questioning by teachers helps to keep the pace of the lessons moving. This was particularly noted in the top set with Years 5 and 6, where pupils were given quick-fire questions to answer about numbers that make 160. Analysis of work and observation in lessons indicate that problem-solving and investigative work take place. Pupils are polite, have a very good attitude and behave well in lessons.

65. Although assessment arrangements overall are satisfactory, greater use could be made of them. Pupils are not given specific mathematical targets and so some do not understand how they can improve. Review lessons are held at the end of each term to ascertain how pupils have performed and where they have struggled. Optional statutory tests take place for Years 3, 4 and 5 in the summer term. Special classes (booster and springboard) help to raise the standards by Year 6. One of these lessons was observed during the inspection where Years 5 and 6 pupils were able to count up and back in tens and hundreds from a given number up to one thousand. Only once, during the inspection, was homework set to a class and this is an area which needs further development.
66. The subject co-ordinator provides very good, knowledgeable and committed leadership. He has been in position since 2002 and has done much to help raise the standards at Year 6. He has observed other teachers and given teachers refresher training. However, he has not had time to thoroughly evaluate the setting arrangements in Years 1 and 2. Resources have improved. Overall, the school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

67. There are some areas in the curriculum where a link has been established in mathematics but links are not planned systematically. Pupils use mathematics in science for measuring and for reading temperatures. It is also used in design and technology for measuring and in art and design for drawing patterns. In a few lessons, mathematics was used in information and communication technology.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well, and standards are above average throughout the school.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, with examples of very good and excellent teaching.
- The co-ordinator leads the subject very well.
- Curricular organisation in Years 1 and 2 requires review.

COMMENTARY

68. Since the last inspection, standards by the end of Year 2 have improved and have been maintained by the end of Year 6. The school's performance in national tests has been at least above average over the past two years, with well above average results in Year 6 in 2003. This is because of improved provision, better teaching and increased use of assessments to match work carefully to pupils' needs. Current standards are above average throughout the school, and pupils achieve well. Teachers' knowledge of the subject has been enhanced through well-

organised professional training so that they are more secure with what they have to teach. They are therefore able to provide increasingly well planned, challenging activities. Staff have become more adept at analysing test results and setting targets, and girls and boys are encouraged to work together in pairs and groups.

69. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well because they build systematically on their earlier learning in the Reception class. More able pupils in Year 2 could achieve even more if the curriculum was better organised to allow them to revisit topics that were taught in Year 1. As they increase their knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things, pupils know that animals produce offspring of their own kind. They investigate how they themselves have grown, and compare what they can do now with what they could do when they were babies. Pupils enjoy science. The school's approach nurtures their natural curiosity about the world and how things work. Pupils' understanding of forces is developed well. In a good lesson in Year 2, the teacher used simple resources to help pupils to understand magnetic force. Pupils experimented with a range of materials and gradually realised that items made of metal were more likely to be attracted by magnets. More able pupils went further and found out what sort of metals were attracted. The teacher used the plenary session at the end of the lesson very well to tease out the pupils' ideas.
70. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' achievement is good. Investigative and experimental science is given a high profile and pupils are secure with prediction and fair testing, and regularly use graphs to present their data. Teachers allow pupils time to develop hypotheses; for example, when pupils in a good lesson in Year 4 questioned whether magnets of different sizes could attract more or less paper clips. They were allowed time to find out for themselves. When appropriate, teachers include environmental issues and other social and moral aspects of the subject. Pupils record their work well; higher attaining pupils organise their findings independently in a variety of tables, charts and narrative. By the end of an excellent lesson in Year 6, pupils were keen to test the hypothesis that micro-organisms need warmth, food and moisture to survive. This was because the teacher had led a lively discussion, given pupils time to discuss what might be needed, and helped them to set up systematic investigations. Throughout the school, staff encourage pupils to use specific scientific vocabulary which helps develop precise thinking and recording.
71. The overall quality of teaching is good, with examples of very good and excellent teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6. Pupils select and use appropriate equipment and become increasingly effective young scientists. Learning is good. Throughout the school, teaching assistants give good support to pupils with special educational needs so that they enjoy the same activities as other pupils, especially with specific vocabulary and with setting out their findings during investigations. The high quality of leadership in the subject has led to effective professional training and closer monitoring of teachers' planning and classroom teaching and learning. Teachers start lessons by reviewing earlier work and setting out clear objectives. At the end of lessons, teachers ask the class if they think the objectives have been achieved. This has a positive effect on learning, as it helps pupils to recognise how much they have gained in lessons. Teachers ask searching questions and sensitively extend pupils' answers by probing further to develop pupils' understanding. This maintains the attention of the whole class and, as a result, the lesson moves along at a good pace. Teachers use the school's marking system very well to make pupils aware of how well they are doing and what they could do better. Comments are well focused on the scientific content of the work.
72. The school has developed the curriculum for science well. It is good overall, but needs adjustment in Years 1 and 2 to consolidate learning before the end of the key stage. Together with the emphasis on practical investigation, there has been keen attention to the development of specific scientific skills. The good quality and good presentation of writing shows that pupils are increasingly using the skills learnt in English lessons. As they measure, make graphs and make comparisons, pupils practise and use their mathematical skills appropriately in science. Scrutiny of work from last year shows that ICT is used well for recording findings in a range of

different graphical forms. Work from pupils of average and above average ability was beautifully presented, especially in Years 4, 5 and 6.

73. Leadership of the subject is very good. The enthusiastic co-ordinator is a good role model, and staff are supported very well with sound advice and ideas on how to teach particular aspects of science.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- By Years 2 and 6, attainment has improved since the last inspection when it was below average expectation and a key issue.
- There has been a significant improvement in resources.
- Staff are now more confident and competent in the use of ICT.
- There is insufficient use and development of ICT to support teaching and learning across the curriculum.

COMMENTARY

74. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards in ICT overall are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. This shows a good improvement since the last inspection when standards at Year 2 and Year 6 were below average. ICT was the main key issue at the time of the last inspection. A new scheme of work has been implemented using mainly a nationally known one. A new ICT suite has been brought into use with 21 computers, each having a printer. A new smartboard enables teachers to show pupils exactly how to use their computers. There is also a computer in each classroom.
75. Pupils are developing their basic skills well and use the computers confidently. Year 2 pupils show good skills in manipulating the mouse; they log on and off and change the font size and colour. Year 6 pupils are able to produce their own leaflets and newspaper articles on different topics such as the Ancient Greeks.
76. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and often good. Teachers have become more confident and competent in their own skills which is having a beneficial effect on pupils' learning. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. Pupils are enthusiastic and obviously enjoy the subject. They generally behave well in lessons. There are no noticeable differences between boys' and girls' attainment and all pupils have equal access to computers. The lessons seen were well-planned and prepared and indicated proficient subject knowledge. The lesson objectives are shared with the pupils so that pupils could quickly experience 'hands on' in order to be actively involved themselves. This was evident in a good lesson with some Year 5 pupils, where they worked well in pairs to create a plan of the classroom. They knew how to drag rectangles across the screen into the correct positions.
77. The co-ordinator is very knowledgeable and has made a good start since she became co-ordinator in 2003. She monitors teachers' planning and has been able to observe a few lessons and make helpful suggestions for improvement. She also gives training to those teachers who require it. Assessment takes place at the end of each year, but the school intends to make improvements to the assessment system next year. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

78. The use of ICT across the curriculum is limited and this is recognised by the school as an area for development. There is some evidence of skills, knowledge and understanding being used across the curriculum, for example, in science and in mathematics.

HUMANITIES

79. Geography and history cannot be reported in full as they were not an inspection focus and only a few lessons were observed. One lesson was observed in **geography** and two in **history**.
80. In **geography**, pupils throughout the school follow units of work which comply with the National Curriculum requirements. In a good Year 5 lesson, pupils, with good supervision, made a trip to the local River Lea. They made good sketches of three parts of the river with a good amount of detail and most pupils had a reasonable understanding of correct terminology.
81. In two **history** lessons with Year 3, the teachers had planned together on Ancient Egypt. Pupils could use basic hieroglyphics to write their names and decipher simple words. The more able could record Egyptian numbers with the date. Pupils showed a reasonable awareness of the Ancient Egyptian way of life and civilisation.
82. Curriculum planning ensures both **history** and **geography** receive adequate time within the timetable. In discussion with Year 2 pupils, they knew that Louis Braille invented special writing for blind people. They were also able to locate various places, including Luton, on a map of the British Isles. Pupils in Year 6 were able to recall how Victorian children lived and worked. They also remembered facts about Ancient Greece studied the previous year.
83. The co-ordinator for both subjects is knowledgeable and fulfils her role effectively. She works out the long term and medium term plans for the teachers so that they, in turn, can work out their weekly plans. Both **geography** and **history** are planned on a two year cycle so that pupils do not study a topic in successive years. Visits by pupils to the Cecil Higgins Museum, Bedford and the Imperial War Museum, London enhance their learning.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and show good levels of respect for others' beliefs.
- Leadership is knowledgeable and good.
- Lessons are interesting and relevant.

Commentary

84. Examination of pupils' past work shows that the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are covered. Tasks expected of pupils are interesting and relevant to their everyday lives. They make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of different religions and how these influence the way people choose to live their lives. Standards are in line with those expected for Years 2 and 6. Themes in assemblies are used profitably to reinforce and extend pupils' understanding and provide more opportunities to see how beliefs influence action.

85. The subject co-ordinator supports her colleagues very well. Her detailed knowledge of different faiths is used very effectively when she does the medium-term planning for all the year groups. She also has a very clear idea of how the subject should develop further within the school and is, correctly, confident that pupils learn effectively *about* religions, but that there is more to do to ensure pupils learn effectively from religion. As far as possible, pupils, and parents, are encouraged to share their cultures and beliefs. This practice means that all gain first hand understanding, as in a lesson about Hinduism for Year 5/6. Pupils listened very respectfully when the meanings of some of the rituals and artefacts were explained to them by their classmate.
86. Due to timetabling arrangements, only two lessons were observed. In the Year 1/2 class pupils listened intently whilst their teacher explained the importance of names. They gave ideas and opinions confidently and for their age had a good understanding of the value of a person's personal qualities such as kindness, cheerfulness and being helpful. In the Year 5/6 lesson, the teacher used her very good subject knowledge and relationships with her class when she told the story of the avatars of Vishnu. Pupils showed genuine curiosity and asked probing questions. When deciding how they could retell the story to the class, they demonstrated mature and responsible behaviour in organising themselves for the task.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

87. It is not possible to make a judgement in relation to the provision for **design and technology**, **physical education** or **music** because these subjects were not a focus of the inspection and no lessons were observed. Only two lessons were seen in **art and design** and, again, there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about provision.
88. It is clear from documentary evidence and talking to staff and pupils that **physical education** is regarded as an important subject. There is a full coverage of all aspects of the subject, including swimming which takes place in Years 3 and 4. Many of these pupils can swim the recommended 25 metres by the time they leave the school. The co-ordinator offers strong leadership and has produced high quality schemes of work which give support to non-specialist teachers. He has also improved the resources in the two years that he has been co-ordinator. The planning also includes dance. There is a wide range of activities after lessons, which cater for pupils' different sporting interests. One activity observed was a girls' football activity where the girls were able to dribble a ball through 5 hoops. A representative from Luton Town Football Club visits the school on a regular basis and he was observed coaching pupils in Year 5. Numerous fixtures take place against other schools in football, cricket, netball, cross-country running, athletics and hockey. Some pupils have gained recognition by the county in hockey, football, cricket and athletics for their age levels.
89. In **music**, a good proportion of pupils take advantage of the extra music lessons with peripatetic music teachers and learn to play stringed and brass instruments. The recorder clubs are well attended and the recorder players' contributions to assemblies demonstrate good standards. In assemblies, the Year 3 to Year 6 choir sang very well in two parts and clearly enjoyed being choir members.
90. The range and quality of displays and samples of pupils' work in **art and design** indicates that standards are above average and pupils achieve well. A scrutiny of work from last year shows that pupils have worked in both two and three-dimensions and at different scales from small detailed drawings to larger corporate pieces done by groups of pupils. Standards have improved since the last inspection. In the lessons seen, pupils enjoyed the subject and behaved very well. Interesting pictures based on the work of well-known artists demonstrate pupils' awareness of the history of art. Pupils have copied prints of work by artists such as Van Gogh and Dali. Work in current pupils' sketchbooks is variable, and this is an area for development. Work done in the Art Club is of very good quality. This club, open to all pupils over the school year, provides valuable opportunities for talented pupils to extend their ideas

and practise their skills. Pictures of African sunsets and examples of Batik are of particularly high quality.

91. Samples of work in **design and technology** from each year group indicate that standards are at least average and that skills are developed systematically. There is good attention to planning and evaluation, so that pupils become aware of the complete process of producing items. Work is linked well to other subjects; for example, when pupils in Year 2 designed brightly coloured coats for Joseph, or designed a well with a winding mechanism to save the pussy-cat that is stranded down below. Photographs show imaginative work from pupils in Years 5 and 6 when they designed shelters, linking with work on homes and climates in geography. Food technology is taught effectively, and it is linked well with work in science and health education.
92. Leadership and management of both subjects are good. Effective planning in both subjects ensures the systematic development of skills and experimentation with a wide range of materials. Literacy and numeracy are used appropriately and ICT is developed effectively. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from expressing themselves in subjects that do not rely so heavily on language skills. The co-ordinators monitor all pupils' progress and keep a close eye on the work done in lessons. This ensures that staff have the support they need to teach all aspects of the subjects, and that appropriate materials are available. Staff keep useful assessments of pupils' progress and these provide helpful information for planning future lessons.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

93. The very good relationships within the school provide a good framework within which pupils' personal, social and health education is promoted well. It includes teaching about the harmful effects of drugs and misuse of medicines, as well as sex education. The use of 'circle time', when pupils sit quietly with their teacher and discuss a theme, is becoming the established method of dealing with sensitive issues, such as behaviour. Environmental issues such as the recycling of materials, are tackled well in science and geography. Aspects of pupils' personal development are introduced appropriately in all subjects. Pupils are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle, and the benefits of healthy eating and regular exercise are promoted well. In design and technology, pupils learn how to plan healthy meals and make nourishing sandwiches. In physical education, there is appropriate emphasis on warming up before and slowing down after exertion. Pupils participate fruitfully in a very good range of sporting activities. The school maintains good links with local professional sports clubs and participates in a wide range of competitive matches.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	5
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	5
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4

The effectiveness of management

4

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