

INSPECTION REPORT

Arnett Hills Junior and Infant School

Rickmansworth

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117289

Headteacher: Miss Traci Ali

Lead inspector: Glynn Storer

Dates of inspection: 27th to 30th June 2005

Inspection number: 272737

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	164
School address:	Berry Lane Rickmansworth Hertfordshire
Postcode:	WD3 4BT
Telephone number:	01923 720507
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Anne Peat
Date of previous inspection:	6 th December 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Arnett Hills Primary School is situated on the edge of Rickmansworth. Principally it serves neighbouring residential areas, although pupils come from a wide variety of social settings in the surrounding area. With 164 pupils on the school roll, this school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupil numbers have declined since the last inspection but are now rising strongly. During the last school year, the proportion of pupils (about 5.3 per cent) known to be eligible for free school meals was below the national average. However, there is some unemployment in the area and a number of families experience hardship. Pupils' attainments on entry to the school are about average, although a number of pupils face difficulties in their learning. There are 29 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs and two pupils who need support from specialist teachers and trained assistants¹. The number of pupils who have special educational needs is about average for a school of this size. Around one in every ten pupils comes from an ethnic minority background but only two pupils speak English as an additional language. Pupil mobility is quite high. In the last Year 6 class, a quarter of all pupils joined the school after the normal date of entry. During the last school year, one teacher has left the school and two have been appointed. The school was granted a Schools Achievement Award in 2002.

¹ There are currently two pupils who are subject to Statements of Special Educational Need and who require this level of support.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19830	Glynn Storer	Lead inspector	Science Information and communication technology French Physical education Citizenship
9874	Malcolm Milwain	Lay inspector	
20646	Margaret Palmer	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Music
19120	Derek Pattinson	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Geography History Religious education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Arnett Hills Primary is a good school. By the time they leave the school, pupils' attainments exceed the nationally expected standards² for 11-year-olds in many subjects because teaching is good or very good in a high proportion of lessons. The headteacher provides very good leadership. Together with staff and governors, she is striving for excellence in many aspects of the work of the school. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils of all abilities make very good progress during their time in the school.
- In Years 1 and 2, standards in science are not high enough because higher attaining pupils are underachieving.
- Consistently good teaching stimulates in pupils a strong desire to learn.
- Pupils trust and respect their teachers and other staff and so respond very well to them.
- Relationships between pupils and levels of racial harmony are excellent.
- Formal arrangements for personal, social, health education and citizenship are unsatisfactory.
- The headteacher provides very effective leadership.
- The school is not using all of its funds effectively to benefit current pupils.
- The outdoor area for children in the reception class is inadequate.
- The school works in successful partnership with parents and with the wider community.

Improvement since the last inspection has been **very good**. The school has dealt successfully with issues arising out of its last inspection. Importantly, standards are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection because leadership and management are much more effective and teaching and learning have improved significantly.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 6 results

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

*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*

Most pupils achieve **very well**. When children enter the school most perform at an average level for their age although, for many, levels of language development and aspects of personal, social and emotional development are below average. However, they make good progress in reception and almost all achieve the early learning goals³.

In the 2004 national assessments for seven-year-olds, results in reading and writing were above the national average and in mathematics they were average. Results in science were below average. In reading and mathematics the 2004 results were lower than those of 2003 and in all core subjects standards were below those in similar schools. This dip in standards does not indicate a decline in pupils' learning or achievement. The small number of pupils in the 2004 Year 2 group, four (one third) of whom had special educational needs, distorted the 2004 results. In relation to their attainment on entry and to the difficulties that some pupils faced, virtually all pupils in the Year 2 class of 2004 achieved well and made good progress. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils currently in Year 2 are achieving well in reading and writing and are on course for above average standards. In mathematics, standards are broadly average and pupils' achievements are

² At the end of Year 6, the expected level is National Curriculum Level 4. Pupils who achieve Level 5 exceed national expectations.

³ Early learning goals are the standards that children are expected to reach by the end of their reception year.

satisfactory. However, standards in science have declined further and are unsatisfactory because the higher attaining pupils are underachieving. Compared with all schools and with similar schools, too few pupils attain the above average standard.

In the 2004 tests for 11-year-olds, results in English, mathematics and science were well above average. Taken together, these results were also well above the average for similar schools. Pupils in the current Year 6 are on course for above average standards in English and mathematics and well above average standards in science. This represents very good achievement from the standards that they attained at the end of Year 2 in 2001. Standards also exceed expectations in religious education, information and communication technology (ICT) and music. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school. Pupils from different backgrounds make similar progress and boys and girls do equally well.

Pupils achieve **good** standards in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are reflective, sensitive to the needs of others and contribute very well to the school as a community. They are keen to learn and rise to the challenge to do their best. Provision for moral development is very effective. Curriculum topics promote cultural awareness effectively and the school's fundamental values prepare pupils very well for life in a multi-ethnic society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **good** quality of education. Teaching and learning are good. There are regular examples of very good teaching throughout the school and of excellent teaching in Years 5 and 6. Teaching is stimulating and engages pupils' interest. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good and teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning, especially where pupils have special educational needs. The school enriches its curriculum with a good range of visits, out of hours activities and special events that bring learning to life and motivate pupils. However, arrangements for personal, social, health education and citizenship are unsatisfactory. Current practice is inconsistent and does not ensure that pupils receive a coherent and progressive programme of work. Resources and facilities are generally satisfactory, although the outdoor area for children in the reception class is inadequate for promoting active learning and physical development. Standards of care are good and induction arrangements are effective.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The headteacher leads the school very well. She successfully promotes a strong sense of purpose and very good levels of teamwork amongst staff. She receives good support from senior staff and governors, whose contribution has improved because their levels of involvement have increased. The headteacher and deputy are very rigorous in analysing performance data and in monitoring standards and quality. Governors use the outcomes of monitoring effectively to evaluate the school and to plan for improvement. However, the surplus on the school's budget, which has built up over several years, is unacceptably high because the school is not using all of its funds effectively to benefit current pupils.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are very well satisfied with the school. Parents believe that the school has improved significantly in recent years and they give generous support, both at school and in the home. In the parents' questionnaire, they expressed strong approval for every aspect of the school's work. Pupils are most happy that there are adults to turn to if they are hurt or worried.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise standards in science by the end of Year 2;
- improve provision for personal, social, health education and citizenship;
- improve outdoor facilities and resources for children in the reception class;
- ensure that the school's budget is used effectively for the benefit of current pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Children in the Foundation Stage⁴ make **good** progress. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading and writing are **above average** and in mathematics standards are **average**. By the end of Year 6, standards in English and mathematics are **above average** and standards in science are **well above average**. Pupils **exceed** the expected standards for their age in several other subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of the Foundation Stage, almost all children attain the early learning goals.
- In reading and writing, pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2.
- Standards in science are not high enough by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils in Year 6 are on course to improve considerably on the standards they achieved at the end of Year 2.
- Pupils exceed the expected standards for their age in ICT, music and religious education.

Commentary

1. When children enter the reception class most have levels of knowledge, understanding and skills that are average for their age although, for many, aspects of language development and of personal, social and emotional development are below average. They make good progress and most attain the early learning goals by the end of their reception year. Because personal and social development, along with communication, language and literacy, forms an important focus for work in the reception class, children achieve well and are well prepared for the next stages of their education.

Key Stage 1⁵

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores⁶ in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.5 (17.1)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.7 (15.7)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.2 (17.7)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 12 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Key Stage 2

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.5 (30.1)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	30.0 (28.8)	27.0 (26.8)
science	30.6 (30.4)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 20 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. In the national assessments for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2004, results in reading and writing were above the national average and in mathematics they were average. In reading and mathematics the 2004 results were lower than those of 2003 and in all core subjects standards were below those in similar schools. However, these comparisons do not do justice to pupils' actual achievements. This apparent dip in standards does not indicate a decline in the quality of pupils' learning because the small number of pupils in the 2004 Year 2 group, four (one

⁴ The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and ends at the end of the reception class year. It is a distinct stage, preparing children for later schooling, and is based on six areas of learning. These mainly refer to communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and personal and social development, but also include knowledge and understanding of the world and physical and creative development.

⁵ Key Stage 1 is the phase of pupils' education which includes National Curriculum Years 1 and 2. Key Stage 2 covers National Curriculum Years 3 to 6.

⁶ Average point scores are a statistical method for comparing a school's performance in a single core subject or in all core subjects with the performance of all schools or of similar schools. The school's scores are derived from the levels that pupils in Years 2 and 6 achieve in the annual National Curriculum tests.

third) of whom had special educational needs, distorted the 2004 results. In relation to their attainment on entry and to the difficulties that some pupils faced, the majority of pupils in the Year 2 class of 2004 achieved well and made good progress. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils currently in Year 2 are achieving well in reading and writing and are on course for above average standards. In mathematics, standards are broadly average and pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

3. Results in science were below average in 2004 and inspection evidence indicates that standards have declined further. Current standards in science are unsatisfactory because higher attaining pupils are underachieving. Compared with all schools and with similar schools, too few pupils attain the above average standard.
4. In the 2004 tests for pupils at the end of Year 6, results in English, mathematics and science were well above average. Taken together, these results were also well above the average for similar schools. Current standards in Year 6 are above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. These standards represent very good achievement from the below and well below average standards that they attained at the end of Year 2 in 2001.
5. Pupils also exceed the expected standards for their age in ICT, music and religious education. There was insufficient evidence to evaluate standards in other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school. Pupils from different backgrounds make similar progress and boys and girls do equally well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Most pupils have **very good** attitudes to school and behave **very well**. Rates of attendance are **very good** and pupils' punctuality is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the reception class settle to school routines and rapidly grow in confidence.
- Pupils have very good attitudes and are keen to do well.
- Relationships and levels of racial harmony are excellent.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- Attendance rates are very high.

Commentary

6. Children's personal development is given a high priority in the reception class. When they first come to school, many children are reluctant to take part in activities unless adults directly supervise them. However, the teacher and teaching assistants ensure that each child feels included and, as a result, they quickly settle into school life. All boys and girls grow in confidence and soon begin to approach activities and daily routines with assurance. Children are keen to participate and work hard because they are encouraged to see learning as fun.
7. The pupils' questionnaire indicated that most pupils like their school. Even though they have to work hard, they feel that teachers show them how to make their work better, treat them fairly and listen to their ideas. They particularly like the fact that there are trusted adults to turn to if they are worried. Inspection evidence supports these views. Consequently, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good, they are keen to learn and try hard. These positive attitudes improve pupils' learning and progress.
8. Relationships are excellent. Pupils work and play happily in groups that are mixed in terms of race, gender and age. Pupils who are not from the majority ethnic background are fully included in games and friendship groups. Pupils confirm that they do not suffer bullying, racial abuse or harassment at school. Pupils also treat each other with respect. Conversations between pupils or between pupils and staff are relaxed yet courteous. Staff seldom shout or

speak aggressively to pupils and most pupils follow their very good lead. Pupils trust and respect their teachers and other staff and respond very well to them.

9. Pupils behave very well because teachers and supervisory staff insist on high standards of behaviour. They use rewards and sanctions consistently and take the time to explain why a particular action is unkind or wrong. Consequently, most pupils understand the consequences of their actions. No pupils have been excluded during the last school year.
10. The school manages to promote pupils' personal development successfully, even though most current approaches are informal and cross-curricular. Pupils do not have lessons in personal, social, health education and citizenship every week. This lack of formal provision is unsatisfactory because it does not ensure that pupils receive a coherent and progressive programme of work. However, because the school has a very strong and positive ethos and a very well defined value system, pupils do achieve good standards in relation to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are reflective and are sensitive to each other's feelings and to things of beauty. They are motivated by music, express awe at the wonders of nature and enjoy their learning. Arrangements that foster social and cultural development are particularly effective. Pupils respect one another and act on their understanding of what is right and wrong. Subjects such as French, geography, history, religious education and science make a satisfactory contribution to this area of the work of the school and special events, such as democracy day and art week, add to the quality of pupils' learning and experience. Pupils regularly learn about the lives and beliefs of people from other cultures and religions. They begin to value cultural diversity because topics in art draw on both western and non-western cultural traditions. Such topics prepare pupils well for life in a multi-ethnic society.

Attendance

11. Attendance is very good. The overall attendance rate for the school is well above the national median and is higher than it was at the time of the previous inspection. Registers are marked efficiently at the start of each session and the results are recorded electronically. As a result the school and the education welfare officer are able to monitor patterns of absences and to take prompt action in the event of regular or unexplained absence. Parents make a very good effort to ensure that most pupils come to school regularly and punctually.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	3.6	School data:	0.3
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.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **good** education for its pupils. The overall quality of teaching and learning is **good**. Standards of care are **good** and partnerships with parents, the community and other schools are **effective**.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning have improved since the school's previous inspection.
- Teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently good.
- Teachers' very good knowledge of the subjects that they teach helps them to plan lessons which engage pupils' interest and motivate them to learn.
- Teachers manage pupils very effectively and insist on high standards of behaviour.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning.

- Teachers assess pupils very thoroughly but do not always use assessment information to plan work that builds on pupils' prior learning.

Commentary

12. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teaching is good overall and there were examples of very good teaching in all phases of the school. Examples of excellent teaching were observed towards the upper end of Key Stage 2. There was only one unsatisfactory lesson during the inspection.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (9%)	10 (31%)	14 (44%)	4 (13%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

13. The reception class teacher has a good understanding of how young children learn and of the Foundation Stage curriculum. This enables her to plan a good range of activities that very successfully engages and stimulates the children's desire to learn. There is a clear focus on the development of children's personal, social, emotional and communication skills. As a result, the children rapidly gain in confidence and independence and make a happy and secure start to their school life.
14. Teachers' secure subject knowledge provides a good basis for carefully planned and structured lessons. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn in the course of sessions and share this with pupils so that almost all lessons are purposeful. Most teaching engages pupils' interest. This is most effective where teachers have particular expertise, for example in music throughout the school and in ICT and literacy in upper Key Stage 2. Pupils achieve very well in these lessons because teaching is lively, stimulating, challenging and authoritative.
15. All teachers manage pupils very effectively, insisting on very good standards of behaviour and establishing classroom routines that promote effective learning. They establish very good relationships with pupils that very successfully motivate pupils and make them very keen to participate and to apply themselves to their tasks with interest. The quality of pupils' learning is good and often very good because it is boosted by their very good attitudes to their work.
16. Staff are committed to ensuring that all pupils are included and have access to all that the school has to offer. Teachers thoughtfully plan the role of teaching assistants so that they support the work of teachers effectively and contribute significantly to pupils' learning. Notably, support staff ensure that pupils with special educational needs receive the support and encouragement that they need to overcome their difficulties and make progress alongside others in the class.
17. There are very good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and evaluating their progress. In the Foundation Stage, the teacher and teaching assistants assess children's skills thoroughly and create a range of records. This information is used effectively in identifying individual children's development and learning needs and in planning group activities in the reception class. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the school conducts the annual statutory National Curriculum tests and supplements them with a well-planned programme of additional assessments. The school maintains detailed records and uses this information effectively to set targets, track pupils' progress and direct additional support to meet the needs of specific groups of pupils. Assessment and recording procedures for pupils with special educational needs are good and enable pupils to make good progress towards the targets on their individual education plans.
18. In almost all lessons, teachers ask carefully targeted questions that successfully check pupils' understanding. In addition, teachers regularly mark pupils' work and assess their progress. The quality of this on-going dialogue ensures that, on most occasions, teachers meet the needs of pupils with different capabilities. This is particularly effective in Key Stage 2, where marking very

successfully involves pupils and promotes their understanding of how well they are learning and how they can improve. However, although teachers use their understanding of pupils' abilities to set tasks that are at a generally challenging level for most pupils, they do not always plan tasks that closely meet the needs of all pupils of different abilities. For example, the lack of tasks specifically aimed at higher attaining pupils is a contributory factor to underachievement on the part of higher attaining pupils in science in Key Stage 1.

The curriculum

The school provides a **good** curriculum and there are **good** opportunities for curriculum enrichment. Accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum has improved considerably since the previous inspection.
 - Learning opportunities are wide and varied and inspire pupils with the desire to learn.
 - Formal arrangements for promoting pupils' personal development are unsatisfactory.
 - The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is good.
 - There are some shortcomings in the school's facilities.
19. The curriculum is effectively broad and balanced and meets the needs of all pupils. The curriculum encompasses all subjects of the National Curriculum as well as religious education and aspects of personal, social and health education. There are clear frameworks for developing knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects and teachers ensure that most work is matched to pupils' learning and developmental needs. This represents a significant improvement on the findings of the last inspection when provision for religious education and ICT was unsatisfactory. Teachers give English, mathematics, science, religious education and information technology good emphasis, but have not allowed this to take a toll on other subjects, which are also well represented. Consequently, pupils steadily build on their understanding in all subjects.
20. The school provides many interesting after school clubs, residential and day visits, visitors and special events to enrich the curriculum. Outings to places of interest such as the Imperial War Museum, St. Peter's Church and Willows Farm and a residential outdoor education visit for older pupils bring learning to life. Themed events such as *Book Week* and *Democracy Day* and visiting authors and musicians motivate and inspire pupils. Popular after school clubs, such as football, French, aerobics, homework and computer clubs, appeal to many pupils and extend their interests. In addition, developing links between subjects are making pupils' learning more relevant. Teachers use ICT effectively to support learning in other subjects. Curriculum leadership is very effective and the job of improving the curriculum is a high priority.
21. This is an inclusive school. The headteacher monitors pupils' performance carefully to ensure that teaching meets the needs of all pupils. Consequently, pupils from different backgrounds make similar progress and boys and girls do equally well. Induction procedures are good and, where necessary, the school provides additional support, for example to pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs. Well-trained support staff are used very effectively to help them learn. Provision for the most vulnerable pupils is now good, which represents a considerable improvement on the unsatisfactory judgement from the last inspection.
22. The current curriculum does not give enough emphasis to pupils' personal development. Although assemblies contribute to aspects of personal development and recent guidance indicates where teachers can exploit opportunities presented by other subjects, current practice is inconsistent and does not ensure that pupils receive a coherent and progressive programme. Furthermore, few teachers build this area of pupils' learning and development into their weekly timetables, with the result that pupils do not get enough opportunities to consider and discuss issues that are important to them.

23. The school's accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Classrooms are large and spacious enough for the numbers of pupils who use them and there are sufficient resources to meet the requirements of the curriculum. The school uses the available space quite well and the creation of an ICT suite, in what was formerly a shared area, has improved facilities for that subject. However, there is no room for a library and storage space for essential resources is at a premium. The most serious shortcoming is that the outdoor area for reception pupils is inadequate. It is far too small for the number of children who use it and limits active learning and opportunities for physical development.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes **good** provision for the care and welfare of its pupils. Pupils receive **very good** guidance and support.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are effective arrangements for the induction of children into the reception class.
- There are good procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' health and safety.
- Relationships between the staff and the pupils are very good.
- Pupils receive well-informed guidance based on teachers' monitoring of their progress.

Commentary

24. There are good induction procedures for children entering the reception class. Visits to the school give prospective parents an opportunity to meet the reception year staff and to discuss any concerns that they may have. Their children spend a morning in the reception class and this allows them to become familiar with their new surroundings. As a result children entering the Foundation Stage are well prepared for learning.

25. There are good systems for child protection. All staff, including the lunchtime supervisors, are aware of the relevant guidelines to be followed and are clear about how they should respond if issues arise. Health and safety procedures are thorough and an independent adviser carries out an annual health and safety audit. Staff undertake risk assessments for both on- and off-site activities and, as a result, levels of supervision, for example when pupils walk to their weekly swimming lesson, are very good.

26. Pupils and staff have a very good relationship with each other, which is evident in the very pleasant atmosphere in school. More importantly, almost all pupils believe that there are trusted adults to turn to if they are worried or upset. The majority of pupils hold very positive views about the school. They feel that teachers listen to their ideas and treat them fairly. A school council allows pupils to make their views known and pupils have responded to these arrangements with enthusiasm. Where appropriate, the school responds to pupils' views and ideas. As a result, pupils feel that they have been instrumental in securing improvements, for example to the school's toilet facilities.

27. There is a good system for assessing and recording pupils' academic progress and teachers make very good use of this information when setting pupils' individual targets for improvement. As a result, pupils receive well-informed support and guidance that enable them to achieve well and pupils with special educational needs receive good support. Other than in the reception class, there is no systematic recording of pupils' personal development. However, teachers' informal monitoring and very good levels of pastoral care ensure that they are aware of pupils' levels of personal development and are in a position to give effective advice and guidance when the need arises.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **good** relationships with parents, the local community and with other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have confidence in the school and are very pleased with the quality of education that it provides.
- Information to parents is good, although annual progress reports do not always identify pupils as individuals.
- Links with other schools contribute effectively to staff training and curriculum development.
- Involvement in the local community promotes pupils' understanding of citizenship.

Commentary

28. The results of the pre-inspection questionnaire, together with the comments made at the parents' meeting, show that the majority of parents are very pleased with the quality of education that the school provides. They have confidence in the school because it welcomes parents and maintains a genuine 'open door' policy. In addition to the formal consultation procedures, staff are always available after school each day to talk to parents. Consequently, parents feel comfortable approaching the school with concerns or suggestions.

29. The school provides a good level of information for parents. Through the school prospectus, the governors' annual report to parents and regular newsletters, parents are kept up to date about events in school. Reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory. They comply with current requirements. However, they are often too generalised and do not clearly differentiate between individual pupils. Nevertheless, in questionnaires and at the parents' meeting the majority of parents said that they felt well informed about their children's progress. This is because follow-up procedures are good. Parents are encouraged to discuss their child's report informally with the teacher and parents are able to make written comments on the reports. There are also two parents' consultation evenings each year when parents have a formal opportunity to discuss their child's progress with the teachers. These arrangements work well and ensure that parents are able to be fully involved in their children's education.

30. The school has a close working relationship with other local primary schools through the Primary Learning Network. This initiative will enable staff to exchange ideas and teaching experience and, in doing so, support on-going professional development and training effectively. The network also contributes to curriculum development through additional funding to support developments in mathematics and ICT. The school also maintains strong links with local nurseries and, as a result, the majority of children entering the reception year are well prepared for the start of their formal education. There are satisfactory arrangements in place for the transfer of pupils to secondary school.

31. The school has good links with the local community through participation in a range of activities, such as the Rickmansworth Carnival and the Primary Schools Music Festival, and local health professionals and community police officers contribute to the teaching programme. The school invites members of the community to the Christmas production and pupils distribute produce from the Harvest Festival to the elderly. These activities contribute to pupils' social development and improve their understanding of citizenship.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very good leadership.
- The senior management team and subject leaders provide good leadership.
- There are very good arrangements for monitoring standards and quality and planning for school improvement is comprehensive and effective.
- The governing body is involved in checking aspects of the school's work and in shaping the school's direction.
- Aspects of financial management are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

32. The headteacher provides strong, purposeful, yet supportive leadership that has had a very beneficial impact on most areas of the school's work. She strives for excellence and high standards and has a clear view of the way to achieve them. She has communicated her vision of the way ahead and established a rigorous agenda so that all who are involved in the school's development know what must be done to secure improvement. Because of her high aspirations and effective delegation, the school's improvement since its last inspection has been very good. Through her drive and determination to move the school forward, she has gained the respect of pupils, parents and staff.
33. The senior management team is effective because its members have clear roles and responsibilities and they are taking an increasingly important role in school development. Led by the deputy headteacher they are leading the drive to raise standards, often through the example they set to others. For example, both the headteacher and deputy headteachers were observed during the inspection and their teaching of English deemed to be excellent. Subject leaders and the Inclusion co-ordinator are being empowered, through training and support, to lead the implementation of essential improvements. They are given the time to monitor thoroughly and, as a result, are already very effective in finding out what works well, what needs to be done and how best to bring about improvement.
34. Governors and senior staff take a rigorous approach to all aspects of monitoring and, as a result, the school's arrangements for evaluating its own performance are very good. Pupils' results in the national tests are analysed carefully, weaknesses are identified and strategies introduced to overcome them. For example, weaknesses in writing have been successfully addressed by using a range of strategies, including highly effective marking, and by ensuring that writing is given good emphasis in all years. The headteacher tracks pupils' progress as they move through the school and uses the information very effectively to set individual and year group targets for the raising of standards. The setting of individual targets by teachers also gives pupils greater ownership of their learning and makes them part of the drive to raise standards. Consequently, planning for school improvement is comprehensive and provides a clear, measurable agenda for improving achievement, teaching and learning. It is used well to allocate funding to priorities for school improvement and is linked closely to the planned provision of training of teachers because arrangements for managing the performance of staff are thoroughly embedded in the school's work.
35. The governing body provides good support for the headteacher and is thorough in discharging its statutory duties. The governing body is increasingly effective in shaping the school's future direction because links between governors and subject leaders provide governors with an informed overview of what the school does well and what it needs to improve. Governors know many of the school's strengths and weaknesses because they gather first hand information about aspects of the school's work, are fully involved in planning for improvement and hold the school to account for what it achieves.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure		Balances (£)	
Total income	517,279	Balance from previous year	73,062
Total expenditure	494,080	Balance carried forward to the next	96,261
Expenditure per pupil	2,409		

36. Approaches to financial management are generally thorough and administrative staff work hard to ensure that the school runs smoothly and that day-to-day financial management does not impinge on teaching and learning. Careful monitoring and prudent approaches to expenditure have insured that the school has met its financial commitments and continued to raise standards, despite a period of falling rolls and increased financial uncertainty. That period is now almost over because recent improvements have raised the school's standing in the community to the extent that the school is now fully subscribed in most classes. However, habits of prudence have continued to a point at which the school has a very high budget surplus and is, therefore, not making the most of the money it has. This aspect of financial management is unsatisfactory because it is the governing body's responsibility to ensure that the majority of the school's funds are spent for the benefit of existing pupils and there are no specific plans for spending an increasingly large budget surplus. Nevertheless, in relation to its social and educational circumstances, to the very good standards that pupils achieve by the end of Year 6 and, in particular, to the very good rate of improvement since its last inspection, the school provides good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good**. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

37. Children enter the reception class with a very wide range of abilities. However, whilst their skills are average overall, a significant proportion has limited social and communication skills. Notably, many children start school with poor listening skills. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage because the teaching is good and the children are actively involved in stimulating activities that successfully extend their learning. The teacher and teaching assistants carefully assess what individuals know, understand and can do. The teacher uses this information to identify and plan the next steps in children's learning and development. As a result, almost all children are on course to attain or exceed the early learning goals for children of their age. The teacher and teaching assistants work effectively together to promote children's achievement.

Personal, social and emotional development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes good arrangements for introducing children to school life.
- The teacher and teaching assistants value each child's efforts and effectively boost their self-esteem.
- Children become confident, well-motivated learners.
- Children co-operate well with the staff and with each other.

Commentary

38. The promotion of children's personal development is given a high priority from the start. The teacher and teaching assistants very successfully ensure that each child feels included so that they settle securely into the reception class. Parents and carers meet the class teacher, headteacher and governor and parent representatives and children make visits to the reception classroom before they start school. These arrangements successfully promote a smooth transition into school. The teacher ensures that the reception class is welcoming and classroom systems are firmly established. Staff sensitively meet the needs of those children with special educational needs. As a result, all boys and girls grow in assurance in their approach to activities and daily routines.

39. On entry, many children are reluctant to undertake activities without direct adult intervention. The quality of teaching is very good and the teacher thoughtfully plans topics that very effectively extend children's self-knowledge and awareness of others. In addition the classroom is organised to promote children's independent and collaborative working. Consequently, children make rapid progress, achievement in this area of learning is very good and children reach a high standard by the end of their reception year. They have regular opportunities to make decisions and select activities independently and also work with others co-operatively. Children are keen to participate and work hard because they are encouraged to see learning as fun.

40. The teacher has very high expectations of children's behaviour. She consistently reinforces the classroom standards and the children make very good progress in learning what is expected of them in school. They respond promptly to instructions and are beginning to clear away equipment efficiently. They behave very sensibly in the classrooms and outdoors. They handle books and equipment carefully.

Communication, language and literacy

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children regularly engage in activities that very effectively promote their speaking and listening skills.
- The teacher successfully promotes children's early reading and writing skills.

Commentary

41. The quality of teaching is good. The teacher plans regular opportunities for children to talk purposefully to adults and each other. For example, during Circle Time⁷ activities, children share their thoughts about someone who is special to them. These arrangements very successfully motivate children's interactions and boost their confidence in communicating in groups. The teacher asks well-directed questions, ensuring that all children are involved. This very successfully promotes children's concentration and extends their speaking and listening skills. As a result, children make very good progress and are on course to reach or exceed the standards expected for their age.

42. The teacher introduces a varied range of well-structured early reading and writing activities that successfully engage children's interest. She promotes children's involvement with actions and rhymes, so that children make satisfactory progress in associating letters and sounds. They enjoy sharing a varied range of stories and recognising familiar words. They regularly take books to share at home. The teacher plans imaginative formal and informal activities to motivate children's interest in writing. Opportunities to promote children's emergent writing skills are incorporated into activities around the classroom and children also have regular opportunities to work with the teacher and express their ideas in writing. The children try hard and make satisfactory progress so that by the end of their reception year almost all children attain the early learning goals and some exceed them.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher plans a good range of stimulating activities that successfully promote children's skills in counting, recognising and calculating numbers.

Commentary

43. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is good. Children develop a secure sense of number, order and sequence through regular counting routines. In addition, the teacher carefully plans practical activities that promote children's understanding of number, shape and the language of mathematics through practical activities. For example, children extend their knowledge of shapes by taking a 'shape walk' around the school. They measure ingredients when they make gingerbread men and pancakes. Staff also take every opportunity to reinforce counting so that children become familiar and confident with numbers. The teacher and teaching assistants have high expectations of children's application and in the course of activities they consistently check and build on individual children's mathematical language and skills. Children achieve well and almost all reach the early learning goals, with a significant number achieving counting skills above those expected for their age.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Provision in this area of learning is **good**.

⁷ Circle Time – when pupils sit together and share thoughts and feelings or talk about things that are important to or concern them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children acquire a secure knowledge and understanding of the world through well planned practical activities and topics.

Commentary

44. The quality of teaching is good so that children achieve well and are on course to attain or exceed the early learning goals by the end of their reception year. They discover the properties of materials, including sand, water and playdough, by handling and working with them. The teacher carefully plans activities that successfully stimulate children's curiosity and boost their investigative skills, as when they collect and examine leaves and conkers. They learn about living things when they sow seeds and observe the plants as they grow. Their visit to a farm very successfully extends children's experience and learning.
45. Children have regular opportunities to gain competence with computers and IT resources. They use a satisfactory range of simple computer programs in their classroom and in the computer suite and confidently operate equipment, including a tape recorder, floor robot and digital camera, in the course of their activities.

Physical development

46. It was not possible to make an overall judgement about provision or children's achievement, but planning, documentation and limited observation indicate that children achieve well in this area of learning. Children move safely and independently in and around the classroom and outdoor area. Within the classroom there is a satisfactory range of equipment such as jigsaws, construction materials and simple tools, including scissors, to promote children's manipulative skills. The teacher also plans regular physical education lessons in the school hall, when children have a good range of opportunities to develop spatial awareness as well as extending their climbing and balancing skills.
47. However, although children have ready access to a secure, well-organised outdoor area, this facility can only be used in fine weather. Moreover, given current and projected numbers in the reception class, it is too small to provide maximum opportunities for the vigorous and imaginative play. This restricted facility is unsatisfactory because it does not enable children to learn by working on a more active scale than is possible indoors.

Creative development

48. There was insufficient evidence to make overall judgements about provision, children's achievements or the standards that they attain in this area of learning. The teacher plans thoroughly to ensure that children have opportunities to engage in a satisfactory range of creative activities. It is evident that children have frequent opportunities to paint and print using different sized brushes and create collage using a range of fabric, card and paper. The teacher plans carefully to promote children's imaginative play by creating role-play areas, such as the Space Rocket and the Dinosaur Den. This promotes children's use of imaginative language and encourages collaborative play. Children have frequent opportunities to sing, explore sounds and use percussion instruments in the classroom and in weekly music lessons.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and very well in Years 3 to 6 to reach standards that are above national levels at the end of both key stages.
- The development of speaking and listening is given good emphasis.
- Pupils write for a broad range of purposes, although approaches to the teaching of handwriting and spelling are inconsistent.
- Reading has a high profile in the school's work.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, and often very good in Key Stage 2.
- Leadership of the subject is very good.
- Literacy skills are promoted well through work in other subjects.

Commentary

49. In the 2004 national assessments, pupils' results in both reading and writing were above the national average at the end of Year 2. The fact that the 2004 results were lower than the previous year's results and lower than results in similar schools does not indicate a drop in standards. The small number of pupils in the class, four of whom had special educational needs, distorted the 2004 results. Pupils' achievements and progress were good in both reading and writing. Inspection findings show that pupils currently in Year 2 are set to attain above average standards and that they have made good progress from their generally average levels on entry to Year 1. The school's English results for 11-year-olds in 2004 were well above the national average and in line with results in similar schools. These pupils had achieved very well during their time in Key Stage 2. Current standards in Year 6 are above average. This is consistent with the school's predictions for 2005 based on its tracking throughout the key stage. Although overall standards are somewhat lower than in 2004, pupils have again achieved very well because their results at the end of Key Stage 1 were below average.

50. Standards of speaking and listening are above national levels by the end of Years 2 and 6. Teachers place good emphasis on the development of speaking and listening skills, for example through the skilful questioning of pupils and the use of 'talking partners'⁸, which is used extensively across all subjects and in all classes. Pupils also take part in role-play, drama and discussions. As a result of these good features, many pupils talk and listen confidently in a wide range of contexts by the time they leave the school.

51. Pupils write for a wide range of purposes including letters, instructions, poems, stories, diaries and newspaper reports. For example, Year 2 pupils write reports of a visit they have made and instructions for how to make boxes. By Year 6, pupils successfully write a conclusion to a discussion about the place of zoos in today's society, change stories into play-scripts and write a personal response to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. However, some teachers give too little attention to the development of pupils' handwriting. This results in standards of presentation which are unacceptably varied. Strategies to improve pupils' spelling are not consistently applied. For example, some teachers miss opportunities to encourage the use of dictionaries and some spelling lists given to pupils are not matched to their abilities.

52. The development of pupils' reading skills is given a high profile by holding regular *Reading Weeks*, giving pupils many opportunities to read in lessons and through good support from home. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to help pupils read with increasing fluency, accuracy, understanding and expression and, as a result, they reach standards which are

⁸ Talking partners is a strategy which gives pupils frequent opportunities to discuss and clarify their thinking in short conversations with a friend.

above national expectations. Teachers give good emphasis to the development of research skills and so most pupils find information efficiently in reference books. Older pupils know how to skim and scan text to locate specific information and talk confidently about their favourite books and authors. However, some younger pupils are unsure how to use the non-fiction library to find the books they need to help them with their work. This is because the library is not ideally located and is underused as a resource.

53. Teaching and learning are good and often very good in Years 4, 5 and 6. During the inspection excellent teaching was seen in Years 5 and 6, which helped pupils of all abilities make very good gains in learning across all strands of English. In both of these high quality lessons, teachers were confident, lively and knowledgeable and relationships which successfully underpinned pupils' learning were excellent. Both teachers maintained a brisk pace, demonstrated high expectations, matched work very well for pupils of all abilities and constantly questioned pupils to help develop understanding. Teachers' consistent use of perceptive marking and targets in reading and writing moves pupils forward with their learning. Well-trained and committed learning support assistants are also used very well to ensure that pupils with special educational needs also make good gains in learning. High quality classroom displays help to extend pupils' language, motivate them and celebrate their work. However, pupils do not yet make enough use of ICT to draft and re-draft their stories.
54. The subject is very well led and there are clear plans for its continued development. Subject self-evaluation is very effective. Regular and thorough monitoring of teaching and learning and of pupils' work helps the co-ordinators identify what works well and what needs to be improved. This is an improvement on the findings of the last inspection. They also analyse data rigorously and track pupils' progress as they move through the school. The information from this analysis enables the subject leaders to identify and overcome weaknesses and to set realistic targets for the raising of standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to speak, listen, read and write as part of their work in other subjects. For example, in a link with history, Year 2 pupils write an article for the London Gazette based on the Great Fire of London and, in a link with religious education, Year 5 pupils write a thoughtful set of rules based on the Ten Commandments. This approach to developing literacy skills across the curriculum works well because it is firmly embedded.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils respond well because they enjoy learning French.
- The provision of French lessons enriches the curriculum and adds to pupils' cultural development.

Commentary

56. Most pupils in Year 6 are making good progress. In a little under a year, they understand a variety of everyday classroom and other familiar instructions, statements and questions and respond readily to what they see and hear with short, simple but accurate answers. They introduce themselves, give their age, where they live and talk about things they like and dislike. They can count to twenty, name the days of the week and name a range of animals and colours. They sing simple French songs and participate in games conducted in French.
57. Pupils are learning well because teaching is good. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and are conducted largely in French. The headteacher has a good grasp of basic French. She speaks clearly, confidently and accurately and the quality of her spoken French presents a good model

for the pupils to follow. Lesson planning is effective. Lessons contain a good range of activities which keep pupils interested, active and involved. As a result, pupils respond well. They enjoy their weekly French lessons because the teacher makes learning fun.

58. This initiative is benefiting the pupils who are involved. The provision of French lessons enriches the curriculum as a whole. These lessons bring pupils into contact with a whole new culture and, in doing so, contribute to their personal and social development. Pupils who already experience difficulties with some aspects of their learning get a 'fresh start' with French. The opportunity to succeed alongside their more able peers builds self-esteem and promotes a positive response to learning in general. Learning French also lays firm foundations for the secondary phase of pupils' education because it provides pupils with enjoyable experiences that encourage positive attitudes to foreign language learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve above average standards by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning in mathematics are very good.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The co-ordinator leads the subject very effectively.

Commentary

59. In the 2004 national tests for seven-year-olds, standards were average. In the current Year 2, pupils have made satisfactory progress and overall standards are again broadly average, despite the fact that a number of higher attaining pupils left the school this year. In the 2004 tests for eleven-year-olds, pupils' attainments were well above the national average and the average for similar schools. In the present Year 6, standards are above average. Although this is somewhat lower than last year, current standards represent very good achievement in relation to pupils' well below average attainments as seven-year-olds. By the time pupils leave the school, standards are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. Furthermore, the work of pupils currently in Years 1 and 5 indicates that standards in both key stages are set to rise again next year.

60. Teachers and teaching assistants establish very good relationships with pupils and a consistent feature of lessons is their ready praise and encouragement. Consequently, pupils are very eager to be involved in all aspects of lessons. They are very responsive during introductions and they follow instructions readily. These very good attitudes to work, combined with pupils' very good behaviour, effectively promote their concentration and learning. Pupils with special educational needs receive sensitive support so that they are actively involved in lessons and make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.

61. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Pupils learn effectively because teachers prepare lessons thoroughly and are clear about what they want pupils to learn. They share these aims with pupils so that lessons are sharply focused and purposeful. In almost all lessons, teachers explain tasks clearly and sometimes introduce an element of fun or competition, with the result that pupils are well motivated and respond eagerly. Teachers ask carefully directed questions to check pupils' understanding. There are also very thorough systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress, but the information gained from assessments is not always used consistently enough. Teachers do not always match tasks closely to the different levels of ability within the class and build securely on what pupils have learned before. Consequently, there are times when some pupils do not make the best possible progress in lessons. However, there is very good quality marking, particularly in Key Stage 2, which actively involves pupils in recognising how they can improve their work. Furthermore, teachers set mathematics targets and use them effectively to motivate pupils.

These strategies effectively promote pupils' understanding of their own learning and go a long way towards ensuring that the needs of pupils with different abilities are met.

62. Provision for mathematics has improved because the co-ordinator provides very good subject leadership. The observation of teaching and learning, tracking of pupils' progress and the analysis of pupils' performance in tests are all more rigorous than they were at the time of the last inspection. These activities ensure that teachers cover all aspects of the mathematics curriculum thoroughly and lead to the allocation of support to pupils. They also result in improvements in the curriculum such as the recently increased emphasis on mental mathematics and problem solving and, in doing so, help to raise standards over time.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. Teachers make good use of mathematics to reinforce and extend pupils' learning within other subjects, notably science and ICT. Year 1 pupils measure each other's height in standard and non-standard measures, in work linked to 'Growing and Changing'. Year 5 pupils create accurate line graphs to display the results of experiments in science. This work helps them to discover the length of elastic bands pulled by different amounts of force and the time taken for sugar to dissolve in water of different temperatures. They also use their mathematical skills, including appropriate use of calculators, to solve problems in control ICT.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are higher than they were at the time of the previous inspection.
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are achieving very well.
- Higher attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 are underachieving.
- Teachers give good emphasis to developing the skills of scientific investigation.
- Effective links between science and ICT improve pupils' learning.

Commentary

64. In the most recently published National Curriculum assessments and tests in science in 2004, the school's results for pupils at the end of Year 6 were well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Inspection evidence and the unpublished results of the 2005 tests confirm that standards in the current Year 6 class are equally high. Almost three-quarters of all pupils are set to attain the above average standard. Pupils in Year 6 have achieved very well in relation to the standards that they attained at the end of Year 2 in 2001. These results indicate a considerable improvement in overall standards and achievement since the last inspection. However, despite considerable improvement in Key Stage 2, standards in Key Stage 1 are much lower. Results in science were below average in 2004 and inspection evidence and the unpublished results of the 2005 assessments indicate that standards have declined further. Whilst most pupils attained the expected standard for seven-year-olds, current standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are unsatisfactory because higher attaining pupils are underachieving. Compared with all schools and with similar schools, too few pupils attain the above average standard.

65. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. Throughout school, teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and response. Consequently, all pupils are attentive and thoughtful and older pupils persevere well with challenging tasks and rise to the challenge to do their best. This quality of response improves pupils' learning and progress. Teachers also give good emphasis to developing the skills of scientific investigation. A good range of practical and investigative tasks, such as those on reproduction in plants or on the effects of exercise on the human metabolism, engages pupils' interest, stimulates their desire to learn and promotes deeper understanding of scientific principles. Assessment in science is regular and systematic. Teachers use assessment information effectively to track pupils' progress, to set targets for the raising of standards and to direct additional help to individuals or

groups. However, this information is rarely used to match tasks to the needs of pupils with different capabilities. Whilst tasks for pupils in Years 1 and 2 are sufficiently challenging to allow pupils to attain the expected standard for their age, there is not enough in the current diet to take pupils to the above average standard. As a result, higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 1 underachieve and this is unsatisfactory. In Years 3 to 6, teachers conduct a high quality on-going dialogue with their pupils, both through their marking of work and in their actual conversations during lessons. It is the quality of this dialogue that effectively supports pupils who are struggling to understand and challenges the thinking of higher attaining pupils and, in doing so, moves them to the higher levels. The consistency and quality of this aspect of the teaching and learning relationship are a major strength of teachers' work in Key Stage 2.

66. There is insufficient evidence to evaluate the overall quality of subject leadership and management because the science leader is currently absent. However, it is evident that many aspects of the current arrangements work well. The monitoring of the science curriculum by the subject leader, headteacher and linked governor is regular and thorough. This work has already had a beneficial impact on standards and quality in Key Stage 2, but barriers caused by the turnover of teachers mean that it has yet to impact fully on Key Stage 1. Cross-curricular links are developing well. Pupils' work in science makes a worthwhile contribution to personal, social and health education. Furthermore, effective links with ICT, which include the use of the computer microscope to enhance pupils' observations, the use of digital photography to record investigations and the use of information handling programs to process and present results, are improving pupils' learning considerably, especially in Years 3 to 6.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the time pupils leave the school, standards in ICT are above those normally expected of 11-year-olds.
- Thorough staff training has improved the overall quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to ICT and levels of confidence and independence are high.
- Curriculum leadership is extremely effective.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is developing well.

Commentary

67. There is insufficient evidence to evaluate standards and achievement in Key Stage 1. However, in Years 3 to 6 pupils achieve well because teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 are effective and the use of computers and other devices becomes a very regular part of pupils' experience. Consequently, by the end of Year 6, standards are above those normally expected of 11-year-olds. By the time they leave the school, pupils have good ICT skills. They use computers and other devices efficiently, both in ICT lessons and as tools to aid their learning in other subjects. This is a huge improvement on the unsatisfactory standards and progress reported by the school's previous inspection. In this challenging environment, pupils with special educational needs receive effective support so that they also succeed and make good progress alongside others in the class.

68. Teaching and learning in ICT are good and, at times, very good or excellent, especially in Years 5 and 6. Teachers have successfully undertaken a wide range of training and received regular advice and support from the subject leader. Consequently, their subject knowledge and understanding are good and they are competent and self-assured when teaching ICT. Their explanations are clear and accurate and they demonstrate new skills and techniques well and, as a result, pupils learn effectively. They make good use of interactive whiteboards to engage pupils' interest and involve them in the lesson. Once pupils are at work, teachers have the necessary skills to 'trouble-shoot' effectively, ensuring that little time is lost and that the pace of learning is brisk.

69. Teachers throughout the school establish very good patterns of behaviour and very sensible approaches to work. Pupils share equipment co-operatively and collaborate very well, giving each other constructive help and advice. For example, in the Year 5 class, the teacher has established a very good work ethic. Pupils are confident, self-motivated and thoroughly enjoy pitting themselves against challenging and complex tasks. Much of pupils' work in ICT comes through other subjects. For example, when pupils in Year 5 made animated films, their work drew strongly on the skills of literacy and of art and design. Consequently, tasks are relevant and pupils' very positive response stems from their enthusiasm for the topic in hand. Pupils' keenness to be actively involved and their confidence in solving problems independently improves their learning considerably.
70. Standards are rising and teaching and learning are improving because subject leadership and management are outstanding and the curriculum for ICT is good. Pupils learn well because the school has improved its resources and facilities for teaching ICT during recent years and there are further significant improvements 'in the pipeline'. The school now has, or will very soon have, the necessary programs and equipment to teach all strands of the ICT curriculum thoroughly. Pupils already have regular access to computers and this access is set to expand when new 'portable' equipment arrives. Furthermore, there are planned opportunities for pupils to use a good range of ICT equipment, including programmable toys, sound recording equipment and digital cameras and camcorders. The subject leader has been tireless in her work. She has planned very thoroughly for the introduction of these resources and subsequent developments to the curriculum. She provides very good levels of 'in-house' training and support for teaching and support staff alike. She has improved the guidance available to staff and has introduced procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainments. Her energy and enthusiasm for ICT serve as an inspiration for all staff. She monitors teaching and learning in order to check that all elements of the ICT curriculum are taught and to ensure that staff make good use of ICT across the curriculum as a whole. This very well conceived programme of curriculum development has been at the heart of the school's success in raising standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

71. Pupils' use of ICT across the curriculum is good, but this aspect of the work is also set to improve as new hardware and software are introduced and teachers become more familiar with the revised curriculum. However, links with literacy are good. Pupils already use ICT to present written work and to communicate with others by e-mail or through quite complex presentations. There is, however, scope for pupils to make greater use of ICT for entering and editing text. Other applications of ICT include:
- producing graphs and charts in science and mathematics using information-handling programs;
 - using the Internet as a source of information for history, geography and religious education lessons;
 - programming the floor 'robot' or the screen 'turtle' to reinforce directions, turns and data handling in mathematics;
 - using graphic modelling programs to design imaginary locations;
 - using creative tools to make pictures and patterns or to design greetings cards;
 - using camcorders to make animated films;
 - using devices such as listening centres, digital cameras and digital microscopes.

HUMANITIES

History and **geography** were not included in the main focus of the inspection. Inspectors saw one history lesson and no geography lessons. As a result, no judgements were made about provision, standards, teaching and learning.

Commentary

72. Teachers' planning and pupils' completed work indicate that both subjects are secure within the curriculum. Good quality displays in classrooms, such as those in Year 4 about the ancient Egyptians and in Year 5 about the Romans, reinforce this view. There are good links with other subjects, especially literacy. For example, in geography, Year 2 pupils write a letter to an

inhabitant of a small island in the Hebrides to find out about island life. In history, they write a diary entry for a day in the life of Florence Nightingale. By Year 6, pupils use the Internet to research information about mountains in geography, whilst in history they work in groups to research information about different aspects of life for the ancient Greeks. The leadership of both subjects is good. There are clear plans to improve provision, for example by improving the use of evidence sources in history and by extending fieldwork in geography.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for religious education has improved since the previous inspection and overall standards exceed those set out in locally agreed guidelines.
- Pupils learn from religion as well as about religion.
- Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and to the development of their literacy skills.
- The subject is very well led and well taught.

Commentary

73. In 1999, provision for religious education and the standards that pupils attained were found to be unsatisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 now make good progress as they move through the school and attain standards that are above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.

74. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about religion. For example, in work about religious symbols, Year 2 pupils identify symbols that are important to worshippers of different religions, such as Jews and Hindus. They know the significance of Palm Sunday and Easter for Christians. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they have sufficient insight to discuss what God may be like. They understand the importance of meditation to Buddhists and know that Christians believe in life after death. Pupils are also encouraged to learn from religious stories, to reflect on their meaning and make personal responses to the knowledge gained. For example, Year 5 pupils listen to the story of the Passover and use the insights that they gain to reflect on what they would eat at a special meal and to consider how the disciples may have felt eating their last meal with Jesus. By the end of Year 6, pupils consider their response to darkness and light and understand that people can express spiritual feelings or demonstrate their faith through music.

75. Pupils learn through religious education the importance of courtesy, care and consideration for others. As a result, the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Teachers also make good use of religious education topics to reinforce and develop pupils' literacy skills. Links with literacy are given particularly good emphasis in Years 3 to 6. For example, Year 4 pupils write a newspaper report for the 'Daily Prophet' about a miracle Jesus performed and Year 6 pupils write the Diwali story as a play script during their study of world faiths.

76. Most pupils achieve well because teaching is good. Secure subject knowledge, effective organisation, confident presentation, good questioning of pupils and positive relationships were good features of teaching seen during the inspection. Resources have improved since the last inspection and teachers use them well to illustrate their teaching. Regular contact with Christian leaders helps to enrich the curriculum. The subject is very well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who has undertaken a rigorous audit and makes regular checks of teaching and learning to help her identify what works well and what needs doing. Consequently, the subject is well represented within the curriculum and there are clear plans for its continued development, for example by improving assessment arrangements. Governor involvement in the monitoring has improved the rate of improvement.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Inspectors only observed two lessons in art and design, design and technology and physical education. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence to make overall judgements about provision or the quality of teaching and learning in these subjects.

Music

Provision for music is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in music have improved since the last inspection.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Pupils' experiences make a good contribution to their spiritual and cultural development.

Commentary

77. The majority of pupils make good progress and standards in music are above average by the time pupils leave the school. Pupils of all ages sing regularly and have a wide repertoire of songs and hymns, which they sing very tunefully and with good expression. Older pupils perform songs in unison and in parts with clear diction and pitch control. Pupils have frequent opportunities to create and develop musical ideas, extend their composing skills and play a satisfactory range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments. In the course of the year, pupils perform in school assemblies and concerts. Older pupils also have the opportunity to perform for a larger audience by participating in the Rickmansworth Schools' Music Festival. All pupils in Years 3 to 6 learn to play the recorder and to read musical notation.

78. Teaching and learning are very good. The school employs a highly skilled and experienced specialist teacher of music who teaches all classes. This arrangement works very well because it ensures consistently high quality teaching for all pupils. The music teacher promotes pupils' skills energetically. Her enthusiasm and expertise motivate pupils, who rise to the challenge to do their best. The school also provides opportunities for piano and guitar tuition. These activities successfully reinforce and extend the skills of those involved.

79. Musical activities make a significant contribution to pupils' social and cultural development because they successfully encourage pupils to respond sensitively to things of beauty and acquaint them with aspects of their own and other cultural traditions.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social, health education and citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Current arrangements do not ensure that pupils receive a balanced and progressive programme of teaching.
- The subject leader is working hard to address weaknesses in current provision.
- The school's ethos and value system do much to promote pupils' personal development.

Commentary

80. Current approaches to personal, social, health education and citizenship are informal and cross-curricular. It was only possible to observe one short lesson because decisions about teaching are left entirely in the hands of individual teachers. Some teachers hold short weekly 'Circle Times' but others do not conduct any regular lessons in personal, social, health education and citizenship. This lack of formal provision is unsatisfactory because it does not ensure that pupils receive a coherent and progressive programme of work.

81. The recently appointed subject leader is doing a good job. She is aware of the weaknesses in the current provision and as a result is working hard to develop the curriculum and to bring

about greater consistency of approach. She has undertaken training in order to improve her own subject knowledge and understanding. She has already written and introduced a scheme of work and guidance for teachers and has strengthened links with outside agencies who can contribute to the teaching programme. This is intended to ensure that teachers cover important elements of personal, social, health education and citizenship through their work in other subjects such as physical education, science, the humanities and religious education. However, there is still a long way to go. This initiative is too recent to have impacted on the quality of pupils' learning and, furthermore, the subject leader has not yet had the opportunity to monitor the extent to which colleagues are applying the new guidance or to evaluate the current quality of teaching and learning.

82. In the meantime, the school relies heavily on its ethos and value system to promote pupils' personal development. Special events, such as *Democracy Day* or visits from health professionals, who provide specialist teaching on aspects of growth and development, drugs awareness or sex and relationship education, make a good contribution to pupils' learning. However, despite the fact that pupils already achieve many good outcomes in this area of their learning, there is nevertheless a pressing need to establish a whole school approach and to ensure thorough coverage and equality of experience for all pupils.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement	Grade
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	2
Attendance	2
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	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
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	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3
<i>Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).</i>	