

INSPECTION REPORT

THE RICHARD WHITTINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117346

Headteacher: Mr Chris Jones

Lead inspector: Mr Keith Edwards

Dates of inspection: 02 – 05 November 2004

Inspection number: 268091

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed Primary
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 3 – 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 298

School address: Thornbera Gardens
Bishop's Stortford
Hertfordshire
Postcode: CM23 3NP

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mr John Yates

Date of previous inspection: 19 April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Richard Whittington Primary is a popular school that serves a suburban area of Bishop's Stortford. Numbers on roll have increased significantly since the time of the last inspection and there are now 280 full-time boys and girls as well as 36 children who attend the Nursery on a part-time basis. This is larger than average. The school draws most of its pupils from the immediate locality but an increasing number are drawn from further afield. Almost all of the pupils are white and almost all come from homes where English is the first language. Five per cent of the pupils have an entitlement to free school meals. This is well below the national average.

There are two intakes into the Reception classes during the course of the year. Most of the children who start in the Reception have had the benefit of pre-school experience. The attainment of the pupils on entry to their Reception Year is broadly average, although there is a significant variation in the pupils' achievement at the start of their full-time education. After the Foundation Stage, the children are taught in mixed-age classes and there is a wide spread of ability in each class. Twelve per cent of the pupils are on the school's register for special educational needs. This is below the national average. Six pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

The school is in line to receive a Basic Skills Quality Mark, an NAACE (information and communication technology) award and the Investors in People Award before the end of the year.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21190	Keith Edwards	Lead inspector	English Information and communication technology Music English as an additional language Personal, social and health education
31758	Edward Tipper	Lay inspector	
15236	Morag Thorpe	Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Physical education Foundation Stage
22274	Vera Rogers	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Religious education Special educational needs
28200	Paul Stevens	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	19
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	34

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school that has many very good features. The headteacher provides very good leadership and management. Each member of the school community is valued and there is effective teamwork. The quality of teaching is good and there are particular strengths in the Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are above average in Year 6. In the 2004 national tests for the pupils in Year 6, standards were well above those of pupils in similar schools in terms of the progress made since the end of Year 2.
- However, achievement in mathematics could be higher.
- The headteacher has successfully developed the ethos of the school where every member of the community is valued. Relationships are very good.
- The pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are very good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with very good features.
- There are weaknesses in the way that the curriculum is planned.
- The school has developed very good links with the parents and the community.

Improvement since the last inspection in April 1999 has been good because the school has dealt effectively with almost all of the key issues. The development plan is much sharper and there has been a strong commitment to raising standards. The improvement in standards in the tests for pupils in Year 2 and in Year 6 is above the national trend over the last four years. The school has ensured that there has been a very good improvement in the provision for information and communication technology and, as a result, standards are rising rapidly. The quality of teaching has improved. Standards in design and technology and art and design are much improved, although the school recognises that more could be done to raise standards in geography.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

The achievement of the pupils is good. The children make very good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and most pupils are set to exceed the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage. This is because the pupils feel secure and the quality of teaching is very good. The pupils continue to benefit from good teaching in the infant and junior classes and standards are above average, particularly in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology in Year 6. Standards in literacy are above average because the school places great importance on developing the pupils' speaking and listening skills and because the children are encouraged to express their ideas in a range of different subjects. This strategy is particularly helpful to those children who are learning English as an additional language. The pupils have good opportunities to use the school's computers to develop their understanding of different subjects. In science, the pupils benefit from exciting investigative work, particularly in Years 5 and 6. There is

some under-achievement in mathematics because the planning in some lessons does not closely match the National Numeracy Strategy. Throughout the school, the pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs achieve well. This is because they receive good quality individual support and the teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing and number work is systematic.

Because the school's ethos is very good, **the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.** The pupils' moral and social development is very good. The pupils grow to become mature, confident and responsible. They have a very well developed understanding of right and wrong but more could be done to prepare them for life in a multicultural society. The pupils have very positive attitudes towards school and their behaviour is very good. The pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance levels are above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Overall, **the quality of teaching is good.** Almost all of the teaching observed was satisfactory or better and in the Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6, the quality of teaching is very good. The quality of teaching in some lessons throughout the school is excellent. Throughout the school, the teachers manage the pupils very well and they have developed effective working partnerships with the teaching assistants. Because the teachers make good use of assessment information, there is a good level of challenge in literacy lessons. This is not always the case in numeracy lessons and the current, experimental, setting arrangements are not working as well as the school hoped. In the best lessons, tasks are very well modified for different groups of pupils so that they apply themselves well and work hard, but this is not evident in all of the sets. The provision for those pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language is good.

The curriculum is satisfactory. A particular strength is the school's provision for the children in the Foundation Stage. Furthermore, the school's provision for literacy is very good. Although the headteacher and staff work hard to try to ensure that all pupils receive the same kind of experiences and opportunities, there are weaknesses in the planning for numeracy and the humanities where the planning does not consistently allow for the development of skills. The school provides a good number of activities in art and design and physical education. The school has made good progress in developing the accommodation to meet the demands of the curriculum. It has formed very good partnerships with the parents and with the community. The school provides well for the care and welfare of its pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher has achieved his vision to create an effective school through his commitment to high standards and his belief in teamwork. The reputation of the school has grown, not only because of the improvement in standards achieved, but also because of its caring ethos, which is very inclusive. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds feel secure and confident and this enables them to achieve well. **The quality of leadership and management is good.** The headteacher has successfully motivated and empowered his colleagues to settle for nothing but the best. This is particularly evident in literacy and information and communication technology. Subject leaders have established an atmosphere that encourages an open discussion of effective classroom practice. This, together with the more formal programme of monitoring of teaching and learning, continues to improve the quality of teaching. The governors provide good support for the work of the school. All statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with the school and think highly of it. The pupils are proud of their school and feel they are valued and very well supported.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise achievement in mathematics

- Develop the curriculum and assessment procedures to ensure the progression of skills and experiences.
- Raise the profile of multicultural education.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

The overall achievement of the pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good. Standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology are above average in Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English, mathematics and science have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- In the national tests (SATs) for pupils in Year 6 in 2004, standards were above the national average and the pupils' achievement was well above that of pupils in similar schools in terms of the progress made since the end of Year 2.
- Current standards in reading and writing are above average in Year 2.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language make good progress.
- By the end of the Foundation Stage, most of the children are likely to exceed the goals set for them in each of the areas of learning.
- Although pupils are making good progress in mathematics, there is scope for greater achievement.

Commentary

1. Although standards on entry have varied over the years, the majority of children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with attainment that is broadly average. The children achieve very well as a result of very good teaching and curricular planning. Staff ensure that the precise learning needs of all children are identified early through excellent assessment systems and very effective links with families. All children, including higher-attaining children, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve equally well. The school is particularly successful in promoting the personal development of the children and in enabling them to develop their communication skills. These attributes ensure that the children are very well placed to take full advantage of further learning opportunities as they progress through the school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.0 (17.5)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.0 (16.9)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.2 (16.6)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 43 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The pupils continue to make good progress in the infant classes, particularly in the development of their speaking, listening and writing skills. In the 2004 national tests, the pupils' performance in the reading and writing tests was well above the national average and in writing was above that of pupils in similar schools. The pupils are given good opportunities to discuss and write about a range of experiences. Handwriting is taught systematically and the children are taught to use a joined script from an early age. Standards in speaking and

listening are well above average. This is because from an early age, the pupils are encouraged to discuss their response to their teachers' questions, to work in small groups and to discuss their work. Furthermore, the teachers set a good example in helping the pupils to appreciate the richness of language through the range of stories that they tell and through the richness of the experiences that they provide. This strategy strongly supports the pupils' achievement in reading and writing. The systematic teaching of reading, the broad range of opportunities for the pupils to write and the strong links with the parents enhance the pupils' performance.

- Standards in mathematics in the national tests for pupils in Year 2 in 2004 were above average. Current standards in Year 2 are broadly average. There are pockets of underachievement because the work set does not consistently follow the guidelines of the National Numeracy Strategy and the feedback to pupils does not help them to overcome their misunderstanding. The pupils achieve well in information and communication technology because it is well taught and the pupils have good opportunities to develop their skills.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.0 (29.9)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	27.6 (27.8)	27.0 (26.8)
science	29.7 (30.2)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 38 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- The pupils' achievements are good in the junior classes because of the quality of teaching, particularly in Years 5 and 6, and the strength of the curriculum that places such high value on their personal development. In the 2004 national tests for Year 6, the pupils' results were above the national average overall and were well above the performance of pupils in similar schools in terms of the progress made since Year 2. The school meets the challenging targets it sets for its pupils. Current standards in English, mathematics and science are above average. Standards in writing are well above average because the pupils are encouraged to use their skills in a wide range of different contexts across the curriculum. Furthermore, the pupils have a very clear understanding of what they need to do to improve and work hard to meet the targets set for them. The setting of pupils in Year 6 for mathematics has not yet had a beneficial impact on the pupils' learning because it has not resulted in smaller group sizes and more focussed teaching.
- Standards in information and communication technology are above average because the school has made the most of the opportunities provided by the new computer suite. In science, standards are above average because they have good opportunities to develop their investigative skills, and science lessons, particularly in Years 5 and 6, are imaginative and exciting. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection in raising standards in art and design and in design and technology. Standards in both of these practical subjects are above average in Year 6. Standards in the humanities are broadly average.
- There are no significant differences in achievement between boys and girls. The small number of pupils who are learning English as an additional language make good progress because the school has effective intervention strategies. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Those who are causing concern are identified early and placed on the school's register. They are given some good support in lessons such as English and mathematics from well-trained assistants, but this is less so within other lessons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to their work and towards others in the school are very good. Their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is good and punctuality is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are high standards of behaviour in school.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic in their approach to lessons and the activities provided for them outside the school day.
- The school instils in its pupils a strong moral code and helps them develop very good relationships with each other and adults working in the school.
- There are too few opportunities to prepare the pupils for life in a multicultural society.
- Although attendance levels fell in the last reporting year (2003-2004), attendance rates remain above the national average.

Commentary

7. The school operates a clear system for controlling the behaviour of its pupils which is well supported by them and appreciated by their parents. Pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly manner and play happily in both playgrounds. This is particularly evident in the junior playground, which was reduced in size during the inspection due to building work. Lunchtime is a relaxed and sociable occasion despite the dining area spreading across corridors and classrooms because of the loss of one half of the hall to serve as a classroom. Pupils are very well behaved in lessons. Ninety-three per cent of parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire feel that behaviour is good. While a few expressed concerns about bullying, most parents and their children believe that the school addresses any concerns in a prompt and sensitive manner. There were no exclusions in the last reporting year.
8. Pupils in the Foundation Stage are making very good progress towards achieving the Early Learning Goals in personal, social and emotional development.
9. Pupils have very positive attitudes to everything that they do. They respond well to teaching in lessons and are enthusiastic in their support for out-of-school activities. Opportunities to take responsibility are also welcomed by pupils who act as monitors assisting in every aspect of school life. These include helping in the dining hall and in the infant playground and ensuring lights are switched off when leaving a classroom. Members of the school council take pride in carrying out their responsibilities and the older pupils see themselves as guardians of their younger colleagues.
10. Pupils gain a clear understanding of right and wrong from their early years in school. This is developed through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and the constant reinforcement by adults within the school. The emphasis on working in pairs and groups in lessons helps them to develop appropriate social skills. These are further enhanced through their many opportunities to mix with pupils of other schools and members of the local community. Relationships are very good. The pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to members of staff and visitors, to whom they respond in a friendly and respectful manner.
11. The major religions are examined in religious education and there are examples of foreign cultures being explored in subjects such as art and music. A very good PSHE lesson enabled pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 to appreciate the effects of racism. Overall, however, there are limited opportunities for pupils to understand the differences in lifestyles of peoples around the world, and within their own country, and to prepare them for life in a multi-racial society.

Attendance

12. Although attendance has been significantly higher than in similar schools in recent years, last year saw a substantial decrease to a level below that at the last inspection. The lack of a computerised recording system limited the ability of the school to identify the situation early enough to analyse the reasons behind it and take the necessary remedial action. The school also lacks an effective system of rewards and sanctions to promote attendance and to discourage parents from increasingly taking their children on holiday during term-time. Most pupils arrive on time, reflecting the eagerness and enthusiasm with which they come to school.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.2	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.

Exclusions

There were no exclusions in the last school year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good and there are satisfactory assessment procedures. The curriculum is satisfactory and the school provides a good standard of care for its pupils. The pupils who have special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language receive good support. The school has formed a very good partnership with the parents.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The quality of assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching in Years 5 and 6 is very good.
- The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is very good.
- Literacy is very well taught.
- The school is successful in ensuring that those pupils with special educational needs and those that are learning English as an additional language achieve well.

Commentary

13. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and this has a significant impact on the pupils' achievement and the progress they make. The teaching was very good or excellent in almost six out of ten lessons seen and, across the school, there are many noteworthy features. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and the amount of very good and excellent teaching has quadrupled.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 38 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (10%)	17 (45%)	12 (32%)	4 (10%)	1 (3%)	0	0

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

14. The children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well because of the consistent high quality of teaching. The teachers and teaching assistants work as a highly effective team due, in no small part, to very good leadership and management. The staff know the children really well because of their very detailed assessments of the children and the highly effective monitoring of their daily progress. Communication with parents is very good. The highly organised and effective planning ensures that every child works at a level that matches his or her age and ability. Very effective use is made of the outdoor areas to help the children to learn. There has been very good progress since the last inspection in the teaching of children in the Foundation Stage.
15. The school gives the highest priority to the development of the pupils' self-esteem and their progress in literacy and numeracy. The teachers are far more successful in the teaching of literacy and the fostering of the pupils' personal development than they are in the teaching of numeracy. In literacy, the teachers have a very clear understanding of the National Literacy Strategy and they have a very consistent approach from class to class. Assessment data is used effectively and the teaching of the basic skills of reading, spelling, handwriting and grammar are very systematic. Very good links with the parents support this learning and the marking is effective in helping the pupils to improve their work. The teachers are skilful in finding opportunities for the pupils to practise their writing skills in different subjects. This is not always the case in numeracy lessons, where the quality of teaching ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory. In the very best lessons, such as one observed in a Years 3 and 4 set, the teaching was inspirational because the activities were carefully designed to motivate the pupils and were very well matched to the pupils' abilities. Each child was fully engaged throughout the lesson. In the weaker lessons, there is too much reliance on published schemes that neither challenge or motivate the pupils and the learning objectives are imprecise. The teaching of information and communication technology has improved, due largely to the leadership of the co-ordinator, who has been instrumental in improving the knowledge and confidence of the teachers and ensuring consistency from class to class.
16. The pupils respond very positively to the teachers' very high expectations of how they should behave and approach their work. Lessons are invariably calm: the pupils are able to concentrate on their learning, secure in the knowledge that their contributions will be valued by adults and other pupils. They are not afraid to make mistakes but, equally, they enjoy succeeding. This was seen to great effect in a class for pupils in Years 5 and 6, where the pupils took great delight in hearing a very imaginative play script written by one of their classmates. The overall quality of teaching and learning in Years 5 and 6 is very good and this quality of experience for the pupils accelerates their learning and is a major factor in the standards achieved.
17. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language are fully included in lessons. Most teachers plan work that is well matched to their ability levels in English and mathematics although the same is not the case in other subjects; tasks are sometimes too difficult and there are times when pupils do not receive additional support to help them understand and complete them. The teaching assistants play a valuable role in enabling the pupils with special educational needs to make good progress in literacy and numeracy.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is satisfactory. The curriculum meets statutory requirements to teach all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The school also makes provision for pupils to learn French in Years 5 and 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of learning opportunities in the Foundation Stage is very good.
- There are weaknesses in planning for the development of skills in the mixed age classes.
- Pupils' learning is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular clubs, visits and visitors to school.
- There is a good programme for personal, social and health education.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

Commentary

18. Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to plan a curriculum that ensures appropriate curricular coverage in all subjects. It uses national guidance (QCA) and because of the mixed age range of classes this is planned over a two-year cycle. However, as yet there is no secure system in place to ensure that the pupils develop the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding progressively as they move through the school. This is the result of the two-year cycle and changes to the mixed-age class organisation. Consequently, some pupils miss out on some of the planned provision and this leads to unequal access for those pupils. This is not being picked up and addressed by curriculum co-ordinators.
19. One very good feature of the Foundation Stage curriculum is the consistent use of the outdoor areas which are very well resourced and can be used in all weathers. These give children purpose and abundant enjoyment in their learning. The cross-curricular planning incorporates many areas of learning and provides varied and rich opportunities for research and communication within the Foundation Stage. All children are very well motivated and their learning is focussed yet fun.
20. Information and communication technology is used effectively to support learning across the curriculum. Teachers are confident in using a wide range of technology, and opportunities are built into teachers' planning and seamlessly integrated into lessons. This is important in maintaining pupils' interest and motivation.
21. The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs. They receive good quality support from teaching assistants, particularly in English and mathematics. The Individual Education Plans for pupils with special educational needs state clearly what pupils need to learn in order to make progress. The targets set, although generally achievable over a period of time and realistic, are not always broken down into sufficiently small, manageable steps.
22. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. This element of the curriculum is taught regularly in each class and as elements of other subjects such as science. The dangers of alcohol and drugs misuse are taught to older pupils in these lessons. The school has a clear programme for sex education and relationships, which is taught to older pupils. Parents are informed before these lessons take place so that they are fully aware of the content. The school makes good use of the school nurse and police to support its work in these areas.
23. The school provides a good number of activities outside of the school day. These include a number of after school clubs including a range of sports, art, the school choir, ICT, a writing club and a club organised by the local church. There are several opportunities for pupils to learn to play a musical instrument such as woodwind instruments provided by the peripatetic music service. The curriculum is enriched by an extensive range of visits to places of interest

both within the local area and further afield. These cover a wide range of curricular areas and the school makes the most of its proximity to London, visiting places such as the National Gallery and Royal Albert Hall. Visits further afield include field trips to Pelham field studies centre and Gunpowder Mills. Older pupils also have the opportunity to take part in a residential visit to Osmington Bay Adventure Centre. Pupils' learning is further enhanced through a range of visitors to school including artists, authors, poets, musicians, a theatre workshop, and the local police and fire services.

24. Learning resources are good and used well. The well-trained teaching assistants give good support to pupils who find learning difficult, during English and mathematics lessons. Unfortunately, this support is not always available during subjects other than the core subjects. The quality and adequacy of the accommodation is satisfactory. At present, however, it is not possible to use the hall for physical education or assemblies as there is a class based in the hall during extensive building work. This is near to completion.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes good provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils and provides them with good support, advice and guidance. It actively seeks, and acts upon, the views of pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is successful in providing personal support, advice and guidance for its pupils.
- Pupils are very well cared for in a safe and healthy environment.
- There are good arrangements for pupils joining the school.
- The school council is proving successful as a means of enabling pupils to express their views about their school.

Commentary

25. Teachers and their classroom assistants get to know their pupils very well. This close relationship ensures pupils receive a high level of support for their personal development. The school also encourages pupils to help each other in lessons and look out for younger colleagues during break-times. Parents are very complimentary about the pastoral support their children receive and the overwhelming majority of pupils feel there is an adult they can go to if they have a concern at school. Pupils also benefit from a generally good standard of academic support and guidance where regular assessment is used to identify their individual needs and help them develop a good understanding of how they can improve. However, this is not as good at Key Stage 1, as it is in Key Stage 2 and the Foundation Stage, or in certain subjects, such as mathematics. Most pupils feel that teachers help them when they get stuck and show them how to make their work better, and ninety-seven per cent of parents feel their children are making good progress as a result.
26. The school treats the health and safety of its pupils as a priority. The recent installation of closed circuit television combined with an efficient system keeping the building secure during the school day provides pupils with a secure environment in which to work and play. An annual health and safety audit of the school is supported by checks each term by the caretaker and the daily vigilance by all members of staff. Any hazards identified are immediately addressed if they are serious while others are prioritised for addressing when funding is available. There is also an effective system for ensuring risk assessments are carried out for in-school activities and outside visits. Staff trained in first-aid are spread throughout the school and an appropriate system for administering medicines is run by administrative staff. The headteacher, the designated person, is fully trained and experienced in the implementation of an appropriate child protection policy. All staff are regularly made aware of their roles and responsibilities in this important area. The school is involved in

initiatives promoting walking to school and provides a range of opportunities for its pupils to enjoy the benefits of physical exercise. However, while aspects of healthy living are covered in subjects such as science, there is currently no planned approach to help pupils develop healthy lifestyles linked to a commitment to achieving the Healthy Schools Award.

27. There is a clear system for the smooth introduction of pupils into the Nursery and the Reception classes. There are regular contacts with the main playgroups and Nursery teachers visit prospective pupils in their homes to talk with them and their parents or guardians and begin to develop profiles of them. The children visit the school to meet their teachers and be shown around while their parents attend a meeting where they are informed of all the arrangements on joining and the roles they are expected to play in helping in their children's education. The children then enjoy a phased introduction into the school in September and January. This system is clearly appreciated by the vast majority of parents as well as the pupils themselves.
28. The school council represents the views of pupils in Key Stage 2. When questioned, school council members feel confident that the headteacher listens to what they have to say and that they have an increasing opportunity to have a say in how the school is run. The school is now looking towards increasing the involvement of all pupils throughout the school in influencing their life within it.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed a very good relationship with its pupils, parents and carers. Links with the community and other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning at school and at home.
- Parents are provided with a good standard of information about the school and the standards achieved and progress made by their children.
- Links with the local community do much to improve pupils' learning and develop their social skills.
- The school has established links with other schools which are of clear benefit to the progress of pupils.

Commentary

29. Parents are very supportive of their children's education both at school and at home. The overwhelming majority feel that the homework given is appropriate and that enough information is given to allow them to help their children with it. Outline programmes of work are given to parents at the beginning of each school year and there are several booklets explaining what pupils should be able to do at each stage of their education. The school also distributes publications helping them to support the teaching they receive in English and mathematics. Parents are welcome to come into school and many do so to help in the classroom and on educational trips. They also provide considerable financial support for the school through the very effective Parents' and Friends' Association which raises a substantial sum each year and has been responsible for, among other things, the purchase of the ICT suite. Most parents also feel the school seeks their views and responds well to their suggestions and concerns.
30. Because the school establishes very effective links with pre-school providers, parents and children before they join the Nursery, the children soon settle into school routines. Parents are very well informed of the curricular needs of their children and how they can support them at home. This level of care is also shown when children transfer to the Reception class and into Year 1. The school has established good links with a number of local secondary schools. There are specific links with these schools for science, music, ICT and French, and opportunities for the pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented regularly visit one of the high schools for some work. There are strong links with other local primary schools: curriculum co-ordinators for English, mathematics, science and ICT meet regularly with regard to their curriculum areas.
31. Parents are successfully encouraged and eager to share in their children's learning. The teaching assistant with responsibility for home and community links plays a major role in this highly successful area. Children take reading books home each night with additional notes and information when necessary. The quality of information to parents and involvement of parents in the Foundation Stage is exemplary. Parents have organised a rota of support for each session and this gives the Nursery teacher and the Nursery nurse greater time to focus on children's learning. This help is very highly valued.
32. The Parents' Association has contributed a tremendous amount of financial and personal commitment and physical effort into the improvement of the school's accommodation and resources. An outstanding outcome of the ongoing active parental involvement has been the improvements made to the Nursery and Reception class accommodation and resources including a kitchen where healthy snacks are prepared and a high quality outdoor area that makes an outstanding contribution to all areas of learning. From discussions with parents it is evident that they are delighted with the quality of provision in all areas and very pleased that

- their children attend this school. Their only concern is the fact that children who are in the younger age group for each class do not benefit from the entire year.
33. The school keeps parents well informed about life in the school through its prospectus, annual report and newsletters. It provides parents with regular opportunities to formally discuss their children's progress with their teachers. One meeting, at the beginning of the school year, at which individual targets in English and mathematics are discussed, is followed by further meetings each term at which progress towards meeting these targets is reviewed. The annual reports, while very informative in terms of identifying progress made in subjects and setting targets in literacy and numeracy, do not clearly state pupils' capabilities in relation to national expectations. However, the frequent meetings with teachers clearly contribute to the feelings expressed by the overwhelming majority of parents that they are kept well informed about their children's progress.
34. There is a good range of links with the local community. Religious festivals are celebrated in the parish church and the local minister takes assemblies and is a governor of the school. Visits are made to museums, theatres and galleries, broadening pupils' educational experiences. These are supported by visits to the school by poets, authors and theatre and music workshops. Good use is made of the area surrounding the school in project-work and local people share artefacts and experiences of life during the Second World War with the pupils. Several organisations use the school facilities, providing a welcome contribution to school funds. There are links with the Rotary Club and a local newspaper but, overall, the school makes limited use of the educational opportunities afforded from developing relationships with local businesses.
35. There are good sporting links with local primary schools through a programme of matches and attendance at local festivals. Similar co-operation exists in the areas of art, music and drama with the highlight of the year being attendance at the Hertfordshire Schools' musical production at the Royal Albert Hall. There are also joint initiatives where educational issues are addressed. Similar links exist with secondary schools. As part of the Specialist Schools and Diversity Pathfinder initiative, the school works with three schools to develop a common approach to teaching and learning in ICT, science and French. Good arrangements also exist for enabling pupils to make a smooth transition to the secondary school of their choice.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Both the leadership and management of the school are good. The governors provide good support.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's commitment to inclusion, equality and concern for the needs of individuals is very good.
- The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good.
- The strength of the teamwork is a major factor in helping the pupils to achieve.
- The management team has had a major impact on improving the quality of teaching.
- The governing body provides good support.

Commentary

36. The school benefits from very good leadership from the headteacher, a dedicated and enthusiastic staff and a supportive governing body. The headteacher, who has high expectations for the school, has a very good working partnership with his deputy and has developed a successful team ethos. The headteacher's energy and determination to improve the quality of education has ensured that standards have risen faster than the national trend and has enhanced the popularity of the school. There is strong focus on valuing each individual member of the school community and a continuing emphasis on enabling them to

improve their achievements still further. The governors and parents rightly value what the headteacher and staff provide for the pupils.

37. The ethos of the school is very good. The school is very successful in meeting its aims. The positive, caring ethos promotes high standards of academic attainment and personal development. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are happy in school and share its values. This is reflected in their work and their relationships with their peers and adults. The role of the subject leader has developed well. The climate of the school encourages an open discussion of effective classroom practice. This, together with the more formal programme of monitoring of teaching and learning, continues to improve the quality of teaching. Although there is a range in the expertise of the different curriculum leaders and in the way they exercise their responsibilities, they are rising to the challenge of increased responsibility and accountability. For example, the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is very good with some excellent features. The co-ordinator provides a judicious balance of guidance, encouragement and support at the same time as ensuring that statutory requirements are fully met and assessment is rigorous and up to date. She monitors planning and assessments and is aware of the needs of individuals as well as groups of children. Her monitoring and supporting role is very good. The work of the science and literacy co-ordinators has been particularly successful; their confidence in taking the initiative and the development of their expertise has made a significant contribution to the improvement in standards. However, the school recognises that more work is required in the development of numeracy and the humanities.
38. The management of special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has a thorough knowledge of the pupils within each class, with a good awareness and understanding of the range of needs within the school. Where the pupils receive support within lessons, this is of good quality. Where relevant, pupils receive appropriate support from the LEA support services. The co-ordinator for special educational needs keeps well-documented evidence and records. The progress of the pupils is carefully monitored and arrangements are reviewed regularly and adjustments to provision made accordingly.
39. The wide-ranging measures for making teaching even better are contributing very well to the rising standards. The school is very good at involving support staff and teaching assistants, as well as teachers, in its very effective efforts to improve teaching. For example, all staff attend training days, including those at other schools, often resulting in a very good impact on what the school provides. Consequently, teaching assistants are very much a part of the whole team. Staff development is given a high priority. Those new to the profession are enabled to work alongside other, more experienced colleagues to develop their skills. This has resulted in the majority of lessons being of very good quality or better, with some outstanding teaching and learning taking place in all phases of the school.
40. The school has successfully improved those areas of weakness identified in the last inspection. The school has increased its ICT capability significantly and standards are above average in Year 2 and in Year 6. The co-ordinator has ensured that the potential of ICT to support the curriculum is being continually developed and the computer suite is being used both imaginatively and effectively. The school has been particularly successful in continuing to raise standards in English, mathematics and science from a position of existing strength. Standards in art and design and design and technology have been improved. This is because the school has made significant progress in developing the quality of teaching and revising its curriculum planning. The accommodation has benefited from several building initiatives.
41. The governing body is very supportive of the headteacher and the school. The committee structure is well established and the governing body fulfils its statutory duties. Its role as a critical friend to the school is developing well because the governors are encouraged to become involved. They have a clear understanding of the curriculum and the standards achieved as well as pastoral, staffing and premises issues. The governors make a significant contribution to the strategic planning of the school, for example by discussing on a regular

basis progress towards the objectives in the school improvement plan and the financial implications.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	845,330	Balance from previous year	57,088
Total expenditure	846,124	Balance carried forward to the next	56,295
Expenditure per pupil	2,595		

42. The office and administrative staff provide a welcoming first point of contact and a very effective service. The day-to-day financial management of the school is very good. The recent audit of the school's financial systems endorsed the efficiency of the school's systems. Financial resources are fully utilised to ensure the school makes good progress towards its priorities. The school is very successful at securing additional finance and this has led to significant improvements to the accommodation. The school ensures that specific grants, for example for information and communication technology, are correctly spent. All expenditure is carefully tracked in line with best value principles and the budget is updated continuously to show the current state of the school's finances. The school provides good value for money.

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 **very good** with some excellent features. This shows a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Children are very well prepared for transfer to Year 1. There is one Nursery class and two Reception classes and children in the Nursery class attend for either the morning or afternoon sessions. The recently developed outdoor provision is very good and gives children a wealth of opportunities for sharing and learning.

There are two admissions into both the Nursery and Reception classes depending on children's birthdays. During this inspection approximately half of the total intake of children were in the classes and therefore judgements on attainment are based on the children in school at present who will have the benefit of a full year in each class.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for this area of learning is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very well planned activities and resources increase children's independence and their ability to work in groups.
- Very good teamwork ensures that all children achieve very well.
- There is very good progression in the range of activities between the Nursery and Reception classes and within these classes.
- Teachers plan an exceptionally enriching range of special events and these contribute to children's very good understanding of Christianity and of the cultures, faiths and customs of people in multi-faith Britain.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly successful in maintaining very supportive relationships and developing the confidence and self-worth of all children.

Commentary

43. The staff work as a very cohesive and effective team and children are introduced sensitively but thoroughly to very good social conduct including classroom routines. The staff have a very good knowledge of the needs of young children. They take time to talk to them and use praise very effectively to raise children's self-esteem. Relationships between staff and children are very good. In the Reception the children build on their previous knowledge of class routines and take on more responsibility for their own learning. They adapt very well to working both as a class and in small groups and enjoy shared activities, especially planning the child-initiated activities and having the responsibility to manage their own time for part of some lessons. This makes an excellent contribution to all aspects of their personal development including personal responsibility and the development of the ability to take turns and share equipment. During these activities the adults ensure that children are purposefully involved. They use these opportunities for rigorous monitoring of attainment, achievement, attitudes and behaviour. Almost all of the children are likely to attain, and many are likely to exceed the Early Learning Goals before they leave the Reception classes.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision for this area of learning is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good with some excellent features and is very carefully focussed towards developing children's language skills in all activities.
- The teaching of reading is very good and pupils' speaking and listening skills are very well promoted through all areas of learning.
- The curricular planning, assessment systems and use of assessments to guide planning are excellent.
- Very good organisation of resources and planned activities ensures that children use correct vocabulary.
- Parents are very well informed and involved in their children's learning and the shared involvement contributes to children's very high level of achievement and motivation.
- Leadership and management are good and contribute to very good teaching and achievement of all children.

Commentary

44. Most children quickly adapt to the routines and exciting learning opportunities in the Nursery and listen attentively to a wealth of stories and poems and guidance for each activity. Most children speak with confidence, listen carefully and are very enthusiastic learners.
45. In the Reception classes children achieve very well and the majority are well placed to exceed the early learning goals in this area of learning. Higher-attaining and most average attaining children read fluently and accurately with exceptionally good understanding as the books chosen are well matched to their abilities and interests. They use reasoning skills very well and retell stories in the correct sequence. The majority read familiar and unseen texts equally well. Children who are learning English as an additional language read familiar vocabulary well as they benefit from repetition of vocabulary and picture clues. Their reading skills and enjoyment of reading are very well promoted in each class. The provision for gifted and talented children is very good; teachers take great care to ensure that they continue to read a varied and enriching range of books at the same time as developing their learning to exceptionally high levels in other areas of learning.
46. Very good relationships give children the confidence to speak and all adults listen intently and respond to their comments. In the Reception class the teachers have developed very rigorous and tightly structured plans for the teaching of sounds. Most children are therefore able to say the sounds, recognise them in print and practise them during writing activities. They are encouraged to hold pencils with the correct grip. The teaching of handwriting in the Reception classes is exceptionally good and well structured. The method of teaching handwriting as a class activity separate from other literacy activities contributes to high standards. ICT is very well planned in order to develop children's literacy skills. Standards show very high levels of improvement compared to their attainment on entry to the class and considering the short time they have been in school.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for this area of learning is **very good** with some excellent features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and achievement in all classes are very good.
- Teachers plan an exciting range of structured activities to ensure that children understand numbers and apply their skills to other areas of learning.
- Children have very positive attitudes and apply mathematical skills with confidence.

Commentary

47. Standards are high and the majority of children are well placed to exceed the expected levels by the end of the year. Children's achievement is very good in this area of learning because of very good teaching and assessment in all classes. Teachers have excellent understanding about how children learn and give the correct level of challenge. Children's knowledge and understanding are very good in all aspects of number, shape and space and problem solving.
48. The teachers have very high expectations; they successfully develop children's confidence and make learning exciting and relevant to them. Children apply mathematics to most areas of learning; they are encouraged to look for patterns and shape in art and knowledge and understanding of the world. ICT is very successfully incorporated into this area of learning to develop children's understanding of number. Very effective class activities at the end of the lessons give children opportunities to demonstrate their new learning and also consolidate mathematical skills. The National Numeracy Strategy has been very well adapted to meet the needs of the children in the Reception classes.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision for this area of learning is **very good** and has significantly improved since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good and contribute to very high levels of achievement.
- Teachers plan a very enriching range of activities which contributes to high levels of achievement throughout the year.
- Children are encouraged to use their initiative and observational skills.
- Children have very good opportunities for using technical equipment.

Commentary

49. Throughout each day the children's learning is very well developed by the investigative approach adopted by the staff. Work on display and curricular planning show that children have very good opportunities for learning across all aspects. During the inspection, children in the Nursery had many opportunities for using the outdoor area, planting a variety of flowering plants and recognised the root, the stem and the flower. Children in the Reception classes developed their geographical skills very well by using the sequence of events in the story "We're going on a Bear Hunt". They identified different features such as rivers, seas and mountains and very successfully created maps from their illustrations. They used the outdoor area to plan a route from their home to the bear's cave.
50. From the very imaginative planning and discussions with children it is evident that they achieve very well and most are well placed to exceed the Early Learning Goals. In the short time since they have been in school they have become confident, articulate and interested learners. The children have very good opportunities for using a wide range of equipment including computers. They name many parts of the machines and describe how some equipment works. They classify equipment according to the purpose and whether or not mains electricity or batteries are used. Children in the Nursery program a robot to move

forwards or backwards and change direction with high levels of confidence; their joy and wonder at their new levels of success were a pleasure to watch.

51. Children have very good opportunities for learning about the local area and have a very good understanding about change over time; they classify toys, books and pictures as new or old. An enriching range of visits and visitors enhances this area of learning. Children use the outdoor area for an outstanding range of activities that enhance their achievement in this area of learning.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for this area of learning is **very good** and has significantly improved since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and contributes to very good achievement in all classes.
- Children have a wealth of outdoor play equipment including wheeled toys.
- At present the hall is not in use but all teachers ensure that the spacious classrooms are used very effectively for physical educational activities.

Commentary

52. During the inspection children in the Nursery showed very high levels of co-ordination when they used the wide variety of wheeled equipment in the very attractive outdoor area. They showed very high levels of co-ordination and agility during the "Firework" activity as they made circular shapes to reflect Catherine wheels and jumped in different directions to emulate bangers. Children have a very good understanding of the contribution of physical activities and diet to a healthy lifestyle. Children in both classes respond very well to the creative, physical and intellectual challenges planned by the teachers. They are very well included in all activities; gifted, talented and higher-attaining children have extra challenges and those with special educational needs and EAL benefit from additional guidance. These lessons contribute very well to children's personal and social development.
53. Children handle construction equipment, paintbrushes, scissors and pencils with very good levels of dexterity and accuracy. Most children in the Reception classes hold pencils correctly and are taught handwriting skills very successfully. Teachers have very high expectations of all children. The lower-attaining children, including those with special educational needs, benefit from very good support and encouragement and achieve as well as others in the class. Most children in the Reception classes are well placed to exceed the Early Learning Goals.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for this area of learning is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good planning related to children's abilities and interests and very good challenges contribute to the very high levels of achievement in all aspects of this area of learning.
- Children use a very wide range of media and develop confidence and a wide range of skills in the use of colour, texture and shape.
- Children have many opportunities for role-play and music.

Commentary

54. As a result of very good curricular and resource planning, children develop confidence in using an increasingly wide range of resources. Teachers plan a very good balance of new skills and encourage children to incorporate previously learned skills into their creations. They use a wide variety of materials to create pictures, sculptures and models with a good feel for texture and shape. Children develop speaking and listening skills very well as they discuss the materials used and compare designs.

55. The children use paint programs in ICT to generate a wide range of pictures. During the informal music activities they sang enthusiastically and with accurate pitch, good articulation and a very good awareness of rhythm and dynamics. No activities involving instrumental music were observed, although planning shows very good provision for this aspect of learning.
56. From the lessons observed, displays and discussions with children, most of them are well placed to exceed the expected levels in this area. Teaching, learning and achievement are very good in all aspects of this area of learning. Planning shows that over the year children have a very wide range of creative opportunities. They are encouraged to experiment when mixing paint and using modelling materials. A particular strength is their very good awareness of shape and texture in art. The staff skilfully extend children's language and encourage their imaginative and collaborative activities. In a Reception class painting activity the children were encouraged to mix and experiment with colours. The discussions which developed showed extremely mature knowledge and use of language as one child said "I have mixed a lighter brown" and another child responded "That colour is called beige." They have a very clear understanding of the skills to be learned from each activity.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are good overall.
- The good and, particularly in Years 5 and 6, the very good quality of teaching supports high achievement.
- The very good management of the subject by the co-ordinator has ensured that standards continue to rise.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported.

Commentary

57. Standards in reading are above national expectations by the age of seven and by the age of 11. Standards in writing are above national expectations at Year 2 and above in Year 6, with a significant minority having higher achievements. Pupils enter the school with broadly average English skills and they make very good progress as they move through the school, with the result that, in the latest (2004) national tests, overall attainment in reading and writing was well above average by the end of Year 2. Standards in English were above the national average by the end of Year 6. This was a significant achievement for the school as the 2004 cohort of Year 6 pupils contained a higher percentage of pupils on the special educational needs register. This cohort achieved very well in the national tests when compared to all national benchmarks. This is a pattern of success that has been consistent over the previous few years.
58. A key element of the success of the school in raising standards in English is the emphasis placed on speaking and listening. In every class, the pupils are encouraged to discuss their ideas in pairs or small groups. This practice is a common feature not only in English lessons but also in other subject areas. This strongly encourages the pupils to develop their vocabulary and raises their confidence to communicate their ideas in writing. Standards in speaking and listening are above average throughout the school.

59. Standards in reading are above average in Year 2 and Year 6. The pupils make good progress because of the effective teaching based on a strong and well-planned curriculum. Each class has regular reading sessions when the pupils are encouraged to read and understand a wide variety of stimulating texts. Lower-attaining pupils benefit from a very structured approach where the early skills are very well taught. The teaching assistants play a vital role in supporting this work. Many parents reinforce the school's efforts by providing support and encouragement at home within the context of a carefully planned homework system, particularly for the younger pupils. The school encourages research and comprehension skills by providing opportunities for the pupils to find information on a range of themes on the Internet and then to express their finding in their own words.
60. The quality of teaching in English ranges from satisfactory to very good and lesson observations, coupled with a scrutiny of pupils' work from the current and previous school year, indicate that teaching is good overall throughout the school. The quality of teaching is particularly good in the upper junior classes and accounts for the high achievement of most pupils in Years 5 and 6. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and have good classroom and behaviour-management skills. These allow most lessons to progress at a good pace. Teachers use day-to-day assessment very well to match tasks to pupils' abilities and learning needs. Where teaching and pupils' progress are very good, the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject, their impressive rapport with the pupils and comprehensive subject knowledge, combined with well-developed questioning skills and the setting and maintenance of a very good pace throughout, are common features of the lesson. A further significant factor is the attitude of the pupils. Their attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good and this strongly supports learning. In the best cases, the pupils work enthusiastically together, respond very well and confidently to their teacher's questions and work independently without the need for frequent intervention by the teacher.
61. The subject is very well led and managed. Despite the school's success in the subject, the leadership is not complacent. Very effective monitoring systems and further professional development have improved the quality of teaching. Assessment procedures are effective and the pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve. The school ensures that those pupils requiring additional support receive it. Equally, home-school links ensure that parents are fully involved with teaching their children to read; for example, younger children take books home each night and regular writing homework is set throughout the school. A whole-school handwriting style is taught systematically and this has a positive effect on the presentation of pupils' work. Weekly spelling tests encourage pupils to take care with their spellings and a range of additional activities, such as a "Book Fair" and a visit from an author, contribute to pupils' love of books and enthusiasm for the subject.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

62. Subjects such as history and science are used to enhance the development of the pupils' literacy skills very well. They provide the pupils with opportunities:
- to write in their own words and in different styles;
 - to practise their speaking and listening skills in group work and in role-play exercises;
 - to develop their reading and comprehension skills through research tasks.

French

Provision for French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Meticulous planning and challenging teaching enable pupils to achieve very well.
- The partnership with a local secondary school has a beneficial impact on pupils' learning.
- Pupils are confident in their use of the French language.

Commentary

63. There are no national expectations for attainment at the primary stage. However, pupils in Years 5 and 6 confidently use everyday expressions with fast developing fluency and accurate pronunciation. After less than a term, they have therefore already achieved very well. Moreover, through the interest generated by their teacher, the pupils have developed a greater understanding of the geography of France. More able pupils improvise conversations, spontaneously applying their increasing vocabulary with accuracy.
64. The quality of teaching is very good. The specialist teacher plans and executes most enjoyable lessons, providing pupils with a thorough grounding in the language. Her introductions to new expressions are lively and make use of a wide variety of good quality visual and auditory resources. She ensures all pupils are included in lessons by both targeting individuals and reinforcing learning by asking all the class to repeat what is being learnt. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as other pupils. Lessons are very well balanced with many opportunities for oral interaction and some written work. Pupils are very attentive and behave impeccably. It is too soon to have made use of computers.
65. The school uses an interesting course with an attractive workbook for pupils to extend their learning. Pupils' achievements demonstrate that the teacher meets her objectives within the time allocated. One point for development is to take advantage of pupils' achievements by giving them more opportunities to use French independently both initiating and responding in conversations. The school's close work with the secondary school involves a thoroughly thought out development plan, whereby class teachers gradually take over lessons through observation and team teaching. French makes a very valuable contribution to the curriculum, including giving opportunities to pupils to develop another linguistic competence, to learn another currency system, to sing French songs and to take a special interest in another country and its culture.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and are in line to reach standards that are above average in Year 6.
- Standards are in line with those expected in Year 2.
- Teaching is good overall in Years 3 to 6.
- Marking is not always used sufficiently well to help pupils improve.
- Assessment targets are not always shared with the pupils so that they are aware of what they need to do to improve.
- There are shortcomings in the leadership and management of the subject.

Commentary

66. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 so that by the end of the year the majority are in line to achieve at the expected levels, with a significant minority having higher achievements. Pupils make good progress overall in Years 3 to 6 with more rapid progress by older pupils, so that by the end of Year 6 standards are above average with a higher than average number of pupils achieving at the higher levels. In the 2004 national tests, standards achieved were above those expected by the end of Year 2 and close to average at the end of Year 6. However, the 2004 cohort of Year 6 pupils contained a higher proportion of pupils

with special educational needs and statistical evidence shows that they made good progress in the junior classes.

67. Since 2001 there has been a steady decline in pupils' overall achievements in the national tests at the end of Year 6, although the number of pupils achieving at the higher levels by the end of Year 6 has increased. This is largely as a result of the strong teaching, particularly in the junior classes. The school has recognised the need to improve the proportion of pupils achieving at the higher levels by the end of Year 2 and to ensure that a higher proportion reach the expected levels by the end of Year 6. As a result, they have recently adopted setting arrangements across the school, based on pupils' abilities. This has had some success in Year 2, with an improved pupil performance in the 2004 test results.
68. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall in Years 1 and 2 and good overall in Years 3 to 6. However, as at the time of the last inspection there is variation in the quality of teaching across the school, which ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory. Although planning is largely based on the National Numeracy Strategy, there is too much dependency on planning according to suggested published work schemes in some classes, particularly in Years 1 and 2. This leads to some confusion in the approach to teaching and learning, as in those lessons where pupils of all abilities attempt the same tasks. This slows down the rate of progress in learning by the higher-attaining pupils particularly and also leads to the pupils who have difficulties in learning often finding the tasks confusing or too difficult. In the most effective lessons, teachers have secure knowledge and understanding of the subject, which are reflected in the good pace and the careful development of strategies that ensure that pupils understand one process before moving on in their learning. In these lessons, the teachers' levels of questioning and discussion are challenging and take the pupils' learning forward well. There is very good use of a range of strategies that engage the interest of the pupils and the tasks given are interesting and appropriate. The oral and mental sessions are used well and engage the interest of the pupils and present appropriate challenges.
69. Although pupils' work is marked regularly and they are given appropriate praise, the marking does not consistently give sufficient direction on how to improve. The school has developed sound procedures to assess the achievements of its pupils, based on regular evaluations by class teachers and standardised tests. This information is now being used to plot the achievements of pupils and to set targets. However, the targets that are set with individual pupils are not used specifically enough to give them a clear picture of how they are progressing or of the next stage of their learning. The presentation of pupils' work is generally neat and well organised. The setting arrangements have gone some way to ensuring that teachers plan carefully for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils are further well supported within these sets, by the teaching assistants.
70. As at the time of the last inspection, there remain some shortcomings in the leadership and management of the subject. Although there are opportunities for monitoring lessons and teachers' planning, there remains a lack of rigour in ensuring a consistent and cohesive approach to the teaching of the planned curriculum of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, the co-ordinator has taken steps to encourage greater parental involvement in their children's learning through events such as "Maths Week" and has provided additional support for those pupils who find learning difficult. The subject leader has recently implemented strategies to evaluate standards and find out any common weaknesses but the effects of this have yet to be realised in improved standards at the end of Year 6.

Mathematics across the curriculum

71. The pupils make satisfactory use of their mathematical skills in subjects such as science where they use graphs, for example when Year 6 pupils plotted the results of their investigations in

science. There are also opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning in mathematics with the use of appropriate programs and, for example, when handling data.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of the subject is very good and is the major contributory factor to improving standards and high levels of achievement.
- Provision for the subject has greatly improved since the last inspection and pupils at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 are well placed to reach standards above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and this helps pupils to achieve well.
- Science makes a very positive contribution to pupils' understanding of a healthy lifestyle and many aspects of personal and social education.
- The broad and balanced curriculum is enriched to a very high level by a range of visits and very effective use of the local environment.

Commentary

72. The provision for science has improved since the previous inspection and this has contributed to high standards. All pupils, including higher-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, achieve well. The monitoring and tracking by the co-ordinator has made a significant contribution to improved standards and the level of challenging work for all pupils.
73. A significant number of pupils in the Year 2 classes attain high standards in their knowledge and understanding of the value of a balanced diet. During the inspection they identified many foods which form part of a balanced diet and designed healthy menus for each meal of the day. They classified a wide range of foods and the very good handling of these investigative activities developed their understanding that many foods contain more than one valuable element. Homework planned was highly relevant to their learning, involved a week's research and further enhanced their understanding of the value of a balanced diet.
74. In all lessons observed, the investigations were highly relevant and interesting. In Years 3 and 4 pupils further developed their concept of ensuring fair tests when they investigated the effect of different materials on the rate of water cooling. In Year 6 pupils investigated shadows and evaluated the effect of distance, size of object and angle of light on the size of the shadow. This work was taxing and imaginative but the attention to reasoning, reflection and evaluation resulted in excited and stimulated learners and high levels of achievement.
75. Pupils in Year 6 are already working at standards above the national average. The standards are consistently high because the school concentrates on pupils behaving as scientists and the planning of investigations. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 successfully build on the good practices established in Years 1 and 2. The careful links made with other subjects, especially literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, enhance pupils' scientific understanding. In all classes, pupils use accurate scientific terminology and understand that scientific investigations are written in formats that are different from other aspects of writing.
76. Teaching and learning are good overall and some very good and excellent teaching was observed during the inspection. The analysis of work reflects good teaching and very high quality investigations. Good relationships allow teachers and pupils to work in calm, purposeful atmospheres, and ensure time for reflection. Lessons are very well planned and allow opportunities for individual development. The pupils are managed very well and with apparent ease as a result of impeccable planning. In most lessons, the different approaches used made the speed of learning brisk and pupils very well motivated. Teachers questioned

pupils very skilfully and encouraged them to think of answers to questions, solve problems and demonstrate their understanding of complex issues.

77. The varied activities planned throughout the entire curriculum provide strong links between ideas and topics that make knowledge very secure through an exceedingly enriching variety of experiences. On a day-to-day basis assessment procedures are rigorously built into lessons in the planning stage and possible alternative strategies are used as the lesson progresses to engage pupils' imagination and to extend their thinking. Teachers use these processes to adapt their work within lessons and into the next stages of learning as they find out where pupils have understood work and where they need additional reinforcements.
78. The subject leader supports, encourages and monitors colleagues formally and informally. She monitors planning and rigorously reviews completed work and test results. The guidance and assessment systems are designed to help all teachers to increase their personal knowledge and confidence. One very effective indicator of this very successful input is the fact that, whatever the teachers' levels of personal skills in the subject or in teaching, the rigorous planning for each group of pupils ensures that they experience scientific investigations and achieve as well as others in their year groups.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Because of effective leadership, the provision has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The pupils are making good progress.
- The school makes good use of information and communication technology to support learning across the curriculum.
- The staff have a good level of expertise and are keen to make the most of innovations.
- Assessment procedures are at an early stage of development.

Commentary

79. Standards in ICT are above the expected levels in Year 2 and in Year 6. The pupils make good progress because lesson plans are detailed and well focused upon developing pupils' skills. The school's commitment to training all staff has led to increased confidence and a willingness to use ICT to support learning across the curriculum. The school's computer suite is timetabled regularly for each year group to ensure that the basic skills are taught systematically and this is working well. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language are well supported.
80. The quality of teaching is good. The development of the teachers' expertise and knowledge in this subject has been well managed and this has enabled the new resources to be used to good effect. For example, the staff make effective use of the interactive whiteboard installed outside the computer suite. The computer suite is carefully timetabled to enable pupils to have regular access. Furthermore, the staff are skilled in providing opportunities for the pupils to use ICT to support learning in a range of subjects. For example, pupils in Year 2 manipulate a range of photographic images to support their work in art. They use digital portraits of themselves and superimpose them on to other bodies in famous settings. Not only does this work enhance the pupils' technical skills but also it becomes the inspiration for creative writing in a subsequent lesson. These factors, together with the quality of their relationships, which enable the pupils to feel comfortable about sharing their mistakes, create a successful positive learning environment.

81. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. This is mainly due to the drive, vision and determination of the subject leader, who provides very good support for her colleagues. The school has a satisfactory number of computers for the number of pupils and most other resources are readily available. Although simple assessment procedures have been introduced to provide staff with clear information about each pupil's progress, the subject leader recognises that more use could be made of the data to pitch the work set more accurately for the different ability levels in each class. There is a clear and appropriate vision of how standards in ICT should be raised and how its use in other subjects will be achieved.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

82. The school is making good use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum. For example, the youngest pupils use computer programs for data handling. Both literacy and numeracy lessons are conducted in the computer suites on a regular basis to enable the pupils to process their work. Older pupils research information to support their science and geography projects. Throughout the school, good use is made of digital photography to record special events.

HUMANITIES

83. It was only possible to see a limited number of lessons in religious education, history and geography; therefore, it is not possible to make a secure judgement about the quality of teaching and learning. Inspection findings for these subjects are based on the small number of lessons seen, the analysis of pupils' work from the last academic year, teachers' planning and discussions with the subject co-ordinators and pupils.
84. Inspection evidence indicates that by the end of Years 2 and 6 standards in both **history** and **geography** are at the expected levels. Planning for both subjects is based on national guidance (QCA). However, as pupils are taught in mixed-age classes, this is organised over a two-year cycle to ensure coverage but the school has not identified how the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding will be developed systematically. This means that in some year groups the pupils miss essential elements to enable them to apply their earlier learning to new work. The school has recognised the need to improve this through developing more cohesive schemes of work.
85. In **geography**, pupils develop their skills in mapping by identifying the key feature of the immediate area on a local map. They appreciate that there are differences between developing countries and their own through the study of the Indian village of Chembakoli and describe some of the differences in daily life there and that of their own. Older pupils have extended their geographical knowledge and skills satisfactorily. They use their visit to a contrasting area well when studying the features of rivers and the water cycle. They develop their mapping skills when locating the countries of the United Kingdom and apply their knowledge of maps when identifying the weather conditions in different parts of the world. Earlier work indicates that Year 6 pupils have considered environmental issues in relation to the proposed extension of nearby Stansted Airport. As pupils are usually given the same tasks to complete, it is not possible to judge how well pupils of different abilities achieve.
86. Although it is not possible to judge the overall quality of teaching, it was good in the lesson seen. In this lesson the teacher enabled pupils to develop and apply their mapping skills when learning about weather patterns across the world. She encouraged pupils to use atlases appropriately and engaged them well in their learning through good discussion and questioning and tasks that were both challenging and maintained pupils' interest.
87. There are two co-ordinators, who have recently taken over their roles. They manage the subject satisfactorily and have clear ideas about improvements needed. Since the previous

inspection there has been training for teachers so that they have a more secure knowledge about the subject. Resources have improved and are now adequate to deliver the curriculum.

88. In **history**, by the age of seven, pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of events in previous times in their study of the Viking settlers. They use the local environment when making comparisons between buildings in the locality. They are beginning to make contrasts between present and past times when learning about major events such as the Great Fire of London. Older pupils broaden and deepen their knowledge and skills in studying history when they interpret sources of evidence in their studies of the Victorians and the Second World War, for example.
89. Although it is not possible to judge the overall quality of teaching, it was satisfactory in one lesson and good in the other. In the more effective lesson, the teacher developed pupils' understanding of the contrast between times past and present by using a good range of discussion and questioning and strategies that engaged the interest of the pupils. The young pupils were keen to apply their knowledge independently in the task given.
90. The co-ordinator who has recently taken over responsibility for the subject, manages it satisfactorily. She has had the opportunity to monitor planning and pupils' work from across the school. Since the last inspection the school has also developed opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in historical enquiry. However, earlier work suggests that the tasks given are usually the same for all ability levels.
91. Based on discussions with pupils, samples of previous work and teachers' planning, indications are that standards in **religious education** are in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and pupils achieve satisfactorily as they move through the school. As only one lesson was observed it is not possible to make a secure judgement about teaching.
92. By the end of Year 2 pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of Christian symbols and understand the special features of the Bible. They are beginning to relate the moral aspects of their studies to their own lives. They learn about the major Christian festivals and the festivals celebrated by other faiths such as Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 continue to make satisfactory gains in their knowledge of Christianity and other faiths, including Buddhism and are beginning to make comparisons between them. Their knowledge and learning of Christianity has been enriched through visits to a local church.
93. The co-ordinator manages the subject satisfactorily with regular monitoring of teachers' planning and pupils' work. Since the last inspection the school has improved its resources so that there are now sufficient to deliver the curriculum. There are currently no procedures for assessing pupils' work although this has been identified as an area for development within the next year.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

94. Although no lessons in **art and design** were observed, based on the wide range of pupils' work displayed and discussions with pupils, achievements throughout the school are judged to be very high and pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are well placed to exceed national expectations in this subject. Provision and standards have significantly improved since the last inspection when there was insufficient emphasis on artistic skills. Specific strengths of this subject are:
 - Pupils benefit from a highly enriching curriculum where they have the opportunities to use a wide range of media and work in the style of many famous artists.
 - Teaching, learning and achievement throughout the school are very good.
 - Pupils' work is very highly valued and well displayed.

- The planned curriculum ensures that there is very good progression in the development of pupils' artistic and design skills.
95. Pupils' artistic skills develop very well in all aspects of the subject as they progress through the school. They incorporate art from a range of cultures and different historical periods into their work. They build on a well-structured range of skills and consequently are very well motivated and confident when experimenting with new techniques. The analysis of the wide range of work displayed and pupils' sketch books, together with discussions with pupils, provide further evidence of very high levels of motivation and progression in each artistic skill.
 96. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use a wide range of techniques and media including pencils, crayons, paint and fabric. Their observational and design skills develop very well over the two years.
 97. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 acquire very high standards in the investigative aspects of art. They explore pattern and replicate the regular patterns of different fabrics using pencils of varying thicknesses. Other outstanding work includes observational drawing of Henry Moore sculptures showing artistic skills well above those expected for pupils of this age; these pupils have developed a keen awareness of texture, tone and shape and use pencils skilfully to achieve the planned effects. Their use of paints and crayons for an extremely wide range of creative elements contributes to very high quality finished work.
 98. The very good leadership and management of the subject contribute to the very high profile of art in the school. Pupils are greatly influenced by visits to the National Gallery and other art galleries. They discuss the work of a wide range of artists with levels of maturity and understanding well above those expected of pupils of this age. They have studied the impact of art on society, especially the designs and posters which typify aspects of life during the Second World War. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 99. The very good challenges for gifted and talented pupils and the support for those with special educational needs contribute to their very high levels of achievement.
 100. No lessons were observed in **music** and therefore no judgements were made on teaching, learning or standards. Inspectors looked at the planning documentation and discussed the subject with teachers and pupils. Particular strengths for this subject are:
 - Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve high standards in singing.
 - Pupils participate in performances at school, in partnership with other schools, in the community and at charity events.
 101. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 perform a range of songs from different cultures. They sing enthusiastically, with good articulation, accurate pitch and good feel for the styles of the songs. They sing in two parts very confidently. The curriculum leader makes very effective use of a music specialist, who works with every year group and ensures that the pupils throughout the school have good opportunities to perform for a range of audiences. She organises the choir and instrumental tuition for the pupils.
 102. As no lessons in **physical education** were observed during the inspection and the hall was out of use, there is insufficient evidence from which to make a judgement on teaching, learning and standards. No comparisons have been made with the previous inspection.
 103. From the analysis of curricular planning, lesson plans and discussions with the subject co-ordinator and pupils, all pupils benefit from a broad, balanced and enriching curriculum. Pupils are enthusiastic about the subject and the wide range of extra-curricular activities

enhances pupils' skills in the subject and their social and moral development. The headteacher and staff provide very good opportunities for pupils to participate in outdoor and energetic activities during the annual residential visits. The subject plan makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of the value of a healthy lifestyle.

Design and technology

Provision in this subject is **very good** and has significantly improved since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management by the co-ordinator are very good and ensure a consistency of approach and progression of skills.
- The broad, balanced and enriching curriculum ensures a progression of key skills.
- Teaching and learning are good and contribute to high standards.
- Teachers ensure that pupils of different abilities achieve at the same high levels.

Commentary

104. Pupils throughout the school achieve well in all aspects of the subject. As a result of a well-planned progression of skills and challenges for all pupils, the majority are well placed to achieve standards above national expectations by the end of the year.
105. The quality of work seen in the lessons observed and the analysis of work was good with some very good features. Designs in sketch books are marked and annotated well and the quality of completed work on display indicates that all teachers work towards agreed high standards. Work is linked to a purpose and practical ideas are carried through very well. The items are designed to meet a specific need and also effectively support work in other subjects. The objects made have to be functional and durable and very carefully finished. During the processes of designing and making, ideas are shared and evaluated. Those that prove to be unsuitable are modified until they are of an acceptable standard. The work on display shows very productive links with history, mathematics, literacy and art and design.
106. The co-ordinator has ensured that pupils learn a progression of key skills and develop creative thinking as they progress through the school. This was in evidence in the displays of:
- food technology where pupils evaluated a wide variety of breads from different cultures and countries; they then designed and made a range of biscuits and evaluated them;
 - pupils' designs and constructions of books with moving parts; these required precision in measurement and cutting and good design skills;
 - the design, construction and evaluation of a selection of fairground rides; this work very successfully integrated ICT skills, where pupils used a digital camera, scientific skills where they incorporated levers and cams and their knowledge and accurate use of a wide range of technical and scientific vocabulary;
 - the evaluation, pattern designs and cutting in the initial stages of making slippers.
107. Pupils were keen to explain how they developed their earliest ideas through to completion and were proud of their achievements. It was clear that, whilst the teachers offered advice and suggestions, pupils' research and ideas led the work to successful completion. The ways in which the subject is taught contribute to pupils' collaborative skills and their scientific understanding. There are plans for a food technology room but, at present, teachers and pupils make very effective use of the available resources and space.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths

- The provision for the children in the Foundation Stage establishes a very good basis for further learning.
- There is a strong sense of school community.
- There are very good relationships.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others.

Commentary

108. Children in the Foundation Stage make a very good start to their learning. The children are very secure and happy and quickly form very good relationships with adults and others in the school.
109. Adults provide a secure and happy environment where all are valued. Pupils learn to respect each other and accept that some pupils need special support. Teaching assistants, midday supervisors and all of the adults working in the school treat pupils with respect and set a very good example, to which the pupils respond. Each week the teachers organise class discussions to enable the pupils to deal with emotions, feelings and their response to certain situations such as feeling friendless. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to work with others. For example, representatives from each class in Years 3 to 6 take part in the school council and pupils in Years 5 and 6 in particular have many responsibilities around the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	2
Attendance	3
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	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
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	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
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	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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