

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**St. Andrew's Church of England Primary School**

Hitchin

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117467

Headteacher: Mrs Sue Sanderson

Reporting inspector: Mrs Helen Hutchings  
7541

Dates of inspection: 3 - 6 July 2000

Inspection number: 67070

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:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Benslow Lane Hitchin Hertfordshire
Postcode:	SG4 9RD
Telephone number:	01462 459160
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Cleghorn
Date of previous inspection:	16-19 September 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Helen Hutchings	Registered inspector	Art; English as an additional language	What sort of school is this?
			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			How well is the school led and managed?
Sylvia Daintrey	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Robert Battey	Team inspector	English; equal opportunities; special educational needs; design technology; music	How well are pupils taught?
Linda Ellis	Team inspector	Science; information and communications technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Patricia Palmer	Team inspector	Mathematics; areas of learning for children under five; geography; history; physical education	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St. Andrew's Church of England Primary School is a voluntary aided school situated within the parish of Hitchin. It mainly serves the district of Holy Saviour with some pupils coming from outside the district. It currently has 60 children in the nursery on a part-time basis and 234 full-time pupils, with approximately equal numbers of boys and girls from age 4 to 11. Pupils enter the nursery with skills and experiences in line with those normally expected of children of this age. About a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly from the Indian sub-continent and include 69 pupils (29 per cent) who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is below the national average and there are no pupils with statements of special educational need. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also below the national average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

St. Andrew's Primary School is a good school with a purposeful atmosphere for learning. The standards achieved by the pupils are generally well above the national averages and also above the average for schools with similar intakes. Teaching is very good with four lessons in ten being very good or excellent. The school has been effectively managed so that teachers and non-teaching staff work as committed team with a shared sense of purpose. Because the strengths greatly outweigh the weaknesses, it provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils achieve standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, which are well above the national averages. Children in the nursery make very good progress so that most pupils have begun to work within the National Curriculum by the time they reach the age of five.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to school, behave well in lessons, work hard and enjoy their learning.
- Overall teaching is very good and pupils follow a wide curriculum. Literacy and numeracy are well taught.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress and many achieve at the same levels as other pupils.
- The very good relationships between pupils contribute to their personal, moral, social and cultural development. They have a very high level of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.
- There is a strong partnership with parents with very good opportunities for formal and informal contact between home and school.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards in information and communications technology.
- Opportunities for pupils to use the basic skills learned in English and mathematics throughout the curriculum to improve the standards pupils are able to achieve in history and geography.
- The role of subject co-ordinators in monitoring and evaluating standards across the school and developing schemes of work to give clearer guidance to teachers on exactly what skills should be developed in the different years.
- Arrangements for recording pupils' achievements in subjects, other than literacy and numeracy.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was inspected in September 1996 it has made substantial improvement. Attainment has improved in art, design and technology, physical education and, to a lesser extent, information and communications technology. In this subject pupils have not been able to make up for earlier gaps in their experiences and inadequate computer equipment. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced well and there are schemes of work in place for other subjects; these still need further development to give teachers detailed guidance of how skills should be developed in each year. Pupils' progress is tracked well in English and mathematics but recording needs to be improved further in other subjects. Those with management responsibilities have job descriptions but their roles need further development so that they play a full part in the monitoring and evaluation of standards across the school. The school is now well placed to continue to improve standards.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	C	B	A	A	well above average    A above average        B average                C below average        D well below average    E
Mathematics	A	A	B	C	
Science	A	A	B	D	

Children enter the nursery and reception classes with experiences and skills in line with those expected nationally. The standards they attain when they leave school are well above national averages in English and above in mathematics and science. This represents steady progress throughout their time in school; pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and in the upper years in Key Stage 2. When compared with similar schools, results at the end of Key Stage 1 are generally above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics and well above for those reaching the higher levels in reading and writing. Improvement in Key Stage 1 over the last four years has been steadily upward and in excess of the national trend; improvement at Key Stage 2 has been variable from year to year, but the overall trend is one of improvement that is broadly in line with the national trend. There are no national figures available yet for comparison for the 2000 results, but the school's performance at Key Stage 2 represents a substantial improvement over the previous year. The school's targets for performance in English and mathematics are realistic and there is an awareness of the need to provide more challenge in future years.

During the inspection the standards in most other subjects were in line or above those expected at the end of both key stages. Standards in art and design and technology were above national expectations. The standards being achieved in information and communications technology are below national expectations and should be improved.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They enjoy their work and expect to work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. These high standards are not always maintained in the playground where some pupils have a tendency to play in a boisterous way which sometimes results in accidents. The level of these incidents has fallen in the last year due to improved school systems.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development and relationships are very good and a strength of the school. There is a strong atmosphere of mutual respect which pervades all age groups.
Attendance	Attendance at the school is good.

There are consistently good relationships across the school. The school has improved its approach to managing behaviour so that there are very few instances of inattentive or silly behaviour in lessons and is managed well so that it does not impinge on the learning of others. Pupils, from a very early age, respond enthusiastically and are highly involved in their learning. Attendance has improved since the last inspection, in particular for pupils from ethnic minority groups. This is helping them to achieve higher standards.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Teaching is a real strength of the school. The majority of teaching in English, mathematics and science is good or very good. Teaching is consistently good across all subjects being very good or excellent in four lessons out of ten and good in a further two in ten. There was no poor or very poor teaching and in the very few lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory this was mainly where the teacher had too low an expectation of what pupils should be learning or there was insufficient explanation to aid pupils' understanding, so that they became restless and lacked motivation. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding to bring to their teaching, apart from in information and communications technology. Higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in history and geography. Support staff work very effectively alongside teachers and make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and for pupils who have English as an additional language is very good.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, although there is insufficient provision for information and communications technology. The curriculum for children under five leads them very effectively into the National Curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are given full access to the curriculum and make very good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good support is provided to help these pupils to develop their language skills and make very good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's provision is very good and a great emphasis is placed on these elements of pupils' development. Assemblies are used sensitively to encourage spiritual reflection for all members of the school community.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is a caring community and there is a good awareness of health and safety issues in the school. Procedures are good for monitoring and promoting good behaviour.

The overall curriculum is well planned although the school does not meet fully the statutory requirements for information and communications technology and some schemes of work need to give clearer guidance to teachers on exactly what skills should be developed in the different years. The support for pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is effective and sensitively given to ensure that they understand the class work. Where appropriate pupils receive additional support on a withdrawal basis but this is always related to classroom tasks. There is a range of extra-curricular activities to broaden and enhance pupils' experiences and pupils take part in a variety of outings and visits, including residential experiences. The school's procedures for managing behaviour are not so good in the playgrounds as in lessons. There are many hidden corners in the school grounds and boisterous play sometimes results in minor accidents. There is a strong partnership with parents with very good opportunities for formal and informal contact between home and school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy head have successfully built a strong staff team with a shared sense of purpose to provide a stimulating learning environment for pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities appropriately and use their particular interests to support specific areas of school activity.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has developed systems to analyse pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science and to set targets to raise standards. The monitoring of teaching has not been formalised sufficiently to disseminate effective practice widely across the school.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of its available resources to support pupils' learning.

Improvements in whole school planning are strengthening the way in which the school targets its resources and enables it to secure good value for money in raising standards. The role of subject co-ordinator has developed since the last inspection but does not yet consistently involve monitoring which evaluates the effect on pupils' learning. Teachers and support staff have a very good range of expertise to meet the needs of pupils. Accommodation within the school is used well and learning resources are adequate. The school has a good range of books and a well-stocked library but the provision of computers and software is unsatisfactory.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children like school and make good progress.</li> <li>• Help for children to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• High expectations that pupils will work hard.</li> <li>• The school is well managed and teaching is good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity about homework.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. About a quarter of parents indicated that they do not think that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. However, in their comments many stated that they appreciate the wide range on offer and agree with the school that it is not appropriate to have too many for younger pupils. The school makes every effort to arrange activities to interest a wide range of interests, such as music, sports, visits to places of interest and language lessons and to arrange these at times to suit other commitments which pupils may have outside school. Arrangements for communicating homework tasks should be more consistent across the school but parents have good opportunities to discuss all matters of concern with teachers at the end of the school day.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. Most pupils enter the school nursery at the age of three with levels of experience and skills for the foundation stage of learning, which would normally be expected of pupils of this age. A high proportion (29 per cent) of pupils in the school, have English as an additional language and a third of these are at an early stage of language acquisition. The school has identified 56 pupils as having special educational needs; only a third of these are in need of external support and no pupils have formal statements for their special educational needs. These figures are slightly below the levels identified at the time of the last inspection.

2. The standards in the school, as measured by national tests, have improved since the previous inspection. Improvement in Key Stage 1 over the last four years has been steadily upward and in excess of the national trend; improvement at Key Stage 2 has been variable from year to year, but the overall trend for English, mathematics and science is one of improvement and broadly in line with the national trend. Standards in information and communications technology are below national expectations, although they have improved since the last inspection. Pupils have not been able to make up for limitations in their earlier experiences and limited computer provision. In art and design and technology standards are above national expectations while in all other subjects they are in line with other schools. This represents considerable improvement over the last inspection where attainment in information technology, art, design and technology and physical education were below national expectations at Key Stage 2. These improvements are a result of consistently good and very good teaching and teachers' in-depth knowledge of the needs of their pupils. When required pupils throughout the school are able to apply their skills in numeracy and literacy to other subjects, such as science or geography. However, some opportunities are missed to develop these further through their application across the wider curriculum.

3. Most children under five are attaining levels exceeding the outcomes indicated in national guidance in all areas specified for this age and some are working within Level 1 of the National Curriculum. Children make good progress in language, particularly in speaking and listening. The nursery has a very good range of books to stimulate reading and children enjoy listening to stories and joining in with reading the text. Many can underwrite text with well-formed letters and numbers which are consistent in size. Many children can count and add numbers up to 10 and can identify missing numbers in a sequence. They are able to talk about their own experiences of the world around them and learn about the needs of living things. Children show a well-developed sense of co-ordination when climbing during outdoor play and are developing their fine motor development through a variety of modelling equipment. The school places great emphasis on pupils' personal and social development and children under five have learned to be thoughtful for others and to take turns.

4. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards, as measured by the national tests in 1999, are very high in writing and are well above the national averages in reading and mathematics. When compared with schools with similar intakes, standards are above average in mathematics and well above in reading and writing. Pupils in Year 2 have a range of strategies to establish the meaning of unfamiliar words and understand the main ideas and characters in the stories they read. They use extended sentences to express their ideas and listen carefully to discussions in lessons. By the end of the key stage pupils have a good recall of number bonds and are accurate in their use of early mathematical language, such as halving, total and more than. Standards in science are well above national averages. By the age of seven pupils can give accurate reasons for the differences between living and non-living things and understand how to make and operate simple electrical circuits.

5. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards in English as measured by the national tests in 1999, are well above the national average and the average for similar schools. Mathematics and science attainment is above national averages. When compared with similar schools standards are broadly in line with the average in mathematics but below in science. However, the attainment in science of

pupils currently in Year 6 is higher than that indicated by the 1999 results. There are no national figures available yet for comparison for the 2000 results but the school's performance in all core subjects represents a substantial improvement over the previous year. Most pupils can identify the themes and characters of the books and stories they read. Their skills in writing are not so well developed and pupils have insufficient opportunities to edit and re-draft their work to a high standard. Pupils carry out complex mental calculations requiring more than one operation. They are able to extract information from a variety of graphical representations of data and they understand the need to test results in science experiments to obtain reliable information. Most use correct terminology when talking about their work in mathematics and science.

6. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make very good progress overall. Pupils receive very good levels of assistance from teaching and support staff with a focus on improving their literacy and, to a lesser extent, their numeracy skills. They achieve satisfactory standards in relation to their prior attainment and the targets set in their individual education plans. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by girls and boys.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

7. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. They have improved since the last inspection as a result of the improvements in the quality of teaching. Parents confirm that their children are keen to come to school. In nearly half the lessons seen, pupils' attitudes to learning were very good or excellent. They are best in the under fives and in Key Stage 1.

8. Children under five, including those at an early stage of learning English, respond enthusiastically to their tasks and are highly involved in their learning, for example, when reinforcing their knowledge of numbers by joining in the song 'Five little ducks went swimming one day'. In Key Stage 1, pupils respond very well to the enthusiasm and good organisation of their teachers and the opportunities provided for both collaborative and independent work; for example, pupils in a Year 2 literacy hour showed a very high degree of competence and willingness to contribute in response to the very high level of challenge and pace set by the teacher. Pupils with special educational needs maintain the same very good involvement in their learning because their work is closely related to the main class and they enjoy very good relationships with the support staff. Attitudes in Key Stage 2 are good. Pupils continue to respond well to their teachers and to persevere with their tasks. Very occasionally, their attitudes become unsatisfactory and a few pupils become silly and noisy when the teaching lacks pace or challenge and the pupils are not clear about what they are trying to achieve.

9. Behaviour in and around the school is good. It is very good or excellent in many under fives and Key Stage 1 lessons. Children under five learn very quickly the importance of taking turns and sharing resources. Pupils in the main school are very effectively helped by their teachers to learn to listen and to reflect on their behaviour. Pupils move around the school in a very quiet, orderly and disciplined way; for example, to a swimming lesson in the outdoor pool or to a music lesson in the hall. During a wet break in the inspection week, pupils in all year groups were fully engaged in very purposeful activities in their classrooms. These high standards of behaviour are not always maintained in the playground. Some Key Stage 1 pupils have a tendency to play in a boisterous way, which occasionally becomes too rough and results in accidents. At Key Stage 2 a few pupils who have particular difficulties in controlling their behaviour, although records show that these have declined markedly in the past year as a result of the school's improved systematic approach to managing behaviour. There are no exclusions, but occasionally pupils are sent home at lunch-time if their behaviour is inappropriate.

10. Personal development and relationships are very good and a strength of the school. Parents greatly appreciate this aspect of their children's education. There is a strong atmosphere of mutual respect, which pervades all age groups. For example, in a Year 5 history lesson comparing the religions of the Tudor period in England and the Mughal period in India, pupils responded with great respect to the visiting speaker and worked in excellent harmony in their groups. Pupils display excellent caring attitudes to each other, whatever their abilities or ethnic origin, and parents particularly like the way in which older pupils look after younger ones, for example, at sports day. Children under five are keen to tidy up at the end of a session and can get themselves ready for going

home with very little help. Pupils in the main school organise themselves well and carry out their duties very willingly. They enjoy the increasing opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and to show initiative in activities such as raising funds for the school or their partner school in The Gambia. Older pupils have been involved in discussions about developing zones for games in the playground and there are good plans to set up a school council so that all pupils can make a contribution to school developments.

11. Attendance at the school is good and has improved since the last inspection. In particular the attendance of pupils from ethnic minority groups has improved and this helps them to achieve higher standards. There was very little absence in the week of the inspection. The rate of attendance over the year is a little above the national average and unauthorised absence is negligible. Absences because of illness or holidays are usually short and parents are diligent in keeping the school informed of the reasons their child is away. Children under five are developing good habits of regular attendance.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

12. The quality of teaching is very good overall and is a strength of the school. During the inspection seven in ten lessons were good or better with four in ten being very good or excellent. Only 6 per cent of all lessons seen were judged unsatisfactory and there was no poor or very poor teaching. The school has made considerable progress in addressing concerns raised about teaching since the last inspection. The proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching is much better than at the time of the last inspection where only 82 per cent of lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better and 17 per cent was less than satisfactory.

13. A high proportion (85 per cent) of teaching in the nursery and Key Stage 1 is good or very good and excellent teaching is seen in the reception class and in Year 2, where 40 per cent of all lessons seen in those classes were excellent. Teaching at Key Stage 2 is good overall and is generally very good in Years 5 and 6. However there were a few unsatisfactory lessons across the key stage. These were mainly due to teachers being unsure about the match of the content of the lesson to the pupils' levels of attainment and understanding or the teacher had too low an expectation of what the pupils should be learning. There was insufficient explanation to aid pupils' understanding so that pupils became restless and lacked motivation and only made limited gains in their learning.

14. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding to bring to their teaching in all the subjects seen during the inspection. Only a small amount of teaching was seen in information and communications technology and overall there is still a need for further development of teachers' expertise to deliver the full National Curriculum Programme of Study for this subject so that they can incorporate it more directly into their teaching across the full curriculum. In all other subjects the quality of teaching is at least good across the school. The teaching of basic skills is very good. Teachers use the literacy and numeracy strategies effectively; for example, in a Year 2 lesson the teacher's choice of texts provided an excellent stimulus for pupils to develop their descriptive writing by redrafting an imaginative story. In a Year 6 mental mathematics session the teacher used his knowledge of the group to keep the pupils enthusiastic and engaged while they solved time problems using the four operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. In a Year 5 science lesson where pupils were investigating which materials were the best barriers to sound, groups of pupils were encouraged to make their own decisions prompted by good questioning by the teacher.

15. The use of time is very good. Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve. Lessons proceed at a very good pace with very good opportunities provided for pupils to acquire skills, knowledge and understanding. An example of this was seen in a very good design and technology lesson in Year 2; pupils successfully responded to a very high level of challenge and worked out and evaluated how they could draw and plan a winding mechanism, together with the resources they would need. Pupils are very well supported to evaluate and progress their work and there is a very good balance between teacher input and pupils exploring and discussing the development of their work themselves. Teachers also maintain a brisk pace throughout the day. They start lessons punctually, take registers without fuss and waste no time in moving pupils from one task to another.

16. Teachers are very good at organising their classes. They create a very positive atmosphere for learning by their caring and sensitive approach to pupils. They expect and obtain high standards of behaviour and readily reward pupils with encouragement and praise. They value pupils' ideas and contributions and encourage pupils to ask questions and comment, both in assemblies and in class discussions. For example, in the assembly where the Millennium Quilt was presented to the school by parents, pupils were given time to enjoy the occasion and discuss their findings amongst themselves. After doing this, all quickly went quiet on request for the remainder of the assembly. They are used to seeing and sharing in the success of others through a weekly 'sharing assembly' and in the well-used plenary sessions evident in most lessons. Pupils show very high, applied standards of self-control and discipline for their ages. Pupils' listening and speaking skills are very well developed by the way teachers choose discussion topics, which they link closely to pupils' personal interests and understanding.

17. Support staff and volunteers work very effectively alongside teachers and make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Sometimes this extra adult help is used to provide additional help for ongoing classroom work, but it is more usually targeted to individuals or small groups. Teachers, with very good assistance from support staff, modify teaching methods and resources well to provide support for pupils with special educational needs. The support assistants provide this support, both within classes and by withdrawal, through carefully prepared and planned programmes of work. For example, pupils effectively use adapted materials for literacy to aid their progress in English. Pupils very effectively learn to improve their reading, spelling and written competences as well as mathematical competences. What they learn is appropriately linked to what they do in class. Support for pupils for whom English is an additional language is very effective and sensitively given to ensure that pupils have very good levels of additional help and explanation so that they understand the class work and develop their English language skills. The success of the support that teachers and support staff give for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils who have English as an additional language, is seen in the very good standards of learning of these pupils and the high standards they attain alongside all pupils in their classes.

18. The high quality of teaching across the school has a significant impact on pupils' learning. Pupils work at a good pace, showing high levels of concentration and interest. A good range of opportunities is provided for group and collaborative work. Here they gain a good knowledge of their own learning, making great effort to do their best. They show pride in their work and proudly talk about their efforts with a very good degree of understanding. Pupils have regular feedback from their teachers about what they have to do to improve further and teachers use assessments of pupils' work to plan the next steps in learning. The National Curriculum and optional test data is analysed and pupils' progress and attainment are tracked to group pupils within classes and to set targets for further improvement. For example, information from criteria based assessments are effectively used to group pupils in literacy according to their abilities for part of the literacy hour and for extra support for English, reading, spelling and writing.

19. Recent reviews of planning have improved the effectiveness and balance of teaching. Mid-term planning is translated well into daily lesson plans with specific attainable objectives matched to the needs of the pupils and the time available for the lesson. Considering the ages of the pupils, teachers provide an appropriate amount of homework. Most parents are satisfied with both the nature of the tasks and the amount given although there is inconsistency across the school in the way information is given to parents. The very close links that the school has between parents and teachers allows parents good opportunities to discuss homework as needs arise.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?**

20. The school provides a broad and mainly balanced curriculum for its pupils. This includes all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. The school is fully implementing the National Literacy Strategy. This is having a positive impact on pupils' reading skills, but it is not improving their writing skills sufficiently well in Key Stage 2. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is effectively raising pupils' standards in mathematics. The time allocation within the

curriculum for the foundation subjects is adequate, although there is insufficient provision overall for information technology. The planning for the foundation subjects is good. This shows an improvement in the curriculum provision since the previous inspection.

21. The curriculum for children under five in the nursery and reception classes is good. The foundations of this curriculum are the nationally agreed Desirable Outcomes for Learning. The school also takes into account the recommendations of the new Early Learning Goals. The curriculum prepares children well for work at Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum. The school is continuing to develop and improve the quality of its provision for children under five since the previous inspection.

22. The school is developing schemes of work for all subjects and is making good use of the national guidance for schemes of work. Whilst the task is not yet complete, this does represent an improvement since the previous inspection. There is a particularly good scheme of work for design and technology that has had a direct effect on the improvement in standards in that subject. The school has satisfactory provision for pupils' personal and social development although there are no plans to show how all the various aspects are covered. The science curriculum includes elements of a health education programme that encompasses sex education and drugs awareness whilst other aspects are dealt with in circle time.

23. The school ensures that all pupils, regardless of age, ability or gender, have equal access to the curriculum. All pupils have opportunities to join in the extra-curricular activities. They support them enthusiastically. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good across the school. Pupils are assessed well in English, mathematics and for their social and behavioural needs and information used to ensure that all pupils needing additional help are well supported. Care is taken to ensure that pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Any withdrawal from class is used very well to support their reading, spelling and writing competences. Recording the progress of pupils when receiving support, on a daily basis, is well used to inform their targets in their individual education plans. Parents are informed by verbal contacts on their children's needs. However, the school's formal written procedures do not inform them sufficiently about when their child is first registered as having special educational needs, the implications of this or review arrangements. The school informs parents suitably on their child's progress and how the defined targets in their individual education plans are being met. There is very good provision for pupils with English as an additional language. It meets individual pupils' needs well and ensures that pupils develop levels of skills in English that enable them to work confidently in lessons.

24. The school's range of extra-curricular activities is good. These include a wide range of sporting activities as well as music and visits to places of interest. For example, there are good opportunities for pupils throughout the school to learn to play musical instruments and to participate in dramatic productions. These broaden and enhance pupils' experiences. Effective use is made of residential visits to enable pupils to develop a sense of group identity and acceptable group behaviour. All members of staff foster good relationships between pupils, and between pupils and themselves. Pupils take part in a variety of outings and visits. These include a very popular residential visit for pupils in Year 4 and a visit to the Millennium Dome. Most clubs are held mainly at lunch-time as many pupils have other commitments after school. Language classes are offered in Punjabi and French. A quarter of parents responding to the questionnaire indicated that they do not think the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. However, in their comments on the questionnaires, parents say that they appreciate the opportunities offered by the school, such as music, sport and trips, and agree with the school that it is not appropriate to have too many extra activities for younger children.

25. The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils is very good. The school correctly places great importance on these elements of pupils' development. The spiritual development of pupils is good. The school provides suitable opportunities for reflection in the daily act of collective worship. For example, pupils were amazed and delighted when the Millennium Quilt that they helped create as part of the whole school community was unveiled in assembly. Opportunities for spiritual development are incorporated naturally into religious education lessons.

26. The moral development of pupils is very good. The school is effective in teaching pupils the principles that distinguish right from wrong. This begins on entry to the nursery class and develops well as pupils' progress through the school. There is a strong code of conduct implicit in all actions. All members of the teaching and support staff provide good and effective role models. They ensure that their dealings with issues are firm but fair. Teachers talk through any transgression of the code of conduct with pupils and, when necessary, with parents. Pupils are well aware of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and have illustrated classroom rules imaginatively in the Key Stage 1 classrooms. Pupils tidy away equipment and learn to look after it carefully. This enables them to begin to appreciate moral issues concerning other people's property. Pupils develop a good understanding of the effects of their actions on other people and on themselves. They respect their teachers and adults who work in the school.

27. The social development of pupils is good. This confirms the findings of the previous inspection. Children under five in the nursery and reception classes have many opportunities to develop independent attitudes to learning. Teachers build on this and increase these opportunities as pupils become older and more mature; for example, pupils in Year 5 help pupils in Year 2 to develop reading skills. Pupils develop well their ability to work co-operatively and collaboratively in lessons. In science, for example, pupils work well together when carrying out investigations. This encourages the effective development of social skills. Pupils are involved in projects which develop their sense of responsibility and foster an identity as part of a community. All members of staff and voluntary helpers maintain a calm and orderly community in the classroom although there is some boisterous behaviour in the playground leading to few safety concerns.

28. The school makes very good provision for the cultural development of pupils. Pupils have many opportunities to develop an awareness of their own culture. They visit local places of interest as part of their work in history and geography. The school teaches pupils well about other religions, cultures and beliefs. This mainly happens during religious education lessons where pupils learn about Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. Representatives of different beliefs visit the school, and it makes effective use of the cultural mix within its own community. The school teaches pupils to value and respect all faiths and beliefs, and prepares them well for life in a multi-cultural society.

29. The school continues to make very good use of its links with the local community to enrich the curriculum. There is an extensive programme of visits and visitors for children of all ages, which broaden their experiences in subjects such as religious education, history, geography and music. Community links also enhance pupils' personal development; for example, Year 6 pupils recently took part in the 'Crucial Crew' safety campaign organised by the local police and other agencies. The summer fair for which pupils, parents and the local community come together for the benefit of the school and the display of the school's Millennium Quilt at the Hitchin Festival, are impressive examples of the ways in which pupils learn that they are part of a wider community of families, cultural groups and the town.

30. Pupils are well prepared for their work at secondary level. The school has satisfactory links with playgroups and secondary schools which ensure that pupils transfer smoothly between the different phases of their education. Links with other primary schools and teacher training departments of two universities have a positive effect on the professional expertise of staff.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

31. The school continues to be a caring community in which the headteacher and staff know individual pupils and their families very well. Children under five settle quickly into the nursery and transfer successfully to the younger reception class, because of the very secure routines established by the staff and the good attention to individual medical and educational needs. Arrangements for child protection in the school are good. The headteacher as the designated member of staff has good experience and training in child protection issues and ensures that staff are alert to signs of possible abuse. A new part-time member of non-teaching staff has quickly established herself as an effective first-aider, providing good care to pupils who hurt themselves in the playground. Good records are kept of accidents. All staff have had resuscitation training so that they can supervise pupils in the



swimming pool. However, there is a shortage of staff, in both the main school and the nursery, with full up-to-date qualifications in first aid.

32. Procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils are sound. There is a good awareness of health and safety issues in the school and the pupils are given a range of curriculum experiences to teach them how to protect themselves from harm. Risk assessments and audits are implemented appropriately and the hazards identified are satisfactorily addressed. Responsibilities for the many aspects of health and safety are carried out effectively by a number of staff and governors. Arrangements for supervision at breaks and lunch-times in the main school are not always effective in preventing minor accidents at all times. There are many hidden corners where pupils can play out of sight. The school has difficulties in recruiting the full complement of mid-day supervisors it needs and in training some of them on how they can best carry out their roles.

33. The school has good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress, with detailed assessment procedures in place for English and mathematics to identify pupils' needs. Analysis of results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 has been undertaken to identify weaknesses within the subjects to raise standards further. The school also uses optional national tests in Years 3, 4 and 5 to assess and track pupils' attainment against their end of Key Stage 1 results. Assessment is less well developed in science and other subjects and consequently its use to inform planning is more limited.

34. Procedures for monitoring and promoting appropriate behaviour are good. These are particularly effective in the Nursery and in main school classrooms where teachers are highly skilled in managing the behaviour of the often large classes with a wide range of abilities and needs. There is some very good use of targets and rewards to encourage and celebrate good behaviour and achievement. Good records are kept of incidents of misbehaviour and the school has worked hard to develop a range of strategies to deal with these, mainly through staff discussion, training and the use of outside agencies. The management of pupils' behaviour is not as effective in the main school's playgrounds, in spite of the introduction of games and equipment.

35. Measures to improve attendance and punctuality have been successful. The headteacher and class teachers are very alert to patterns of individual absence and lateness. Parents are given clear guidance about their responsibilities to ensure that their children attend regularly and on time. The school works well with the education welfare service and the ethnic minority service to monitor and target the attendance of particular individuals and groups.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

36. Parents continue to be very supportive of the school and to make a significant contribution to school life and their children's learning. They are highly satisfied with most aspects of the school's provision, especially the school's expectations for their children and the quality of teaching. They feel that their children are making good progress in the school both academically and in their personal development. They like the way in which every child is treated as an individual and appreciate the mutually supportive community created by the headteacher and staff. This sense of a school community encompassing pupils, teachers, non-teaching staff and governors was impressively displayed during the week of inspection when, at a special assembly of celebration, the parents presented the headteacher with the school's Millennium Quilt in which everyone had been involved and was represented.

37. The school's links with parents are very effective. There are very good opportunities for informal contact between staff and parents at the end of the school day. The headteacher takes parents' views into account through a range of mechanisms including occasional coffee mornings to share issues and regular meetings with the parent governor. The provision of trolleys for pupils' lunch-boxes arose from a suggestion made a parent. Parents provide a high level of support in classrooms and around the school. For example, a group of parents are being trained on a new system for supporting pupils with special educational needs and another group of parents cleaned the swimming pool when the caretaker was unable to do so because of illness. The St Andrew's School Association is very active and recently raised over £2,000 at the summer fair which involved the

pupils and members of the community. Funds raised go towards a wide range of equipment and resources including a cover for the swimming pool and repairs to the adventure playground.

38. Parents have an important influence on pupils' good progress in reading, especially in Key Stage 1, by hearing their children read at home and ensuring that they change their library books regularly. Parents welcome the reading record in Key Stage 1 and the homework diary in Years 5 and 6 as formal ways in which they can find out what their children should be doing at home. Although there is a clear statement on the school's expectations for homework in Years 3 and 4 which parents understand, some would like a more structured approach. The school makes good efforts to inform and involve parents from ethnic minority groups, for example, by being available to translate when required and by including them in fund-raising events. Parents of pupils with special educational needs have good informal links with the school regarding their children's progress but they are not notified in writing when their child goes on the register nor when the annual review takes place.

39. The quality of information provided for parents is good. There is a very good range of letters and newsletters including a termly curriculum sheet which tells parents what will be covered in their child's class and how they can help. The school takes great care to keep parents well informed about changes in class organisation and teaching staff. Annual reports on pupils' progress in the main school provide a good level of detail for parents about their children's achievements in English, mathematics and personal development. Learning targets are added to reports but are too general and unspecific to the child to be of much use. Some parents comment that they do not feel well informed about their children's progress in the Nursery. The inspection team found that there are good opportunities for parents to discuss matters informally with any member of the Nursery team at the end of each session. There are sound arrangements for formal consultation and reporting in the first and third terms of a child's time at the Nursery.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

40. The school has maintained the strengths in leadership and management evident at the time of the last inspection. Parents expressed their confidence in the headteacher's leadership strongly in the questionnaire and at the parents' meeting and the improvements in pupils' attainment and teaching are attributable to the quality of her leadership. She works well in partnership with the deputy headteacher and the school has successfully built a team of committed and supportive staff. There is a shared sense of purpose in creating and maintaining a stimulating learning environment. The school's aims are fully set out in the school prospectus, the development plan and annual report to parents. These inform all aspects of school life.

41. The governing body plays a full part in the strategic management of the school and individual members act as challenging but supportive friends in specific areas of school activity. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have effective strategies to receive information on the standards being achieved by pupils. They have identified the need for more involvement in curriculum policy. The governing body does not meet all its statutory duties in respect of some information in the annual report to parents. This needs to include information about arrangements for taking disabled pupils into the school and progress on the school's action plan following the last inspection.

42. The previous inspection report identified the need for improvements in school development planning. This has been achieved and the current plan is a useful management tool to guide and pace ongoing developments. Evaluation criteria do not yet provide sufficiently clear measurable targets of improvements to be achieved in learning and there is insufficient detail to provide an effective guide for the work of the school beyond the current year. Mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of practice throughout the school are mainly informal. However, a range of tests including National Curriculum statutory and non-statutory tests are analysed to identify weaknesses and improvements have resulted. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching need to be improved further to extend the co-ordinators' role and disseminate good practice more effectively. The current statutory targets for improvement in English and mathematics are realistic and there is an awareness of the need to provide more challenge in future years as the experiences of pupils become more firmly based on sustained effective teaching and improved curriculum management.

43. The school's financial controls and planning procedures are good and the office staff operate all administrative systems smoothly and efficiently. An audit was carried out in 1999 and the recommendations included in the report have been implemented. The school manages its resources efficiently to ensure value for money in its spending and major financial investments. The unit income per pupil of £2042 is above national averages and the school is vigilant in ensuring that all expenditure is prioritised and well targeted towards improving opportunities for pupils currently in the school. Major improvements have been made recently to equipment for the nursery and sources of funding have been identified for computer equipment and training. The school is developing its use of new technologies; for example, it is introducing the use of assessment software to support all teachers in tracking and analysing pupils' performance, but is not yet using the fuller range such as electronic mail and Internet applications.

44. There is an excellent team approach across the school to support the needs of pupils identified as having special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Funding is prudently and well used. The school deploys its support staff very well for in-class support and teaching by withdrawal in small groups. This level of input makes a significant contribution to the standards and the very good progress pupils make.

45. Staffing in the school is very good and has a very positive effect on the standards achieved by children when they reach the age of five and by pupils at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully managed the turnover in teachers to ensure a professional team which is balanced in age, experience and gender. It uses its extra funding for the reduction of class sizes in Key Stage 1 very effectively to benefit the youngest pupils when they transfer from the nursery to the main school. Most of the weaknesses in expertise identified at the last inspection have been addressed well, especially in art and design and technology. However, the school is aware that staff confidence in information technology is still lacking; this has a negative effect on the curriculum offered.

46. Arrangements for the induction of new staff and the professional development of teachers are mainly informal, but continue to be effective in creating a close-knit team of people who share knowledge of pupils and ideas for school developments, such as up-dating the assessment policy. The school is a very capable provider of initial teacher training for the university students who come for their teaching practice placements. Teachers benefit from the additional support, which the students provide in classrooms and from the new ideas, which they bring, for example, in art. There are appropriate plans for staff training in the new appraisal and performance management arrangements which take effect later this year. There are no systems in place for reviewing the professional development of non-teaching staff.

47. The provision of support staff and voluntary helpers continues to be a strength of the school and has a significant influence on the very good progress made by children under five, pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language. The appointment of the senior mid-day supervisor as a classroom assistant enables a better continuity of care between the teaching sessions and the lunch-time period. However, the difficulties in recruiting and training a full complement of mid-day supervisors have an adverse effect on the behaviour of pupils at lunch-time.

48. Accommodation is good. The main school's classrooms are of good size and allow even large year groups to be taught very effectively. There is a useful room for small group work. The accommodation is very well managed to meet the needs of children under five and the reception and Year 1 pupils in the main school. However, the leaking veranda roof in the Nursery prevents outdoor play in damp weather. The outdoor pool is a good feature and enables pupils to make very good progress in learning to swim. The site, although attractive, has several hidden corners which make it difficult for the numbers of staff on duty to supervise pupils effectively at break and lunch-times.

49. Learning resources are adequate. There is a good provision of books throughout the school. The library is well stocked and provides a suitable area for hearing pupils read but it is not sufficiently used to develop pupils' research skills. The school has made some progress in acquiring more

computers since the last inspection, but provision is still unsatisfactory; for example, there are no CD-ROMs or Internet facility.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

50. In order to take the school forward and to build upon its present quality, the staff and governors should:

- **raise standards in information and communications technology by:**
  - (i) developing a scheme of work for the subject which details the systematic development of the full range of skills required by the National Curriculum;
  - (ii) improving the levels of computers and software to meet the needs of the curriculum;  
(See paragraphs 2, 21).
- **improve standards across the full curriculum further for the more able by:**
  - (i) providing more opportunities in history and geography for extended writing and the use of the basic skills learned in English;  
(See paragraphs 65, 93, 99, 104).
- **disseminate effective practice more widely across the school by:**
  - (i) devising a whole school framework for monitoring and evaluation of standards and quality;
  - (ii) developing the monitoring and evaluation role of subject co-ordinators;  
(See paragraphs 42, 68, 75, 81, 98, 104).
- **improve schemes of work and strategies for assessment and recording when undertaking its curriculum review in the light of Curriculum 2000 by:**
  - (i) including clearer guidance for teachers in the schemes of work for subjects other than literacy and numeracy on the progression of skills to be developed in different year groups;
  - (ii) using current good practice in English and mathematics to extend the recording of significant progress and achievement of individual pupils to all subjects;  
(See paragraphs 18, 22, 86).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	67
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10	28	31	22	6	0	0

*The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	30	236
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		17

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	56

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	69

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### *Attendance*

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	21	14	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	20	21
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	33	33	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (91)	94 (88)	97(89)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	21	21
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	33	34	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (92)	97 (94)	97 (91)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	15	14	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	13	14
	Girls	12	10	11
	Total	27	23	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	93 (76)	79 (82)	86 (85)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (71)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	12	14
	Girls	11	10	10
	Total	24	22	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (78)	76 (75)	76 (83)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	16
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	34
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	15
Chinese	4
White	160
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	29.25
Average class size	29.25

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	96.5

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7.5
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	511501
Total expenditure	517327
Expenditure per pupil	2065
Balance brought forward from previous year	9904
Balance carried forward to next year	4078

### ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

#### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

264

Number of questionnaires returned

120

Percentage of responses in each category

My child likes school.

My child is making good progress in school.

Behaviour in the school is good.

My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.

The teaching is good.

I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.

I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.

The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.

The school works closely with parents.

The school is well led and managed.

The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
70	28	2	0	0
47	45	3	0	5
45	45	5	0	4
36	41	16	2	5
60	36	1	2	2
46	37	13	2	3
68	25	3	3	1
57	42	1	1	0
44	42	8	2	4
54	33	6	2	5
63	32	3	0	2
27	35	24	4	10



## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

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

51. Children who are under five are mainly taught in the nursery class with a few also in the reception class. Attendance is part-time in the nursery, with children attending either mornings or afternoons. They enter school with the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and approaches to learning that are approximately in line with those experienced nationally, although a little below the County average. The intake varies slightly from term to term. The school assesses attainment on entry using the County Nursery Baseline and uses this information well to adapt its teaching input to meet the needs of the individual pupils. The careful induction of new children enables them to settle quickly into the nursery routines with confidence and enjoyment. Children make good progress so that their standard of attainment is good and most pupils exceed the desirable learning outcomes in all the six areas of learning by the age of five. The school also makes good provision for the pupils to move smoothly into the next phase of education, whether within St Andrew's or other schools.

52. The quality of teaching for the under fives is always good and sometimes very good or excellent. The teachers, nursery nurse and support assistants work very well as a team. They ensure on a termly, weekly and daily basis that planning meets children's needs and ensures that continuity and progression is maintained. They provide good role models for the enjoyment of learning, which contributes significantly to the enthusiasm that children show when working and to their eagerness to share their views and opinions. All the staff have a good knowledge of the needs of the under fives and a shared approach to the management and care of all the children. Voluntary helpers also make a positive contribution to children's learning experiences.

53. Children with special educational needs make very good progress as a result of careful assessment and awareness of their individual needs. Adult support is well targeted to ensure that children can benefit from the activities and fully participate in situations needing personal and social skills. Many children with English as an additional language are at an early stage of acquiring the language. They are well provided for and make very good progress. There are good opportunities provided in their mother tongue for language and literacy development as well as helping to develop comprehension and fluency in English. They are well supported to become part of the school community.

### **Language and Literacy**

54. Children make good progress in language, particularly in speaking and listening. They are given frequent opportunities both in structured and informal situations to develop reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. The Nursery has a very good range of books to stimulate reading. Children follow and listen well to stories and poems, which they enjoy. Many are very articulate and able to express a point of view using extended sentences. Teachers use questioning effectively to develop language. Children readily contribute ideas in discussions and join in with reading the text. They learn the sounds associated with letters and begin to use these to spell out short words. Many children have secure writing skills and can underwrite their dictated sentences with well-formed letters that are of a consistent size, whilst others demonstrate good control when overwriting their scribed ideas. The context for writing is meaningful and usually related to contributing ideas about the current theme, such as expressing views about the need for and use of water.

### **Mathematics**

55. Children's attainment in mathematics is very good and most children are in line to exceed the expected levels by the age of five. All the children are enthusiastic to join in whole class activity and to demonstrate their individual capability. They have many opportunities to develop number skills and mathematical vocabulary through stories and rhymes and through practical activities such as sorting and counting shells and fruit. Many children can count, read, write and add numbers up to 10, with the oldest children having number recognition and sequencing capability well beyond 20. They

can identify missing numbers in a sequence. They know positional words such as first and second and are secure in ordering the days of the week. They apply their number skills in a variety of situations such as counting jumps on the trampoline, singing songs involving number patterns and using positional language when sequencing events in a story.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

56. Children are provided with stimulating experiences of the world around them both through visits to interesting places and through practical hands-on activities. They are able to talk about their own experiences such as visits to the seaside and playground. They learn about the needs of living things such as the growth of plants by caring for their own; they are developing good enquiry skills when studying fruit and vegetables. Using all their senses to study shells and the inside of fruit is developing careful observation skills. Closer observation is encouraged through the use of magnifiers. Children are gaining knowledge of the recent and distant past through considering their own life history and of life in other times. They are learning to use the computer but this is an area for further development in line with whole school needs.

### **Physical Development**

57. Children engage in a range of physical skills in which they show a well-developed sense of co-ordination, control and balance; for example, when climbing securely along the row of tyres and controlling pedal vehicles in outdoor play. They receive clear guidance in safety procedures and spatial awareness so as not to hurt themselves or others. They are learning to work with a range of apparatus and equipment such as dough, glue and puzzles. Fine motor skill development is encouraged through the use of a variety of modelling equipment, toys and tools.

### **Creative Development**

58. Children experience an appropriate range of creative activity. They explore colour, shape and texture in two and three dimensions by creating attractive pictures, patterns and models. They develop the skills to record observation using a variety of media and writing tools, with increasing attention to detail; for example, when learning how to mix powder paint sensibly to create various shades and effects. They construct their own creative models and engage in imaginative role-play. They join enthusiastically in singing.

### **Personal and Social Development**

59. The school places great emphasis on developing independence and personal responsibility. Many children show a great interest and wonder in a whole range of learning situations and like sharing their ideas with others. They remain on task for prolonged periods and show good levels of concentration. Most children have a highly developed sense of right and wrong and have quickly learned to be thoughtful for others, to move around in an orderly manner, to take turns and to take responsibility; for example, when clearing away and dressing themselves in the appropriate clothing for the task. They play socially together in the sand and water areas and on the large outdoor play equipment and some are developing the skill of interactive play.

60. The curriculum received by the pupils under five is broad, balanced and stimulating, addressing well all the six areas of learning and incorporating the philosophy of High Scope education. The provision for children under five is well managed and resourced resulting in a good rate of progress for all pupils, particularly in the development of their personal and social skills. The accommodation provides an interesting learning environment in which all are able to flourish. The school is aware that it has yet to make final preparations for the introduction of the new Foundation Stage in September, which identifies the educational requirements for pupils entering school to the end of their reception year. This provides an opportunity to revise planning so that it more clearly identifies the progressive steps in learning outcomes identified within the curricular framework, as well as setting out the activities to be used to meet the new Early Learning Goals. Planning will also need to define access to the Key Stage 1 curriculum more explicitly, especially in literacy and

numeracy, for the significant number of pupils who will exceed these goals and require additional challenge.

## ENGLISH

61. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading and writing, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 and the higher Level 3, was well above the national average. Current performance is also well above that for schools taking pupils from similar backgrounds. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 were well above the national averages. When compared with similar schools, performance was also well above the average. Inspection evidence shows that pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 are attaining at levels above the national expectations but the current cohort of Year 6 pupils are not performing so well at the higher levels in their written tasks.

62. The school's 1999 results at both key stages show an improvement on the previous two years and the overall trend over the last four years shows increased attainment, greater than the national trend. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection when pupils were achieving in line with the national averages. The progress that pupils make in their learning in English is very good at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very high when compared with most schools. Their needs are quickly identified and they receive very good levels of teaching and support to develop their skills of speaking and listening and their reading and written skills. They make very good progress throughout the school so that they reach similar levels of attainment as other pupils.

63. By the end of both key stages, pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is well above expectations. Pupils speak clearly and take part in discussions in class and in assemblies. They listen with interest to their teachers and respond very well with comments. In assemblies they readily contribute their ideas; for example, in assembly that was introducing pupils to problems of people who are blind, pupils of all ages expressed their perceptions and understanding with confidence and clarity. In a Year 2 design and technology lesson, pupils used extended sentences to express their ideas about conflicting requirements when evaluating and designing a winding mechanism. In a Year 3 English lesson, when writing about sports news or charity reports, pupils also expressed their ideas clearly, using extended language. In a Year 6 design and technology lesson pupils evaluated and discussed their work very well in groups; they displayed abilities to ask questions, develop ideas, take account of other's views and they adapted their talk well to the demands of the challenges they were given.

64. Standards in reading across the school are well above average. The school gives very good attention to support pupils' reading and spelling, both in class and by focused withdrawal for pupils experiencing difficulties. The school has recently purchased a range of new books for use in class and in the library, which is further supporting improvement in standards. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are confident with strategies to establish the meaning of unfamiliar words, using various methods such as phonics, graphics, syntax or context. They respond well to fiction and non-fiction and employ alphabetical knowledge in locating books and information. More able pupils show a significant understanding of ideas and characters in the stories they are reading and successfully locate ideas and seek information. By the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils successfully identify the crucial features, themes and characters of the story and select phrases and sentences when responding to other's views. Many can retrieve and collate information from a variety of sources. However, the planned opportunities to do this and for them to research in subjects such as science, geography and history, and to use the school library and CD ROMs for independent study are too limited.

65. Standards in writing at Key Stage 1 are well above national averages. Pupils are given many excellent opportunities for extending writing and to edit and re-draft their work. An example of an excellent approach to develop their written skills at a very high level was seen in Year 2 lesson, where pupils had to find and use a range of words associated with the five senses; most successfully used dictionaries and thesaurus to find these words and incorporate them into a sequence of sentences with a knowledge of their meaning; they chose words adventurously for effect and in a short time most pupils wrote many grammatically correct, punctuated sentences to express their ideas effectively.

Standards at Key Stage 2 are above average. However, the earlier achievements of pupils are not consistently built upon and there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop and redraft their written work. Pupils' written skills are insufficiently used in other curriculum areas, such as geography and history, where the over-reliance on the use of worksheets sometimes lowers expectations of the amount or quality of writing.

66. Pupils' handwriting is well developed. Many pupils at Key Stage 1 use well-formed joined script. At Key Stage 2 opportunities for pupils to draft and rewrite work, based on their teacher's input and comments and using their best handwriting or word processing skills is under-developed. Here teachers too frequently accept the pupils' first attempt as their finished work. Classroom displays at Key Stage 2 of pupils' written work are also limited.

67. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is good across the school, with some very good teaching at Key Stage 1. It never fell below satisfactory. All teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and create a positive working atmosphere to which pupils respond with keenness. Class management is very good and few pupils need reminders to get down to work. When asked to work together in pairs and groups, pupils do so with enthusiasm and good degrees of motivation. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are very good and sometimes excellent; for example, at the end of Key Stage 1. Teachers plan their daily lessons well and the effective teaching of the National Literacy Strategy is having a positive impact on the consistency of teaching and planning, raising expectations and ensuring at least good progress across the school. They define the specific skills which they want pupils to develop in order to focus learning and provide criteria for assessing pupils' progress and the effectiveness of teaching; for example, they focus on spellings or reinforce sounds being learnt.

68. The co-ordinator for English has effectively led the introduction of the literacy strategy within the school. Monitoring is insufficiently used to identify formally strengths and weaknesses within the delivery of the subject. However, there is a good informal awareness within the school of strengths and plans are in place to disseminate this more widely; for example, the very good presentation and delivery of the strategy in Year 2. The use of information and communication technology is unevenly developed across the school and there are too few resources to support this development. In other respects the subject is satisfactorily resourced. The recent purchase of new books has enhanced the provision for reading in classes and in the library. The library provides satisfactory and pleasant accommodation. It is well organised and stocked with fiction and non-fiction books, but is insufficiently used for the independent study by pupils.

## **MATHEMATICS**

69. In the 1999 national tests for both Key Stages 1 and 2, attainment was well above average with an above average percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels in both key stages. In comparison with schools of a similar type attainment was above average in Key Stage 1 but average in Key Stage 2. Inspection findings confirm that standards of attainment in mathematics are still at least above average at the end of both key stages. Progress in Key Stage 1 is good but there is a decline in attainment in the lower years of Key Stage 2 so that the rate of progress fluctuates, being unsatisfactory in lower Key Stage 2 and good in the upper two classes. However, the overall picture indicates good improvement in standards since the last inspection, which is in part due to a revision of the school's scheme of work for mathematics to implement the numeracy strategy. There has also been whole school training to improve teachers' understanding of mental strategies and mathematical investigations.

70. At Key Stage 1 teachers successfully build upon the good mathematical skills developed by children under the age of five. Most pupils have well-developed number skills and work is appropriately based on a wide range of practical experiences, using everyday objects and mathematical equipment. Gradually more abstract experiences are introduced. By the end of Year 2 pupils have good recall of number bonds and can use the strategies of doubling and halving to establish number patterns. They use mathematical language such as total and more than, when describing situations and actions taken. There are also good opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge in problem solving situations, including those handling data, for example, when they try to

identify the most common word length in a short paragraph. Pupils also have good knowledge of two and three-dimensional shapes and the associated vocabulary.

71. By the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils are secure in their ability to manipulate number and can carry out more complex mental calculations requiring more than one operation. They are developing the capacity to use estimations and inverse functions to check calculations. They have a good understanding of place value to three decimal points and can confidently change metric measures into their decimal equivalent. They have the ability to extract information from a variety of graphical representations of data. They continue to develop problem-solving skills but these are not as secure as their knowledge of number. Pupils are less confident in their use of time, their ability to identify co-ordinates in graphical situations and their understanding of probability. Pupils' ability to carry out informal jottings to support more complex mental strategies and to explain strategies used when problem solving is underdeveloped. Some pupils fail to use the correct mathematical terminology when talking about their work. Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently to support and extend pupils' learning in mathematics.

72. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the good quality of classroom support. The pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress as a result of focused adult support and a concentration on mathematical language to enable access to the learning and greater fluency in explanation.

73. Pupils show varying attitudes to mathematics, which can change within the lesson. In some lessons, particularly in Key Stage 2, the pupils appear reluctant to contribute to the starter activity unless directly approached. There is no real eagerness to display their knowledge or mental prowess. However, once written or practical work commences they show enjoyment of the activity and generally settle quickly to work and sustain concentration well. Some pupils in Key Stage 1 are very motivated to contribute their ideas both in the starter activity and the plenary session and in these situations progress is particularly good. Most pupils work both independently and in groups where they provide good support for one another.

74. The quality of teaching overall is good with a third being very good. In all lessons there is compliance with the National Numeracy Strategy and lessons are planned with clear learning intentions and with work identified for different abilities, although differentiation is not always as focused as it might be. In the best lessons the purpose of the session is shared with pupils so that they are fully aware of what they are trying to achieve; for example, in a Year R lesson where pupils were developing their understanding that 'we pay money to buy food'. The learning is delivered at a brisk pace in all the sections of the lesson, facilitated by the good management of pupils through establishing clear organisational structures and setting expectations of outcomes concisely. The pupils are regularly consulted on their rate of progress and any issues arising are addressed so that pupils can continue effectively; for example, in a Year 2 lesson pupils were supported well by the teacher in developing a systematic way to record numbers so as not to miss any out when solving problems involving totalling numbers. The plenary focuses explicitly on the learning gained and problems overcome. In the occasional lesson confusion with content and what is expected from the activity results in pupils making unsatisfactory progress requiring further teaching in the following session to clarify the confusion. There is growing confidence in the teaching of mental strategies and an increased awareness of the need for more direct teaching, though the quality of the instruction is variable, as is the choice of activities to deliver the specific learning. There is an over-dependence on photocopied worksheets, some of which do not deliver effective learning, particularly in developing the ability to discuss and explain strategies used. There is still a need in some classes for the more effective use of the plenary to challenge and consolidate learning.

75. Appropriate time is allocated to the subject and statutory requirements are met. In both key stages there is a need to increase the use of information technology and introduce a more systematic approach to the use of calculators, not only as an efficient tool to aid complex problem solving and an accuracy check but also as a means of exploring number patterns and place value. The mathematics co-ordinator has guided the school through the introduction to the National Numeracy Strategy and arranged training for staff, which has contributed to the raising of standards. Parents have been kept well informed of the strategy and a practical workshop has been provided for them. The school now

has detailed data on individual pupil performance and is matching performance against predicted targets on a yearly basis. However, the school has yet to monitor thoroughly the effectiveness of the teaching of the various components of the numeracy sessions and its impact on standards. This is particularly important to address the slight dip in standards in lower Key Stage 2. Analysis of pupils' individual test papers has not yet been used sufficiently to inform amendments to the curriculum, which would help identify weaknesses in pupil performance and further raise the proportion of higher attaining pupils.

## **SCIENCE**

76. Levels of attainment in science at the end of Key Stage 1 are well above the expected standards for pupils of similar age. This reflects pupils' performance in science in the 1999 National Curriculum teacher assessments and is a good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils make very good progress especially in their development of investigative skills across this key stage. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are above the national average. In the 1999 national tests and tasks attainment was above average and is similar to the standard at the last inspection. The quality of teaching at the end of the key stage encourages effective learning and promotes positive attitudes to work. As a result, pupils learn well and make good progress. The proportion of pupils working at Level 4 is higher in the observed classes than that reported in 1999, which were below average in comparison with schools in a similar context.

77. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils of above average ability work within Level 3 in their understanding of life processes and living things. They give accurate reasons for the differences between living and non-living things, have explored life cycles and describe life processes. They understand how to make and operate simple circuits and have a good understanding of forces. Pupils can describe non-reversible and reversible changes in food. Pupils make effective links with other subjects in their work. For example, there is good use of tables and charts to record and communicate findings of investigations and electric circuits have been incorporated into a design technology project about stained glass windows. There is appropriate emphasis on investigations and pupils are able to understand the nature of a science investigation. Pupils of below average attainment are given good support and guidance through very effective use of support staff.

78. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils understand and use suitable technical vocabulary and language, for example, condensation and evaporation and have an above average knowledge of the organs of the human body. By Year 5, pupils have developed a good understanding of controlling variables in testing materials for sound absorption. They can make predictions and are able to identify patterns in the results. The higher attaining pupils can say how they would improve their work. They understand the need to test results more than once to obtain reliable information. At the beginning of Key Stage 2 pupils exhibit a lower level of scientific skill than that observed in the current Year 2.

79. Pupils in all classes show interest in and enthusiasm for science. Attitudes to work are good and pupils generally listen attentively during whole-class sessions, although some pupils in Years 3 and 4 have some difficulty in maintaining the very good standards seen elsewhere in the school. These positive attitudes have a direct result on the progress that pupils make in their learning. Pupils' writing in Year 2, Year 5 and 6 reflects their interest and enthusiasm for the subject. In Year 3 and Year 4 there is extensive use of printed materials to structure writing but this limits pupils' development. Pupils with special educational needs learn well and make good progress in lessons due to the good quality of support staff and their effective deployment. The good quality support for pupils with English as an additional language ensures that they too make good progress in their learning. All pupils gain a secure understanding of scientific skills and concepts as they move through Key Stage 2.

80. The quality of teaching in science is good overall throughout the school although there are unsatisfactory elements at the beginning of Key Stage 2. Of the lessons observed half were very good or excellent but there was also some unsatisfactory teaching. In the best lessons, teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the science curriculum. Planning in these lessons has relevant learning targets and the quality of teachers' intervention, questioning, discussion and challenge of pupils' thinking is a particular strength. Teachers give all pupils opportunities to discuss their

findings. The pace of these lessons is good and ensures pupils' interest and motivation and they have good opportunities to engage in their own research and to plan and carry out their own investigations. For example, in a Year 2 lesson pupils requiring pupils to carry out their own investigations on forces they also had to devise their own recording strategies. There is a good match of work to the needs and abilities of pupils and in Year 5 opportunities to use information and communications technology are incorporated into the science investigations. Unsatisfactory lessons have low expectations and do not provide opportunities for pupils to build sufficiently on previously good levels of understanding. The teachers are not secure in their subject knowledge and do not ask the appropriate questions to ensure that pupils' work is focused on their enquiries. This is particularly noticeable in feedback sessions when the discussions were long and pupils did not establish patterns in the findings.

81. The school's scheme of work for science, built on the local authority guidance and increasingly incorporating recent national guidance, details areas of work for different classes and age ranges. The planning and organisation of the subject ensure coverage of the National Curriculum although there is insufficient use of information technology. Planning gives a good level of support and guidance for teachers to teach the science knowledge but insufficient guidance for the development of investigative skills. However, the school places a suitable level of emphasis on the investigative element of science throughout both key stages and this is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and interest. There is no formal structure for the monitoring of teaching, but results and trends over time are analysed. There has been an analysis of pupils' written work and some changes have been made in order to raise standards that, in line with the national trend, were on a downward trend in 1998. Overall, the monitoring of work in science is unsatisfactory and there is a lack of continuity of approach through Key Stage 2 that is hindering planned progress in investigative science. Resourcing for the subject is satisfactory and staff make effective use of the school grounds and local area to maximise learning opportunities.

## **ART**

82. Standards in art are above national expectations at the end of both key stages. This is an improvement on the previous inspection and reflects the good quality activities provided for pupils to stimulate creativity and the systematic way in which skills are developed.

83. Throughout the school pupils work in both two and three dimensions and make very good use of preparatory studies before engaging in final pieces of work. Year R pupils completed high quality observational drawings of fruit using touch and magnifying lenses to observe the internal and external structure of different fruits and used coloured pencils skilfully to record their observations of shading and texture. Other Year R pupils used mirrors to study the shape and features of their faces before producing self-portraits, using a wide range of flesh coloured crayons and mixing paint to achieve the correct tone. Year 1 pupils built on their earlier understanding of mixing colour further when painting flowers in water colours and had investigated weaving and the effects of stitching in their Art 2000 project. In Year 2 pupils developed these skills further through direct application to a wide range of activities; for example, they had used colour wash to illustrate books produced as part of an English project; these pictures were vibrant, showing very high levels of imagination and creativity. They used their investigation of the work of famous artists as the stimulus for a group project to produce a mural to improve the environment in the school dining room; different groups used a range of materials and techniques, including imaginative painting, observational drawing, printing and collage to achieve their designs.

84. At Key Stage 2 pupils experience a wide range of different art activities. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 use clay to model pots and to make sculptures of landscapes. Throughout the key stage pupils develop their skills systematically and use sketchbooks to build up their designs and chart their progression. By the end of the key stage pupils are able to experiment with different resources to achieve a desired technical effect; for example, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils had used a variety of techniques to illustrate movement and Year 6 pupils created exciting visual effects using pastels and paints to convey speed by drawing different backgrounds around static objects.

85. The teaching of art is very good. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and this is reflected by the enjoyment and satisfaction pupils gain from their art sessions. Teaching is well

structured and lessons are organised effectively with a wide range of resources to support learning. Whole class exposition and exemplification is particularly effectively used to enable pupils to reflect on their own ideas. Pupils work with very high levels of concentration for long periods of time and in two lessons in Years 2 and 4 they expressed genuine disappointment that the lesson had to end. Pupils show insight during plenary sessions when they analyse what works well and what could be improved in their next tasks. Throughout the school pupils enjoy paying attention to detail and producing quality pieces of work. Teachers use praise effectively and provide constructive criticism to further pupils' learning within a secure environment where they are able to take risks and test out their ideas. Pupils work well together and benefit socially through the number of collaborative tasks, learning about the skills of teamwork. Pupils with English as an additional language are able to extend their language through sensitive discussion with their teachers.

86. The subject is well led and managed. The school uses the local authority scheme of work to ensure that there is progression and is currently trialling elements from national guidance before updating for the new curriculum. The current scheme provides a wide range of art activity and experiences for pupils. There are no structured arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work across the school and further work is necessary to support teachers' understanding of the development of art skills throughout the school. Teachers plan very effectively to link art with other subjects; for example, Year 3 pupils successfully made a 'memorial stone' in connection with their history project on Vikings while Year 4 used the stimulus of geography studied as part of their fieldwork to create imaginative landscapes.

87. Art makes a very good contribution to the social and cultural development of pupils in the school and builds on the rich diversity within the school; for example, Year 1 pupils had achieved high quality paintings using Afro-Caribbean colours inspired by the work of Fiona McDonald and work based on Indian design was prominently displayed in the corridor. Displays throughout the school enhance the environment and are an effective record of pupils' work across the whole school. The richness of the use of textiles in art is a particular feature of the school. Displays include a textile mural illustrating aspects of the history of Hitchin. During the week of the inspection a magnificent Millennium Quilt was hung in the school hall and represented a wide range of techniques including fabric printing, appliqué, embroidery, silk screening, collage and quilting. This was the culmination of an ambitious project to represent the life of the school and everyone in it and involved many parents, teachers and every pupil making a contribution. It is an important addition to the richness and heritage of art in the school.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

88. At both Key Stages 1 and 2 standards are above national expectations. This is a good improvement on the last inspection, where standards were said to be in line with national expectations. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve standards in line with other pupils in the school.

89. Pupils make good or very good progress with their learning in design and technology. For example, pupils in a reception and Year 1 class, when designing, planning, evaluating and making a lunch box from old cereal packets for a task associated with healthy food, showed a good awareness of its fitness for purpose, applying good techniques for its construction. A Year 2 class showed very good levels of attainment when they designed mechanisms for winding up objects. Working in pairs, they evaluated and developed their ideas, satisfying conflicting requirements and their sketches showed the detail and function of their designs.

90. In Key Stage 2 pupils build on the skills developed earlier. For example, a Year 5 class investigating a range of musical instruments to see how they function, showed a good awareness of their structure and use; they evaluated the purpose and construction of the instruments and, using labelled sketches, showed the use of the relevant parts. A Year 6 class were given the higher level of challenge by the teacher when they had to design and make a pulley system to create a circular movement of an object above ground level; they had a limited range of resources to use to make the object and create the movement. Pupils worked together very well in pairs and groups with good levels of awareness, interest and enthusiasm and worked at a fast pace. Their teacher and support



staff provided very good levels of questioning and suggestion for pupils to produce step-by-step plans, identifying the main stages in making. They listed and examined the materials to be used, evaluating and experimenting their purpose and application very well.

91. The quality of teaching, supported by the new scheme at both Key Stages 1 and 2, is very good overall. Teachers have a very good awareness of planning lessons to challenge pupils' competences, and raise standards. Since the last inspection, there has been a big improvement in the quality of teaching and teachers' security to deliver the subject.

92. The subject co-ordinator has been appointed recently and has developed an excellent up-to-date scheme of work supported by teaching hints for teachers. This is having a significant impact on standards and delivery of the subject across the school. The school has planned a design and technology week for the week after the inspection, which will give a clear focus for the monitoring, evaluation and further development for the subject. Here, teachers will be evaluating all work produced across the school and the recently applied scheme of work. The present, very good management of the subject, together with the new scheme is having a significant impact on the way pupils use the subject.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

93. Very little evidence of recorded work was seen during the inspection. Judgements on standards of pupil attainment are largely based upon talking to children and pupils' responses in the lessons observed. Throughout the school standards of attainment and progress in geography are in line with national expectations, but there is little evidence of the more able pupils attaining at a higher standard and so their rate of progress is not as good as it should be.

94. At Key Stage 1 pupils are learning to identify locations around the world that are of interest to them. They are able to place factual information on a large-scale map of the town and draw a simple plan of the school grounds. By the end of the key stage most are proficient at drawing maps of a village indicating the range of features and services that might be found there. They can compare and contrast very simply two different localities such as Hitchin and Struay. They are confident in using a compass to identify the four major directions and are just developing the capability to plot a route by compass direction and distance in metres. Some are aware of the existence of the magnetic North Pole.

95. By the upper end of Key Stage 2 pupils have an increased awareness of local environmental issues and possible solutions. They are aware of issues occurring around the world as reported in the media. They can describe simply two different environments such as mountains and coasts and are secure in their understanding of river systems and the effects these can have on the landscape. They describe weather patterns from data. Knowledge of environmental patterns on a world-wide scale and the explanation of these are not well developed and there are insecurities in the use of geographical vocabulary and conventions such as grid referencing. There is little evidence of detailed enquiry of places in comparative locations or practical fieldwork with focused data gathering at an appropriate level.

96. In the lesson observed in Year 2 pupils show enthusiasm and maturity when asked to organise themselves to meet a challenge as a group. The younger pupils are very attentive when engaged in a task but can quickly become restless when the conversation fails to motivate them sufficiently. At Key Stage 2 the pupils observed are able to contribute to discussion and feedback with interest but can quickly lose concentration when asked to record ideas.

97. Teaching in Key Stage 1 is at least satisfactory and frequently very good. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement at Key Stage 2. Where teaching is very good teacher subject knowledge is secure and provides activities that build on the previous experiences of children to enable them to reflect on geographical issues and evidence gathered by their own questionnaires, such as the provision of leisure facilities within the local area. Children are set challenging problems requiring group co-operation in the application of geographical skills such as compass directions and instructional writing.

98. Evidence from teachers' plans and discussion with the co-ordinator indicates that the recently adopted national guidance within the scheme of work is helping to clarify learning intentions for lessons. The school makes frequent use of the surrounding locality, school grounds and educational visits for first-hand experiences. The co-ordinator recognises that there is a need for a more systematic approach to developing geographical skills, such as the teaching of map work. There is also the need to develop the depth of geographical enquiry skills especially at Key Stage 2 to enable pupils to have a more secure understanding and attain the higher levels. Currently it is not always possible to identify how work is being matched sufficiently to pupils' prior attainment levels. Work is not always marked consistently or with an emphasis on how the work could be improved. The co-ordinator has not been required to monitor standards within the subject and there has not been any whole school review of teaching and learning in the subject since the last inspection because of other national priorities.

## **HISTORY**

99. Because of the school's topic structure, lessons were only observed in Key Stage 2. These, along with a scrutiny of pupils' work and discussion with pupils, show that by the end of each key stage standards in history are in line with national expectations. Progress overall is satisfactory in acquiring a knowledge of the past, although progress is unsatisfactory at the beginning of Key Stage 2. This is a sustained position since the last inspection. There is no evidence to show that pupils have a well-developed understanding of the application of historical enquiry skills and reasoning required to attain higher standards. Particularly in Key Stage 2 pupils do not demonstrate the ability to expand on knowledge and ideas in any depth. This is not a satisfactory situation considering pupils' good attainment in literacy and numeracy and represents underachievement of the more able pupils.

100. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils show an appropriate understanding of chronology and can identify the range of evidence sources available to the historian, as witnessed by the good range of photographic evidence and artefacts provided by pupils' families, when comparing contrasting generations within their own personal experiences. They are able to generate simple historical questions that might be answerable from the evidence, such as 'how different was the clothing babies wore?'

101. Within Key Stage 2 pupils gain knowledge of a range of historical periods and civilisations such as the Ancient Egyptians and Romans. Year 4 pupils learn to extract evidence of life styles through considering itineraries written in Tudor times. Year 5 pupils recount in detail through personal experience of a visit to Kentwell, the everyday life style of the Tudor peasants in comparison to that of the wealthy. They are also starting to identify similarities and difference between contemporary dynasties by comparing the Tudors and Mughals. Year 6 pupils can use evidence sources such as photographs of archaeological remains to work out the physical and social environment that existed at the peak of the Indus civilisation. Older pupils generally know the main events of a period and the impact of these but the detail and explanation of this lacks depth and significant reasoning. A few Year 6 pupils are able to use inference and deduction when identifying and explaining the lasting impact of a civilisation.

102. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection in Key Stage 2 is variable. In lessons for the older pupils the teaching is good or very good and the learning is delivered at a good pace, stimulating pupils' contributions and requiring some creative thinking. In particular Year 5 had a visiting speaker from the Multicultural Education and Curriculum Support Service to deliver a knowledgeable input on the Mughal Empire, which fully engaged pupils for an extended period before developing into group research projects. This also provided good opportunities for some pupils from Indian families to contribute their experiences of having visited the monuments described. It also provided a challenging experience, which was well supported by all the adults present, to engage the pupils in comparative analysis of evidence. There was a good balance of open questioning to elicit ideas and focused exposition to extend knowledge. There is, however, some unsatisfactory teaching for the younger pupils in the key stage when they are not given appropriate activities and sufficiently focused teaching to gain understanding of the period being studied. The quality of

marking is erratic with little guidance for pupils on how to improve their standard of work. Teachers do not keep accurate assessments of pupils' attainment to impact on future planning. In all classes there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to deliver their ideas and learning through extended prose and individually selected and creative recording strategies.

103. Pupils are generally interested in their work and enjoy practical enquiry, although the level of interest and involvement reflects the nature of the teaching. They particularly enjoy historical visits which makes the learning more meaningful, such as the visit to Kentwell which they describe with real enthusiasm and humour.

104. The school has recently revised its scheme of work and is implementing the national guidance on units of work. Visits and visitor inputs are very well planned to extend the curriculum provision and there is a commitment to making history come alive for the pupils by, for instance, visiting the Roman remains at Verulamium, using the evidence within the local town and its museum service as well as the evidence provided by the school's families and the school's own good resources. However, the over use of inappropriate printed worksheets is restricting pupils' attainment and progress and is an area that needs to be addressed so that the benefits of stimulating experiences can be maximised and manifest themselves in higher attainment. As yet the school has not started to monitor pupils' progress in history or the quality of teaching in the subject to share effective practice more widely.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

105. The school is failing to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum for the teaching of information technology, as the full curriculum is not being taught to pupils. The previous inspection identified this curriculum subject as an area of weakness and although there has been some development insufficient progress has been made. By the end of both key stages, standards are below national expectations.

106. Throughout the school, pupils have insufficient opportunities to use information technology to support their learning across the full curriculum. There is some recorded evidence of pupils' work particularly in word processing and drawing and painting. The school makes effective use of some voluntary helpers to assist with classes and there is evidence that this is having a positive impact on raising standards in word-processing and data handling.

107. Pupils apply their literacy skills satisfactorily through word-processing. By Year 2, pupils are successful in changing fonts and the size of fonts when word-processing stories and poems. These skills are developed in Key Stage 2 and there are satisfactory examples of pupils using fonts, justification of text and imaginative layouts when word-processing, for example, in creating a science dictionary. In Year 2 pupils were able to open and save files and have good mouse and cursor key control. Pupils in Year 5 were not familiar with the idea of editing text and there was wasted time re-typing the names of materials when pupils were communicating findings of their investigations. Throughout the school there is good use of painting and drawing packages; for example, in Year 1 computer designed graphics improve the appearance of toys that pupils have made and in Year 2 the programme has been used to draw religious symbols. There is some limited evidence of data handling work in Year 2 and Year 5. There is no evidence of pupils using computers for control work or to make models. There is also no work with electronic sensors or digital cameras although pupils do know how to use tape recorders.

108. Although a very small amount of teaching of information technology with small groups was observed there is insufficient evidence to comment on the quality of teaching in this subject. There is some monitoring of pupils' attainment in the areas of the curriculum covered and some class teachers keep records to ensure equality of access in each classroom. The planning does not yet set a programme for the systematic development of skills; however, there are the beginnings of a scheme of work that have the potential to achieve this goal.

109. The co-ordinator recognises the weaknesses in information technology. There has been an improvement in the number of computers since the last inspection although most of these are

machines discarded from business or secondary schools and not all have the appropriate specification. The information and communications development plan is ambitious and includes changes to the building to allow for a computer suite for teaching skills to be used across the curriculum. Governors and parents are involved in and support this plan.

## **MUSIC**

110. Pupils' attainment in music is in line with that expected for pupils at the same age at both seven and eleven years old. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve similar standards. This is similar to the last inspection.

111. In Key Stage 1 pupils respond well to the good levels of teaching. Overall, they reach satisfactory levels in singing. An example of good standards was seen in a reception and Year 1 lesson; here pupils sang a range of learnt songs with confidence. By investigating a range of sounds, they showed the good awareness of pulse, rhythm and the dynamics and successfully tapped out the rhythm of their name on a range of percussion instruments, starting to improvise musical patterns. They successfully achieved a planned effect when tapping a rhythm according to the number and order of times they saw a red or yellow square. This was a good introduction to musical notation.

112. At both Key Stages 1 and 2 standards of singing are not always maintained when pupils sing in assemblies. Here their standards are sometimes barely satisfactory. This is because they do not have sufficient opportunities to develop and practise their skills. For example, one whole school assembly illustrated that pupils had learnt two part songs and rounds where they maintained their own parts whilst relating their contribution to that of the other pupils. Here standards were satisfactory. In another Key Stage 2 assembly good standards of single part singing were obtained but several pupils were not taking part. Here standards, for the pupils' ages, were barely satisfactory. In a Year 3 lesson taken by a visiting teacher good standards were achieved when pupils clapped out rhythms according to musical notation. They displayed a growing knowledge of the names and application of a range of percussion instruments and musical language, such as 'ostinato'. Groups of pupils responded with enthusiasm when playing a range of percussion instruments, producing musical interpretations, together with a good awareness of pulse, rhythm and dynamics. They all had a chance to perform. In a Year 4 class, where a similar lesson was attempted, pupils only achieved satisfactory standards, due to a shorter amount of lesson time and the larger class numbers.

113. Music plays an important part of the life of the school. Pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress. There is a good range of opportunities for them to learn and make music provided by the school. Many of these are provided through extra-curricular activities, taken effectively by peripatetic visiting musicians. Pupils have opportunities to play the violin, the flute, brass instruments, the cello and the piano. There is a junior choir, a wind band and a recorder club. These meet frequently to practise and develop their skills, but these sessions take place at lunch-time which limits the amount of time available to improve standards of performance. There are relevant opportunities for pupils to perform in the local area. During the week of inspection, the school's wind band was rehearsing for a performance in a County music festival. Pupils have previously given a school performance of 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat'.

114. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. During the inspection examples of good teaching was seen in both key stages. At no time did it fall below satisfactory. When opportunities arise pupils respond with good levels of interest and enthusiasm.

115. At present the teaching of music is co-ordinated by the headteacher. There is an intention to appoint a new co-ordinator when the opportunity arises. The range of resources was said to be good at the last inspection. They are now satisfactory. The school is aware of the need to increase resources, in particular for tuned instruments.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

116. The school has made significant progress in improving standards in physical education at Key Stage 2 since the last inspection when attainment was judged to be below average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is now securely meeting the standards expected. Only swimming was taking

place for Key Stage 1 pupils during the inspection period and whilst this shows a satisfactory standard, with most pupils being very confident in the water, there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement across the whole range of the curriculum.

117. Throughout Key Stage 2 pupils sustain energetic activity for a significant period and show appropriate levels of co-ordination when running, striking, sending and receiving. There was little opportunity to gain evidence of pupils' tactical team skill development in the activities being practised. Most pupils leave the school being able to swim at least 50 metres and with the ability and the understanding of strategies to save themselves and others in water. By the end of the key stage pupils have an awareness of the need to warm up muscles before exercise and the role of specific muscles involved in particular activity such as sprinting. They sustain practice well and observe teacher demonstration carefully so as to be able to improve their performance. Their skills of critical reflection and making judgements on standards of performance and ways of improving their own performance are underdeveloped

118. All pupils appear to enjoy physical activity and are very enthusiastic, changing swiftly so as to maximise their time in activity. The vast majority behave very well with due regard for the use of space and the safety of others and work harmoniously together. A very small minority requires firm control to remain sensibly on task and not become over exuberant. Even these pupils respond promptly to the teacher's commands.

119. The teaching of physical education at Key Stage 2 varies from satisfactory to very good. Where it is best the teacher has very good subject knowledge which is used to provide very clear teaching points to enable pupils to make very good progress in acquiring skills needed for sprinting and relay baton changing. The lesson is managed very well, with pupils being well aware of expected routines and the acceptable standard of behaviour so that no time is wasted on these issues and the maximum time is spent learning and practising. However, even in this lesson, there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to make informed judgements about standards and to reflect on the progress they have made. Where teaching is less secure the management and structure of the lesson does not consolidate learning so effectively.

120. The school has a good scheme of work for the subject written by the current co-ordinator using his specialist subject knowledge, which indicates progression in skills within the individual components of the subject and this has contributed to the raising of standards. The school has also engaged in a phase of staff training in response to the criticism of the previous report, which has also helped raise the level of staff knowledge and confidence. The school is well resourced for the subject both in terms of outdoor facilities and equipment, including its own swimming pool for summer swimming. The older pupils attend weekly swimming sessions at the local indoor pool. Outdoor and adventurous activities are delivered through a residential visit in Yorkshire for Year 6 pupils. The extra-curricular provision is very good for pupils in Years 5 and 6 but there is insufficient provision for younger pupils. The school enters into a range of competitive and friendly physical education activities with other schools in the area.