

Erratum

Page 8 of inspection report – 2nd paragraph under the Teaching and Learning table and 3rd line down should now read:

“slow pace, poor match of work or low expectations, and most **significantly** occur in the very large classes in Key Stage 2.”

INSPECTION REPORT

**DOWNFIELD JUNIOR MIXED AND INFANT
SCHOOL**

Downfield Road, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117255

Headteacher: Mrs. E. Hurrion

Reporting inspector: Martin Kerly
Ofsted No.12783

Dates of inspection: 13th – 17th March 2000

Inspection number: 189932

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Downfield JMI School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 – 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Downfield Road
Cheshunt
Hertfordshire

Postcode: EN8 8SS

Telephone number: 01992 629598

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. David Adams

Date of previous inspection: 7th October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
M. Kerly	Registered inspector	Maths Physical Education	What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve further? How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed?
B. Silvester	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
J. Keiner	Team inspector	Information Technology Geography, History	Speech and Language Base.
M. Walker	Team inspector	English, Art Special Educational needs	How well are pupils taught?
H. Williams	Team inspector	Science Music Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
C. Coombs	Team inspector	Design Technology Religious Education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Downfield Junior Mixed and Infant School has 266 full-time pupils on roll and 42 part-time children in the nursery. This is slightly larger than the average sized primary school and is increasing steadily following a period of over-subscription and the local education authority (LEA) decision to increase the school's annual intake from 34 to 45 pupils. There has been substantial additional building work in the last two years to accommodate the rising numbers. The pupils are currently organised by age into nine classes and a nursery. The school also has a new speech and language base which caters for the needs of nine junior aged pupils from across a wide area of Hertfordshire. The school is in the middle of a residential housing estate, comprised of relatively small houses and low-rise flats, built originally as an overspill for the London borough of Haringey, within a wider urban environment on the outer fringes of north London. Nearly half of the homes are owner occupied. The overwhelming majority of the pupils are white and are of United Kingdom heritage with a small minority of children from African, Caribbean, Indian and other European heritages. Unemployment in the area is relatively high and 21 per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. This figure has grown steadily in recent years, against the national trend, and is slightly above the national average. There are 11 pupils with statements of special educational need (SEN) and 86 pupils on the school's SEN register giving percentages above the national average for primary schools. The overall attainment of pupils' on entry to the school is below the national expectation for their age and well below the Hertfordshire LEA average. There is a significant variation in attainment from one year group to the next.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Downfield is a successful school which serves its community well. The pupils arrive with below average levels of achievement and leave with standards broadly average. Their personal development is very good. The teaching is almost always at least satisfactory and often good or very good. The school is well led. The headteacher, staff and governors share a commitment to raising standards. The speech and language base serves its pupils very well and makes a positive contribution to the whole school. The school has above average income for the number of pupils on roll. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils show positive attitudes to their learning and to school
- Pupils frequently make good progress, particularly in the Early Years and in Key Stage 1
- Teachers plan lessons well, make good use of time and support staff, manage their pupils well and provide a balance of support and challenge
- Pupils in the speech and language base make excellent progress. They are very well provided for and very well integrated within the school.
- The support for pupils with special educational needs is good and they make good progress.
- Standards in art at Key Stage 1 are above national expectations
- Standards in information technology (IT) are above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1
- Standards in physical education across the school and aspects of information technology and art at Key Stage 2 are above national expectations
- The pupils' work often shows good planned links between different subjects
- Behaviour is good in classes and around the school
- The school is successful in inter-school competitive sports events
- Provision for pupils' moral and cultural development is good
- Pupils' social development is very good and the school provides very well for this aspect
- There are good procedures for assessing pupils' progress
- The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher provide very good leadership and educational direction
- The governing body fulfils its responsibilities with commitment and enthusiasm
- There are good procedures for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school
- The successful recruitment and professional development of staff
- The support staff teams make a good contribution in lessons and at lunchtimes
- There is a good partnership with parents and carers and the school works hard to meet the needs of the community with support groups and various projects
- The school environment is well cared for and well presented for pupils to learn and teachers to teach
- The aims of the school are clearly expressed and reflected in its work

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 2
- Pupils' understanding of phonics and strategies for spelling.
- The organisation and deployment of teachers to avoid the large variation in class sizes as a consequence of increased numbers of pupils entering the school in each year group.
- The curriculum balance and inconsistent provision in information technology, history, and geography, particularly across Key Stage 2
- The coherence of the long term school development plan so that the contributions by individuals more clearly reflect the long term goals.
- Elements of teaching in the national literacy and the national numeracy strategies including teachers' subject knowledge
- The monitoring of attendance registers

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made significant improvements since the time of the last inspection in a relatively short time and at a time of considerable internal changes to its size, structure and organisation. The establishment of a very successfully integrated speech and language base is a major feature since the last inspection. Standards in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science have improved in national test results in both key stages faster than the national rate of improvement, although they remain well below average in mathematics at Key Stage 2. The school is on course to meet its targets set for 2000 and 2001. The quality of education provided by the school has been maintained as have the strengths previously reported in teaching. Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved and are now good. The school's climate for learning remains very good. The school continues to be very well led and has made good progress in addressing the key issues identified in the last report: standards have risen, assessment procedures from being a weakness are now a strength across the school and the minor statutory irregularities, related to collective worship and the contents of the governors' annual report to parents, have been fully addressed.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	C	B	C	B
Mathematics	D	C	E	D
Science	D	D	C	A

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The standards achieved in tests, based on the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above, indicates standards in English are close to the national average, in science are above the national average and in mathematics are below the national average. Few pupils achieved higher than the national average lowering the overall average points score shown in the table above. Standards in mathematics are a weakness. Standards over the last three years have risen significantly, although not consistently year on year nor consistently within the three reported subjects. Standards in English and science are higher than average when compared with similar schools. Standards in information technology by the end of Key Stage 2 are in line with expectations and standards in religious education are in line with those expected from the locally agreed syllabus.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are keen to come to school, to contribute and take part in a range of activities. They show positive attitudes to their work and to the school community.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall in lessons and around school throughout the day.
Personal development and relationships	These are very good and a strength of the school.
Attendance	Attendance is above, and unauthorised absences are below, the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory

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.

The strengths in teaching identified in the last report have been maintained and considerably outweigh the weaknesses. 95 per cent of teaching is at least satisfactory in the Early Years and Key Stage 1 and ninety per cent at Key Stage 2. There is no poor teaching. More than half the teaching at Key Stage 1 is good, very good or excellent. This figure is just under a half for the Early Years and around a third at Key Stage 2. Teachers' planning is good and they prepare their lessons well. They manage their pupils' behaviour well and have very good relationships with the pupils. Time, support staff and resources are used well, particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons, and to support pupils with special educational needs. Teachers set challenging work for pupils of different needs, use questioning effectively to extend pupils' thinking and provide enrichment activities for the more able. The assessment procedures to monitor learning are now a strength having previously been a weakness. Pupils' learning is supported by their positive approach to their work, encouraged as they are by the enthusiastic teaching and positive encouragement. Teachers effectively share learning targets with the whole class and individual pupils, which helps the pupils to have a clear picture of how they are improving.

There are no overall weaknesses in teaching but there are a few individual examples of unsatisfactory teaching in some classes and subjects. When these occur they are most frequently related to either weak subject knowledge, slow pace, poor match of work or low expectations, and most frequently occur in the very large classes in Key Stage 2 and the mixed age class in Key Stage 1. The most significant gains in learning are found in the base, where pupils are supported in small groups and in Key Stage 1. Many aspects of literacy and numeracy are taught well with some excellent teaching and consequently pupils frequently make good gains in their learning. The shared text session is good or very good in all classes. The word level work teaching phonics is not yet secure. In the new style numeracy lessons the oral and mental sessions sometimes lack pace, some activities are not well matched to pupils' understanding and the plenary does not always engage all the pupils. Pupils' positive attitudes to their learning are contributing to the overall good gains being made by the majority.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall with good provision for extra-curricular activities. Significant focus is given to English, mathematics, science and the caring curriculum with only limited time and attention given to some of the other subjects in some classes.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good throughout the school with access to the full curriculum. Outstanding provision in the speech and language base, supporting pupils' excellent progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils are very well supported in class and in small groups. Clear targets are set and they make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for social development is very good. It is good for moral and cultural development and satisfactory for spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a strength of the school. The school cares for all its pupils very well; it assesses their needs effectively and plans accordingly and monitors their progress

All statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education are met. The school works hard to

address the pupils' frequent poor levels of spoken language and listening skills on entry to the school. Provision for the core subjects of English, mathematics, and science is strong, as it is for many aspects of information technology in most classes. Provision in history and geography is inconsistent, particularly at Key Stage 2. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. The school works very well in partnership with parents to support the needs of its pupils. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress, and are invited and encouraged to be involved in a variety of ways in their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is a strength of the school. The headteacher provides very good direction and leadership and manages the school well. She is ably supported by the outstanding contribution made by the acting deputy head. Curriculum co-ordinators lead their subjects well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body works effectively and fulfils its responsibilities with commitment. Individual governors are well informed about the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There are many detailed and rigorous monitoring procedures in place. The headteacher and subject co-ordinators evaluate the practice of individuals and trends in standards across the school. There remain some inconsistencies in practice. The structure of the school development plan is somewhat disjointed.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of the learning resources. The accommodation is used well. The school plans well to respond to the particular needs of groups of pupils and the deployment of an extensive support staff team is generally good. However, unequal class sizes and the relatively small teaching team in Key Stage 2 impact on the quality and consistency of provision.

The headteacher and acting deputy head lead by example and have high standards and expectations. The aims of the school are clearly expressed and are reflected in its work. The major building work to extend the school and the establishment of a speech and language base have been very well managed. The long term school development plan is detailed but somewhat disjointed in its format relying on several separate documents. Financial planning is clearly focused and financial administration and control is very good. The school has consistently applied principles of best value: it analyses its own data, compares its performance, considers and consults views of partners and sets itself challenging targets. The school employs enough teachers who have a satisfactory range of experience and expertise. The size of the teaching force is relatively small and its deployment has led to significant variations in class size. There is a large support staff team to meet the needs of particular individuals and groups of pupils. The accommodation is very good and is used effectively. The quality and range of resources to support teaching and learning is good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the progress made by their children • the children's enthusiasm for school and interest in their work • the quality of teaching • the caring and supportive atmosphere • the response to individual children and families when a problem occurs • the behaviour in classes and around the school • the leadership provided by the headteacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the arrangements for homework • the nature of the word-processed reports on pupils' progress • the range of extra-curricular activities • the reduction of class sizes at Key Stage 2 • the appointment of some male teachers

The inspection team agrees with all those aspects which please the parents. The arrangements for homework are satisfactory, the reports to parents do provide sufficient information about progress and future targets, there is a good range of extra-curricular activities including activities for Key Stage 1 pupils which is unusual. There is no evidence from the inspection of pupils being disadvantaged by the absence of male teachers. The inspection team shares parents' concerns about the unequal class sizes.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Overall standards achieved by pupils in national tests by the time they reach the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are broadly in line with national averages except in mathematics. Standards of pupils when they first enter the school are below the national expectations and the Hertfordshire LEA average. Whilst the pupils frequently make good progress in lessons standards remain below national expectations when pupils start statutory schooling except in the areas of personal and social and physical development. At the end of Key Stage 1 standards in the 1999 tests in reading and mathematics were close to the national average and in writing they were above the national average. This was a considerable improvement over time and since the last inspection. Standards in comparison with similar schools were above average for writing, average for reading and below average for mathematics. At Key Stage 2 overall standards in English and science were close to the national average. In mathematics they were well below the national average. In English and mathematics fewer pupils achieved standards above the national average than in similar schools. In science the figure was well above the average for similar schools. In the national tests boys are performing less well than girls with the margin slightly greater than the national average. The standards in Key Stage 2 are considerably higher than at the time of the last inspection. The overall rate of improvement in English, mathematics and science has been faster than the national improvement, although this improvement has not been consistent year on year nor in all three subjects.
2. Evidence from the inspection confirmed the overall average standards at Key Stage 1 and in English and science at Key Stage 2. Standards in mathematics remain below national and similar school averages at Key Stage 2. Despite a significant focus in the school on the teaching of mathematics within the new National Numeracy Strategy the overall standards have not risen fast enough and too few pupils are achieving at above average levels. Standards in design and technology, history, geography and music are in line with national expectations in each key stage. Standards in religious education are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus at the end of both key stages. Standards in information technology are above expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. There are higher standards in aspects of a number of subjects; these include investigative science, dance, games and gymnastics in physical education, and observational drawing, painting and ceramics work in art across the school; aspects of information technology at Key Stage 2 and geographical skills at Key Stage 1. Standards in history, whilst satisfactory overall, do not rise at the top of Key Stage 2. Standards in speaking and listening are well below national expectations for the youngest pupils and remain a relative weakness throughout the school. This aspect of literacy impacts on the overall work in other subjects where pupils frequently demonstrate low levels of specialist vocabulary and thinking skills. Standards are also weaker in spelling and in pupils' understanding of phonics. Standards in numeracy are supported by work in other subjects, notably science, geography and history and pupils' numeracy skills enable them to work satisfactorily across the curriculum. No significant differences were noted between the standards achieved by boys and girls. The overall rate of achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. However, within Key Stage 2 in particular the rate of progress is not consistent from one year group to the next, particularly in aspects of information technology and some foundation subjects where expectations are not consistently high.

3. The school is committed to raising standards further and has established good procedures for analysing attainment data by individual pupil, by group and by year cohort. All teachers are involved in this process and good use is made of the data provided by the LEA and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) The school has set realistic yet challenging targets in 2001 for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 in English and mathematics. Individual learning targets are increasingly being set for pupils to help increase rates of learning and raise standards. Whole-school curriculum planning and staff deployment is considered in response to the targets set.
4. Pupils with special educational needs have appropriate targets set in their individual education plans. The targets clearly identify the gains they are expected to make in their basic skills of literacy and numeracy. New, more challenging targets are set frequently and regularly in liaison between class teachers and support teachers or assistants. Pupils are clearly aware of their targets and make good progress towards meeting them. Pupils with English as an additional language have clear targets set in literacy in English. They are very well supported in class and in small groups and make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

5. Pupils are keen to attend the school and play a full part in its life, including the good range of extra-curricular activities. They have a good attitude to their work. Pupils generally listen well to their teacher and are keen to respond to questions. They accept a challenge, focus on the task given and have a strong work ethic. However, less than satisfactory attitudes were observed in a few lessons, mainly in Year 4 in Key Stage 2. This was generally linked to the level of challenge and pace of the lesson, which led to some pupils being disinterested and not achieving much.
6. Most parents are positive about the standard of behaviour achieved in the school. The behaviour of the pupils in class and around the school is generally good. Pupils are courteous and well mannered. In a few lessons, mainly in Year 4, a small amount of unsatisfactory behaviour was observed. This was displayed by a few pupils chatting instead of working, calling out and not listening to their teacher. In 1998/99 there were seven fixed and one permanent exclusion. The figures are static year on year.
7. Relationships, between pupils, and between pupils and adults, are very good. Pupils work and play together well and some good collaborative work was observed. They are very friendly and polite. Pupils listen to others and show respect for their feelings, values and beliefs. The small number of ethnic minority pupils are well integrated into the life of the school.
8. The personal development of the pupils is very good. They are given many opportunities to take responsibility. There is an effective school council at Key Stage 1 and 2 which contributes to pupils overall awareness of taking personal responsibility. Each class has two representatives on the council and they consult their peers about proposed decisions. All pupils are given responsibility for tasks in their classes. As well, older pupils take responsibility for younger ones, they help at lunch-times and during wet playtimes. They help in assemblies and show visitors around. Since the last inspection there are now more opportunities for pupils to show initiative. For example, they initiated a fund raising appeal for Blue Peter.
9. Attendance in 1998/99 was 94.8 per cent which is just above the national average. There were no unauthorised absences. Attendance has improved by over 2 per cent since the last inspection in 1996. Most pupils are punctual. The high level of attendance and punctuality make a good contribution to the pupils' attainment and learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

10. Throughout the school the quality of teaching is broadly satisfactory or better in all subjects. At Key Stage 1 teaching is good. For the under-fives and at Key Stage 2 the overall teaching is satisfactory with elements of good and very good teaching. Pupils of average or high attainment make satisfactory or better progress in most lessons. At Key Stage 1, pupils make good or very good progress in maths, science, information technology, art and physical education. Some lower attaining pupils make less progress when working independently.
11. In the early years, the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in ninety-five per cent of lessons, in 45 per cent it is good, in five per cent very good and in five per cent unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 1 the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of lessons, in 54 per cent it is good, in 18 per cent very good or excellent, and in seven per cent unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 2 the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 90 per cent of lessons, in 33 per cent it is good, in 12 per cent very good or excellent and in ten per cent it is unsatisfactory. The very good and outstanding teaching is evident in maths in the Early Years, and in mathematics, science, information technology and physical education at Key Stage 1. The quality of teaching in the speech and language base and the teaching of the pupils from the base who are supported in class is never less than good and is often very good or excellent. Unsatisfactory teaching is evident in English, mathematics, geography and art at Key Stage 2 and in mathematics at Key Stage 1. All of the unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 2 occurs in year groups where there are particularly large classes recently established following an increased admission limit to the school. The large majority of this unsatisfactory teaching is in one year group where the teacher is unable to manage effectively the large numbers or to establish a working ethos in many lessons.
12. The strengths in the quality of teaching which were identified in the last report have been maintained or improved. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good in almost all classes. The positive ethos is a strength of the school and teachers continue to manage pupils' behaviour well. Teachers' skills in questioning continue to challenge and extend pupils' thinking and the pace of the lessons, which was identified as good in the best lessons, is now satisfactory or good in most lessons. Teachers are always very well prepared for lessons and the resources support learning very effectively. The school has made good progress in addressing some of the weaknesses in the quality of teaching which the last report identified. There is good improvement in the challenge of the activities set for the higher attaining pupils, the homework policy is now clear and explicit, and assessment procedures and practice are good.
13. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs when they are withdrawn from class is always satisfactory and sometimes it is good. The work is well planned between the support teacher and the class teacher and it is carefully linked to the pupils' individual education plans. The pupils are given good support and encouragement and the targets they are set are realistic and achievable. There is good liaison between the class teacher and the support teacher which ensures that pupils continue to be appropriately supported when back in class. The progress made by this group of pupils is good.
14. Teachers' planning is good. It is detailed and thorough and specifies exactly what pupils are expected to learn. The planning for literacy and numeracy clearly identifies the expected learning outcomes for the different parts of the lessons. In a very small minority of lessons in physical education, mathematics and English the learning objectives for the lessons are too broad or too vague for pupils or teachers to be able to assess the progress being made. In one mathematics lesson, the learning objectives set good learning goals for the youngest pupils in the class but did not sufficiently challenge or extend the older ones. The weekly plans for English and mathematics are good and demonstrate where the pupils are expected to make progress over a week. Plans build well on pupils' previous learning.
15. Teachers on-going assessment of pupils' work is good. Teachers know their pupils' abilities

well and make continuous assessments of their progress. In many lessons teachers use these assessments effectively to plan different activities for pupils of different attainment; for instance in an English lesson, the high attaining pupils were asked to delete words from a complex list of instructions while ensuring that they still made sense, the low attaining pupils worked with an adult to order and then follow a more simple list of instructions. There are often good enrichment activities planned for the pupils who complete their work. This differentiation is good in English and mathematics but in history and geography it is unsatisfactory. In a significant number of lessons, the work planned for the lower attaining pupils when they are working independently is routine and dull and does not appropriately inspire or challenge them. Most pupils' work is marked and the quality of the marking, though often good, is variable. Comments are generally encouraging and the best marking clearly specifies what pupils need to do to improve. This good, developmental marking is not consistent throughout the school. Some work is marked very cursorily and occasionally unsatisfactory work is accepted without comment.

16. Most aspects of literacy and numeracy are taught well. The shared text session in literacy is good or very good in all classes. Through reading and analysing the text with the pupils in these sessions, teachers extend pupils' knowledge about language well, for instance through discussing the use of persuasive language or the use of apostrophes in colloquial language. In numeracy, the oral and mental sessions are taught effectively and the main activity builds well on this. There are aspects of teachers subject knowledge in literacy and numeracy which are not yet secure. The word level work in literacy demonstrates that teachers are not always secure in the teaching of phonics which is impacting on the rate of learning and progress. In mathematics some of the work set does not match the pupils' levels of understanding with too many concepts being introduced at once or with confusion in the way examples are given which do not reflect the intended learning objectives of the lesson. The use of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in other curriculum areas is satisfactory. Particularly good use is made of the library to develop pupils' research skills in history and geography and pupils' experience of a range of writing formats helps them in recording their work in science, for instance. Pupils use their mathematical knowledge well in data handling in science.
17. Teachers' use of time is good in most literacy and numeracy lessons where the different parts of the lesson are clearly identified and appropriate time is given to each section. The pace of learning is satisfactory in most other subjects. Lessons begin promptly and an appropriately brisk pace of learning is maintained throughout. Teachers target questions at individual pupils to keep them alert and engaged and pupils are given reminders of time to enable them to complete tasks appropriately. Occasionally, the teacher spends too long explaining or talking to the whole class.
18. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils. They use praise well to motivate and involve them and they speak to them with respect. Where teaching is very good or excellent, pupils experience a sense of wonder and intense excitement during the lesson, for instance where they discover the miracle of new life in plants in spring or where they empathise deeply with a girl who believes she has found a whale in her garden. Teachers are often enthusiastic about the subject they are teaching and this communicates itself to the pupils. Teachers take pains to present pupils' work in a way which demonstrates the value they place on it. This is particularly evident in art where there is some beautifully presented two- and three-dimensional work throughout the school. Teachers are well prepared for lessons and the resources used are good. In the Early Years, for instance, very good use is made of large bricks to explore and develop pupils' mathematical knowledge related to the story - *Little Lumpty*, and good use is made of science resources in Key Stage 2 to ensure that pupils can carry out investigations accurately. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and in almost all classes these expectations are met well. In some classes, most written work in history, and sometimes in geography, is presented and marked as worksheet-based language comprehension exercises, word lists or low-level activities such as colouring in illustrations. A

single humanities workbook is used in some classes for all written work in history, geography and RE, and this presents pupils with an incoherent record of what they achieve.

19. Homework is set in all classes, mostly in English and maths and at times in other subject areas. Homework is based on what the pupils are learning in school and successfully supports the development of their spelling, reading and handwriting skills and their ability to compute in maths. Inspection evidence does not support the small minority of parents who expressed concerns about the levels of homework being set.
20. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress in their learning in nearly all lessons in all subjects in most classes. The under-fives make good gains in half their lessons. At Key Stage 1 pupils frequently make good progress and sometimes very good and excellent progress particularly where teachers have high expectations and set very clear challenges for pupils related to their current levels of understanding. At Key Stage 2 learning is satisfactory overall and in a third of lessons it is good, very good or excellent. However, in the larger classes, especially in Year 4, it is sometimes unsatisfactory and in some foundation subjects the rate of learning is not consistent between year groups. The fastest rate of progress is frequently where pupils are working in relatively small groups with teachers and support assistants including work in the speech and language base. The value added by Key Stage 2 from 1995 to 1999 was in line with the Hertfordshire LEA average. Progress made by the few pupils with English as an additional language is good throughout the school. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs is consistently good in each stage, especially for those pupils for whom there are individual education plans and programmes of support. In some classes the below average pupils make less gains where work is not well matched nor explained sufficiently. Progress by individuals in the speech and language base is sometimes outstanding reflecting the very good and excellent teaching.

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

21. All pupils have access to a full curriculum which meets statutory requirements for the national curriculum and religious education (RE). There are good extra-curricular opportunities for all pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. Curriculum provision for children under five is satisfactory. There is appropriate opportunity for children under five to experience the full range of the areas of learning considered desirable for children of this age. They have good facilities for outdoor play.
22. Whilst the school provides its pupils with a broad curriculum and includes all of the National Curriculum subjects and religious education, there are some inconsistencies in its delivery, particularly of history, geography and information technology (IT). A strength of the school's curriculum is the time given to English and mathematics. A further strength is in the quality and range of opportunities given for linked work bringing together the arts and the humanities, for example through work on textiles linked to studies of Tudor costume at Key Stage 2 and studies of old and new toys linking history and ICT at Key Stage 1. However, the limited time available for the range of topics being attempted in history and geography leads to some superficial coverage at Key Stage 2.
23. In IT, while there is strong emphasis on planning for skills development and a range of program applications, there is not equal access for all pupils in all classes. At the time of the inspection some pupils reported not yet having had an opportunity in the current school year to use the computers in their class. Although there is coverage at each key stage of the required topics of control and modelling and the use of spreadsheets, they are not being offered consistently enough in each year to build up pupils' skills and understanding to the expected levels. There is monitoring of these subjects but greater stringency is needed to take these subjects forward.

24. The governors have approved appropriate policies for sex and drugs education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The school incorporates PSHE in 'circle time' and every class has 'circle time' each week. It forms part of the medium term planning. Built into the scheme is progression and continuity across the years. 'Circle Time' has had a positive impact on behaviour and relationships throughout the school. The provision for PSHE is good. Collective worship meets statutory requirements.
25. The school has successfully introduced the national literacy and numeracy strategies. Within the literacy strategy there is breadth, balance and richness at both key stages. The numeracy strategy is well covered in the mathematics lesson and from an analysis of pupils' work is beginning to have a significant impact upon standards.
26. Policies have been written for all subjects and some have recently been reviewed. The school uses either a scheme of work written by the subject coordinator or the QCA schemes. The short-and medium-term planning are linked successfully to the school's long-term planning.
27. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in the classroom and are making good progress. The support for the pupils in the speech and language base is outstanding and the pupils are making excellent progress. . The additional literacy support for pupils in Years 3 and 4 are impacting on learning. There is little evidence of the impact of the Year 6 Booster provision at the time of the inspection. Pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans which specify clear and achievable targets for improved literacy and numeracy. Targets also address other aspects of their education such as their confidence or their listening skills. These pupils are regularly withdrawn from lessons at appropriate times, for instance in the group work session of literacy lessons. In these withdrawal groups they have opportunities to develop their social and personal skills through sharing and taking turns and consequently develop their self-esteem as they experience success. Targets in individual education plans are drawn up between class teachers and the support teacher or assistants, which ensures that pupils' needs are planned for appropriately in class and withdrawal groups. Pupils with special educational needs have access to the full curriculum.
28. The school ensures that all pupils are valued as individuals and the schools' equal opportunities policy statement reflects the school's commitment to ensuring this.
29. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good and serves to enhance and enrich the curriculum. An appropriate range of activities is available to the pupils including sports, such as football and netball, choir, French and drama. There are extra-curricular activities organised for the pupils in Key Stage 1, which are not very common to find. The school makes good use of visitors to the school and plans visits to places of local interest as well as residential visits.
30. Links with the community are good. Pupils share their talents by entertaining senior citizens. They join events such as the Christmas and summer concerts. Pupils go to the nearby shopping centre at Christmas and sing in aid of charity. The school attends the local church for events such as Christingle. Use is made of the local church as a learning resource. Parents and governors have actively participated in making the school environment more attractive and child friendly, for example when they worked one weekend to build a path around the 'mound' on which the nursery pupils ride their bicycles.

31. The provision for the development of pupils' social development is very good. Provision for moral and cultural development is good and for spiritual development it is satisfactory. The school is effective in promoting pupils' moral and social development through the agreed behaviour policy which is applied consistently throughout the school by all staff. Pupils know right from wrong. There are appropriate opportunities in 'Circle Time' to discuss moral and social issues. Staff have caring attitudes, set good examples and provide a secure environment in which pupils can learn. They encourage good relationships between pupils and use praise effectively. The school provides opportunities for pupils to take on meaningful responsibilities, for example by establishing a school council for each Key Stage. Approximately every two weeks the representatives from these two councils meet with the headteacher to discuss the issues that have been highlighted at their meetings. Older pupils help to entertain the pupils in classes during the wet dinner hours. Pupils organise the furniture for assembly and are responsible for the over head projector and tape player if they are used in the assembly.
32. Further commitment to the provision for pupils includes plans by the headteacher to submit a bid to obtain money from the proposed local 'Education Action Zone' to enrich the curriculum opportunities to include the funding of a minibus so that pupils can be transported to the local high school to use their facilities for science, ICT and sailing. The Headteacher is also developing plans for the setting up of a 'Breakfast Club' backed by the Local Education Authority.
33. The school plans many experiences to support pupils' cultural development. Pupils visit mosques and study religions from other cultures as part of their religious education lessons. A Buddhist monk and a Hindu come into school to talk to the pupils. Pupils visit the West African village 'Aklowa' at Bishop Stortford. They learn African dances and play African instruments. Pupils celebrate festivals of other religions and prepare 'feasts' in connection with their RE topics. Music is introduced from around the world. Pupils are developing good knowledge and understanding of their own culture and the cultural traditions of others through RE, geography, art and music.
34. Daily acts of worship help to promote spiritual development. School assemblies help pupils to share values and beliefs as a school community. Work in geography, for example on the Mozambique flood, helps pupils to reflect on the lives of others. Statutory requirements with regard to collective worship are met. Appropriate arrangements are made for those pupils whose parents have asked for them to be withdrawn from worship.

HOW DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. The steps taken to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety are very good. The teachers know their pupils well, recognise their needs and give them good support and guidance. Parents are pleased with the school's commitment to support, guidance and welfare.
36. The school has a good health and safety policy. The premises committee of the governing body undertake regular health and safety reviews of the grounds and buildings. The only health and safety concern observed during the inspection week was a fire door in the newest part of the building that opens inwards and not outwards. The school had already identified this for action. Fire drills are held at least termly and all the moveable equipment is checked annually. The school nurse visits weekly. Amongst her many duties she carries out health checks and does some staff training. The school cares very sensitively for pupils who have bumps and grazes or are feeling ill. There are several staff who have first aid qualifications. The speech therapist visits three days a week, connected to her work with the base, and the health visitor comes into school each half-term.

37. The school has an appropriate child protection policy and the headteacher is responsible for its implementation. All teaching staff have received training and all non-teaching staff are made aware of the procedures to adopt if they have any concerns. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good.
38. There is a good-behaviour policy which contains an effective hierarchical range of rewards and sanctions to encourage good behaviour. Pupils, teachers, classroom assistants and mid-day supervisors have all been involved in the developments of the policy and all parents are sent a copy. There is good support to help pupils with behavioural problems. Incidents of bullying are very infrequent. When they do occur they are properly recorded and dealt with sensitively and speedily. Parents are fully involved in the school's response to such incidents. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good.
39. The personal development of the pupils is monitored by their class teachers and other staff. Targets are set and progress in their personal development is detailed in the teachers' records and in the pupils' annual reports. The school has a good regular health education programme which is well planned and managed by the co-ordinator. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting the pupils' personal development are good.
40. Attendance is monitored by teachers and the attendance supervisor on a weekly basis. The educational welfare officer (EWO) visits half-termly. If there are any concerns parents are contacted and home visits are made. If necessary the school regularly informs parents of the importance of good attendance and punctuality, through the prospectus and various other forms of communication. Holidays in term-time are discouraged. Certificates are awarded yearly for good attendance. Registers are taken regularly but greater care is needed in their marking. When the registers were inspected, during the inspection week, most had one or more pupils that had not been marked at all for at least one session. Procedures for encouraging and improving attendance have been successful and are good; however, the overall procedures for monitoring attendance are barely satisfactory.
41. Assessment was identified in the previous inspection as an area for development. Since the last inspection the school has made very good progress in the area of assessment. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance is good. A well-defined structure is in place to track progress in learning, which is followed systematically. Optional tests for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 are used. The results of these tests help the teachers to monitor pupils' progress. Pupils have targets in the front of their English and mathematics books. These targets are having a positive impact on work and presentation. The school is beginning to analyse standardised tests to guide planning. Subject co-ordinators monitor pupils' workbooks, and feed back their findings to the staff. This evaluation now has to become more stringent in order to reduce inconsistencies and take the school forward.
42. There is a portfolio kept on every pupil. The portfolio contains samples of work collected termly. Teachers make comment about the collected work and at the end of every academic year pupils complete a self-assessment following a given format. Part of this self-assessment is to highlight further development. The pupils are tackling this fairly successfully and it is potentially a very useful tool in raising standards even more.
43. Provision identified in statements of special educational needs is very effectively delivered. A number of appropriate outside agencies is involved as appropriate and the multi-disciplinary approach is very well co-ordinated by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Support for pupils with statements is very good and enables them to make good progress.
44. The short-and medium-term planning links effectively to the long-term plans. A strength of the

school's curriculum coverage is the opportunities given for linked work bringing together the arts with both the humanities and the sciences. The school's portfolio when complete is intended to standardise attainment levels and bring greater consistency. The school's assessment policy is well written providing good guidance to all teachers.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. The school works very hard and effectively to involve the parents in partnership for the benefit of the pupils. Parents are supportive of the school and the links between the school and parents have a positive impact on the pupils' learning. This is a strength of the school.
46. The quality of information provided to parents is good. There is a termly newsletter and regular information letters are sent out. Questionnaires are used to ask the parents about their views on different aspects of the life of the school. There are some information evenings for parents on curriculum matters like national tests and the literacy hour. Parents are informed of future topics, so that they can help their child with their work. There are termly opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress with the class teacher. On these occasions parents have access to their child's profiles and record cards. The pupils' annual reports tell their parents what the child knows, understands and can do and targets for improvements are set in the core subjects. In the parents questionnaire 17 per cent of those who responded felt they did not receive sufficient information on the progress of their child. This was not supported by the inspection evidence. Similarly the inspection evidence did not support the view held by 27 per cent of responses by parents that the school does not have a good range of activities outside lessons. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good and includes, unusually, provision for pupils in Key Stage 1.
47. The school's links with parents are effective and their involvement has a positive impact on the work of the school. The structures and guidance given to parents are very good and enable them to make a good contribution to children's learning at school and at home.
48. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is very active and organises a range of fund raising and social activities. The money raised is used to obtain resources, such as computers, and contributed to the overall cost of the Nursery garden. Parents and pupils also collect vouchers to obtain resources, like books, for the school.
49. Parents are invited into school to see their children's work and in some cases parents work alongside their child. The school is trying to build upon the partnership they have with the parents so that they see themselves as co-educators of their child, along with the school. Parents of children new to the nursery and reception classes are invited to introductory meetings. The home/school agreement has been well received by the parents. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved in the setting and reviewing of their children's individual education plans. Parents are contacted as soon as any special needs are identified and are invited to termly reviews of their children's progress.
50. Parents are generally very clear about the school's homework policy. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a homework diary which both parents and teachers sign. In the parents' questionnaire 20 per cent did not think that the school provides the right amount of homework but almost all parents at the parents' meeting were happy with the homework provision. Inspection evidence is that the homework provided is at least satisfactory. The input by parents to the reading diary is variable. The school has a large Parents room and this is used four times a week by a parent and toddler group and for PTA workshops.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. Leadership and management are strengths of the school. The headteacher provides very

good direction and leadership. She has a clear vision for the school related to raising pupils' attainment, recruiting and developing a highly skilled staff team, expanding the school and extending the curriculum and the work of the school to embrace and respond to the needs of the pupils and their wider community. This vision is articulated in all school documents and planning and is embraced with commitment by the whole school team. The headteacher leads by example, sets high professional standards and communicates these clearly to all who come into contact with the school. She is very ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher who has made an outstanding contribution to the school in a very short time both in her role as acting deputy head and in her substantive senior management roles. The governing body works effectively and with great commitment to fulfil its responsibilities, which it does well. It has a good understanding of the work of the school, its strengths and weaknesses, is involved in the strategic decision making, appointments of staff and financial planning and it communicates well with staff, parents and outside bodies. Individual governors are well informed about aspects of the school and take their responsibilities seriously. Roles and responsibilities of senior managers, team leaders and curriculum co-ordinators have been established and there is an appropriate balance of delegation, shared decision making and direction by the headteacher. The senior management team meets regularly and has successfully completed an evaluation of its work and impact on the school. The joint and shadow role of co-ordinators is an effective strategy for sharing subject responsibilities across the primary and early years curriculum.

52. The school has a long-term development plan which is updated annually. All partners contribute to this plan and it is supported by short-term action plans, regular monitoring and some evaluation. The structure of the most recent plan is somewhat disjointed relying on a number of separate documents and it is not easy to demonstrate how the work of all individuals and their actions are clearly linked to the long-term goals. Significant priorities since the last inspection have been to raise attainment and to improve further the quality of teaching. The headteacher has directed and led substantial programmes of monitoring and evaluated the practice of individuals and trends across the school. However, despite this monitoring there remain substantial differences in the practice across the school and in pupils' attainment which the school recognises will need further analysis and response. Senior managers and all teachers have been involved in the detailed analysis of performance data and in setting challenging targets for the school in the next few years. The substantial building programme to expand the capacity of the school and to establish a speech and language base have been examples of the headteacher's vision and of her good management skills. The new building is now fully operational after a period of considerable disruption. The speech and language base is very well led and managed and is already contributing to the overall quality of provision across the school. These two major projects have been successfully implemented since the last inspection.
53. Financial planning has reflected the needs of particular groups of pupils within the community. A substantial historic carry forward balance has been systematically targeted on specific needs including the new library and information technology equipment. The governors and headteacher have sensibly avoided establishing a short-term staffing structure which could not be sustained. The current draft budget received from the LEA at the time of the inspection, indicates an increase well above inflation allowing scope for strategic financial planning. Within recent annual budgets the governors and headteacher have deliberately enhanced the ratio of support staff to work with individuals and groups of pupils and in the main this has been very successful. The support staff, both teaching and non-teaching, make a strong contribution to the work of the school and to the progress made by pupils. This large team has been at the expense of the overall pupil teacher ratio. The school spends relatively little of its budget on teachers. This contributes to some unacceptably large classes, particularly in Key Stage 2. The LEA's recent increase to the school's planned admission limit has introduced mixed-age classes to the school since the last inspection. The headteacher recognises this as a strategic management issue for the future and the need for a clear plan to

manage pupils, staff deployment and curriculum delivery. The school has received additional specific grants to address such issues as additional literacy support and Year 6 Booster support. This money is used within the broad framework of national guidance but some of its targeted use is not sharp enough, especially in relation to the deployment of Booster sessions for Year 6 pupils with an additional teacher being under used during the course of lessons.

54. The recruitment and development of highly trained staff are a long-term strategic goals of the school which are being successfully implemented. Almost half of the teaching staff have joined the school in the last four years, several of whom have been newly qualified teachers. The school has a good programme for the induction of teachers and there has been a comprehensive programme of professional development for teachers and support staff along with a programme of non-contact time to carry out subject leadership roles. All this activity is conscientiously logged in date order and against each member of staff but does not readily and systematically reflect the whole-school priorities within the school development plan. The staff development policy needs reviewing in the light of national changes for performance management. The responsibilities given to newly qualified staff have been suitably incremental in recognition of their initial limited experiences. For all staff the school has maintained annual professional development meetings when previous targets are reviewed, the contribution to the school evaluated and new targets set. The school is well placed to adopt new national guidelines for appraisal and performance related pay. The SEN support teacher and some of the SEN assistants have had only limited training and during the inspection indicated their commitment to receiving more such training.
55. Budget setting and monitoring systems are clearly established. Financial control and administration are very good. The most recent LEA auditor's report was very positive about all aspects of the school and reported full implementation of minor issues identified around the time of the last inspection. The school has consistently applied principles of best value in a number of ways by analysing performance data for similar schools; by consulting parents and the community about the provision made by the school; by establishing a school council and seeking the views of the pupils before each annual review of the school development plan; and by using other providers and organisations to meet some of the needs of the community in partnership in such projects as breakfast clubs, the planned after school homework club, parent toddler groups and the family literacy group.
56. The accommodation in the school is very good and it is well managed. There is plenty of space for all teaching groups with additional specialist accommodation for music, parental group activities and the purpose built nursery. Unequal class sizes mean that some pupils at Key Stage 2 have relatively cramped conditions for some of their lessons. Additional facilities are generous for administrative purposes, staff room, and for pupils' learning with a library, resource areas, kiln room, and separate dining room which is also used effectively for additional teaching groups as well as a good sized general purpose hall/gymnasium. The recent building programme has enhanced the accommodation beyond the previously reported good provision. Outside there are extensive grounds which include hard and grassed surfaces for physical education and recreation and a wild area. There is also a recently established nursery garden with attractive features. All the accommodation is in good condition, is clean, well maintained and well cared for, providing a very good environment for pupils and staff. The quality, range and quantity of resources for learning are good overall and for mathematics, science, history and physical education are very good. Budget allocations to subjects reflect national and school priorities and the subject co-ordinators have a clear understanding of resource strengths and weaknesses within their subjects.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- (1) **Raise standards in mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 2, by**
- improving teachers' subject knowledge
 - increasing pace and pupil involvement in oral and mental sessions

- improving the match of differentiated work
 - ensuring consistently high expectations in all classes
- (2) **Develop a strategic plan to address the growth of larger year groups and mixed age classes throughout the school**
- (3) **Improve pupils' phonic awareness and spelling strategies by:**
- revising the training programme for the National Literacy Strategy for all staff to include external expertise and modelling the very good teaching from within the school
 - improving the overall quality of teaching of phonics
 - improving further teachers' subject knowledge and awareness of the National Literacy Framework
- (4) **Review the overall curriculum provision within the context of Curriculum 2000 to ensure the school realises its aim of providing a balanced curriculum with full recognition of the foundation subjects** in order to:
- reduce inconsistencies in pupils' experiences in information technology and some foundation subjects
 - ensure the quality of experiences remain high even when time allocations are restricted
- (5) **Refine the format of the long-term strategic development plan to make it more coherent and easier for individuals to recognise how their actions contribute to the school's published long-term goals**

In addition governors should consider the following:

- The need to improve the monitoring of attendance registers

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE BASE

57. The school's Speech and Language Base was established in September 1998 in new purpose-built accommodation, with substantial funds from Hertfordshire LEA. It aims to enable pupils with severe speech and language difficulties to be integrated as far as possible into the mainstream classes in the school, whilst also enabling them to receive specialist teaching and speech therapy in a purpose-built specialist base. It serves nine pupils in Key Stage 2, drawn from across Hertfordshire, of whom one has been in the school only since September 1999. The base is led by a specialist member of staff who, at the time of the inspection, was also acting deputy head. A speech therapist works with the base for three days a week, supporting pupils in their mainstream classroom activities as well as in one-to-one speech therapy sessions. An LEA educational psychologist is closely involved in working with the base staff and pupils. Three support assistants work with the pupils in the base and the classrooms.
58. The speech and language base is very successful in enabling pupils with high levels of speech and language difficulty to be integrated into mainstream education. Staff specify individual education plans and targets for each pupil which are aimed at raising their

achievement steadily towards the levels expected for their age group. Although their attainment in curriculum subjects is still well below what would be expected of pupils of the same age nationally, the pupils make excellent progress. Pupils consistently achieve the high targets which are set for them each half-term. The greatest progress has been made in pupils' attainments in English. One older pupil who joined the school barely able to write recognisable letters or to copy a simple beginning readers' text had within six months learnt to transcribe correctly texts appropriate for 11-year-olds, using handwriting which matches the national expectations for mainstream pupils of that age group. Other pupils' progress in handwriting skills has been particularly good. In most cases, they have improved dramatically to be at or near the levels expected nationally of mainstream pupils.

59. Pupils make good progress in developing speech skills. Many pupils who were previously reluctant to speak at all are relaxed and readily speak or offer to answer questions when working in the base. They make very good progress in developing their awareness of sounds used in words as part of their specialised learning programmes. Pupils also make very good progress in reading and understanding texts. They identify contents pages and indexes and they understand what the gist of a sentence is. They predict missing words which have been covered in a book they are reading together and they identify grammatical errors, missing words and full stops in an incorrectly drafted text which they are proof-reading with their teacher.
60. The base pupils also make very good progress in mathematics. The quality and quantity of the tasks they complete have shown marked improvement since they joined the base. Pupils who previously regularly failed to set out work appropriately or complete it, now proudly display books filled with correctly worked multiplication and addition calculations, set out to a high standard.
61. Base pupils make good progress in other subjects when working with support staff. For example, one pupil was enabled by his support teacher to complete a writing task for science he could not otherwise have done because she involved another pupil in discussing and writing down their shared conclusions. Pupils' progress in some lessons is sometimes affected if they are withdrawn from for the specialist teaching they receive. For example, the base pupils in one class were withdrawn at the time of the class religious education lesson. In some cases, the base staff plan a special activity to enable the pupils to cover class work they miss, but this does not always happen.
62. A particular strength of the contribution made by the speech and language base is the very successful work done on promoting pupils' personal and social skills. Many of the pupils have difficulty in interpreting body language and facial expressions, and in understanding and interpreting others' emotions. The base organises a programme which is designed to enable pupils to build their social skills through discussion in small groups. The staff use photos, role play and circle discussion very successfully to help the pupils. The base also teaches the pupils to take responsibility for their learning and for contributing to the school through ingenious organisation charts. These use easily understood train and carriage symbols to enable pupils to understand what is expected of them each week. All pupils know and understand their personal targets and take pleasure in recording progress made with stickers on their personal charts. This programme has been very successful in boosting pupils' social skills and makes a very good contribution to the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
63. Teaching in the speech and language base, and in sessions in classes taught by base staff is very good, with many outstanding features. No teaching by base staff was less than good. The base co-ordinator plans and presents whole group literacy teaching with outstanding skill and verve, using feigned ignorance and surprise as techniques to encourage pupils to show what they know in correcting and guiding her. She makes excellent use of support assistants

as pretend stooges to make silly suggestions which the pupils rush to correct. Pupils enjoy their lessons very much and stay focused throughout an hour of literacy teaching. Mathematics lessons and other small group literacy teaching are presented with equal skill. In some group tasks, however, pupils have too little time to complete the work set. The base is not yet making as much use as it could of existing IT facilities in the school, such as talking word processors and simple word bank programs to support pupils' learning, particularly for their learning in mainstream classrooms. The base team carefully plans and evaluates the team's contributions to pupil support in the mainstream classrooms. The base co-ordinator has established a very good assessment and record-keeping system, which draws very effectively on specialist input, sets clear targets and keeps clear records of what the pupils achieve. Pupils get very good feedback on what they are achieving, and contribute to recording their own progress.

64. The leadership and management of the speech and language base are outstanding. The co-ordinator has in a very short time set up a very effective system, an attractive and very well functioning centre, and created a very good team of professionals and support staff. The base specialist input is planned so as to ensure that withdrawal teaching as far as possible is timed to coincide with mainstream class group work in literacy and numeracy teaching. The allocation of base team members to mainstream class activities is planned so as to prioritise lessons which make the highest demands on literacy. Most pupils spend some part or all of their mornings working in the base and one or two afternoons, depending on their needs. The base team has a very good liaison system with class teachers, who meet with the team every week to review planned support for individual pupils. There is a particularly effective evaluation system for mainstream class support where the base team member concisely notes on a form key points in the pupils' responses and attainment in relation to the work set, and whether it was completed. These feedback forms are then used to improve subsequent teaching tasks set. This evaluation system has not yet been used more widely in the school, though it could provide valuable insights.
65. The resources for the base cover a wide range of pupils' needs well. The base is a most attractive environment and the very professionally mounted displays convey a very clear message about the high expectations for its pupils. In the week of the inspection displays included some very good quality observational paintings of daffodils and well-presented word processed reflections by the pupils on photographs that are special to them. IT-produced resources for pupils are of a high standard. The base has a well-specified computer, but IT provision for the particular learning needs of pupils with severe speech and language provision is too limited. The base co-ordinator has identified IT as a priority for future development of the base. There is a need for training in specialist IT applications for all the base team, especially those working in support roles in mainstream classes.
66. The establishment of the base included a very good training and induction programme for all staff, as well as assemblies for the pupils and meetings with parents. This programme was well targeted and proved very effective in ensuring that the pupils and the base have been seen as a positive addition to the school.
67. The school is making use of the expertise and outstanding teaching and organisational skills of the base team to improve teaching and learning across the school but this could be extended and developed further.
68. The Speech and Language Base offers very good value for money.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	85
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
[2]	[11]	[28]	[52]	[7]	[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)	21	266
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		56

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		11
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6	86

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	[19]	[17]

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	18
	Girls	15	16	15
	Total	32	33	33
Percentage of pupils At NC level 2 or above	School	89 [55]	92 [66]	92[72]
	National	82 [80]	83 [81]	87 [84]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	32	32	32
Percentage of pupils At NC level 2 or above	School	89 [64]	89 [84]	89 [86]
	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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	10	23

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	4	8
	Girls	18	16	21
	Total	24	20	29
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	70 [79]	61 [63]	88 [70]
	National	70 [65]	69 [59]	78 [69]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	4	5	4
	Girls	17	17	15
	Total	21	22	22
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	64 [88]	67 [73]	67 [82]
	National	68	69	75

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	208
Any other minority ethnic group	4

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	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	5	1
Other minority ethnic groups	1	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)	9.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27
Average class size	29.5

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	243

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/9
	£
Total income	505603
Total expenditure	505406
Expenditure per pupil	1762
Balance brought forward from previous year	50198
Balance carried forward to next year	50395

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	266
Number of questionnaires returned	70

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	41	7	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	46	4	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	49	10	0	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	56	19	1	0
The teaching is good.	44	47	4	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	41	16	1	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	29	4	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45	49	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	33	46	10	4	6
The school is well led and managed.	27	48	9	3	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	46	3	4	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	34	22	6	16

Other issues raised by parents

From the parents' meeting:

- The absence of male members of staff
- The large class sizes in parts of the school

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

69. There are 52 part-time places available at Downfield Nursery, but at present there are only 42 children on the roll. Most children who attend the nursery enter the main school at the appropriate age but a significant number of higher achievers move to other schools in the vicinity. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery is generally below that expected in Hertfordshire and attainment in speech and language is well below that found in most nurseries. This has altered since the last inspection when the attainment of children under five was judged to be in line with national expectations. Although children make satisfactory progress during their time in the nursery, overall attainment on entry to the reception class is also below the expectations for their age. The nursery is staffed by a teacher and two nursery nurses and often additional support is provided by other adults such as students. The reception class is staffed by a teacher and a classroom assistant. Four children have been identified as having special educational needs. The nursery occupies a separate building within the school grounds and provides good accommodation. There is an enclosed outdoor area, of good size, and the school has worked hard and well recently to provide a grassed mound and paths. The outdoor area provides a stimulating environment for children's physical development. There are plans to use this area for the children in the reception class as well as Key Stage 1 pupils. Parents are invited to support their children's learning in the nursery but at the time of the inspection few had taken up this offer, although there is no problem in recruiting parents to help on special occasions such as visits by the nursery children.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

70. The children settle very well into school life. They enjoy coming to school and they quickly learn how to behave in school and how to be part of a social group. They usually work amicably with other children, normally taking turns politely and sharing well and fairly. They know the importance of hand washing after painting or when they use the toilet. They move confidently around the nursery or the reception class as well as other parts of the school and ask for help when required. They concentrate hard on their work and many are keen to explore new learning. Their behaviour is generally good, although a small number of reception children do not always behave appropriately in their lessons. Most have good attitudes to school, to other children, and to their teachers and the other adults.
71. By the time they are five the attainment of children in this area is in line with that expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in this aspect of their learning, increasing their awareness of others, learning to behave in different situations and developing confidence in making choices.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

72. Children in both the nursery and the reception class generally have poor listening skills, although they usually pay good attention to their teachers. They usually listen with interest and concentration to explanations and instructions. Most enjoy listening to stories and they enjoyed becoming involved in manipulating the puppets during the story about *Little Lumpty*. Children in the reception class use simple props to demonstrate different characters such as a snowman with a scarf, but a number of children are not confident in speaking in front of the whole class. Many children's speaking skills are poorly developed and many have difficulties with pronunciation and articulation. Generally, children have a very limited vocabulary.

Although they often talk readily to one another and to adults, the speech of a significant number of children is not in line with that expected for their age as they start Key Stage 1.

73. Nursery children generally understand that books normally contain words and pictures and that words convey meaning. They are able to handle books properly and higher attaining children are beginning to read. In the reception class a higher attaining child reads well and fluently, using pictures sometimes to help him with words such as 'television'.
74. Although most of the nursery children make marks using pencils or felt tips, few recognise many letters, nor do the lower attaining children associate the letter sound with the letter in any meaningful way. However, a higher attaining child writes her own name easily, neatly and legibly. Many of the older children in the reception class make good efforts as they practise handwriting and form correctly letters such as 'a' and 'g'. The overall attainment of children in this area of learning is below average.

MATHEMATICS

75. Overall attainment in mathematics is below that expected nationally on arrival in school and by the time they prepare to enter Key Stage 1. Although many children count easily to five, and some to ten, a significant number are unable to remember the names of numbers or to say them in order. For example, a group of nursery children, looking at how shapes such as bricks fit together, are not able to count the four corners of a brick. Reception children sing readily counting songs such as 'One, two, three, four, five...' and a higher attaining child counts accurately up to 30, using his fingers correctly to help.
76. Children working with shapes often recognise the names of some familiar shapes such as 'circle' and 'triangle' and a small number correctly use the names 'octagon' and 'pentagon'. They devise various methods to sort shapes into two sets. Most nursery children making handprint patterns recognise simple repetitive patterns such as 'hand, thumb, hand, thumb...' but some children do not understand what is required.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

77. Nursery children are interested in old photographs and know that they were taken a long time ago. They make various suggestions why the photographs are old but use limited vocabulary when describing them, for example saying 'a soldier thing' or 'a soldier hat' for a uniform. The nursery children take part in a very effective whole-school assembly and children confidently 'act' as Mr. Bear or a dripping tap as they demonstrate the sequence of Mr. Bear's sleepless night. Most children, both in the nursery and in reception, successfully use their developing physical skills to support their work on knowledge and understanding of the world; for example they use scissors appropriately when cutting out, as when reception children investigating their bodies, cut out the pictures made when they draw round their own hand. Others enjoy selecting various materials to stick onto their farm animals, and they use appropriate materials such as wool for the sheep and feathers for the chicken. Nursery children are keen to use the computer and many know that the keys can control an on-screen character. They have some understanding of how the arrow keys can be used to move up, down or left or right. In both the nursery and the reception class children experience play with various materials such as water, sand, large blocks and paint. For example, reception children explore the world using their sense of touch as they try to guess by feeling what a mystery object in the sand tray is. Similarly, nursery children explore their sense of touch when guessing what objects are in the feely bag. Despite the progress made the attainment of most children is still below the national expectations by the time they prepare to start Key Stage 1.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

78. The under-fives enjoy creative work and make satisfactory progress. However, their overall attainment remains below the national expectations by the time they prepare to enter Key Stage 1. Nursery children who are making textured tiles from clay recognise roughness and smoothness. They work carefully and imaginatively to create their tiles and are proud of their finished work. Children investigating a brick wall feel the textures of the bricks and notice the way the shapes fit together. When making handprint patterns children demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of the names of colours, correctly identifying green, blue and purple. Some nursery children clap and pat a rhythm with reasonable accuracy, although others find it hard because they have poor co-ordination. Most understand loud and soft in music. They enjoy playing the instruments.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

79. Nursery children move confidently and well when they play safely in the outdoors area. They use their bodies well as they play with large wheeled toys, steering safely along the paths and round objects. They walk and run with confidence and demonstrate good physical control. Reception children in their physical education lesson in the school hall move well round the hall on two body parts. They balance well and perform a short sequence of movement across a mat. They often have a good awareness of space and move with confidence and imagination. When holding and using pencils, felt-tipped pens or scissors, they demonstrate appropriate control of fine movements.

GENERAL

80. The overall quality of the teaching of children under five is satisfactory, in the nursery it is generally good. The teachers have a secure understanding of the social, emotional and educational needs of the children and provide a well-planned range of activities and experiences. Children are well managed with much good use of praise and they are encouraged to develop independent learning skills. The use of questions to develop children's learning is good. All of these aspects of teaching have a positive influence on the standards children attain and the progress they make. The nursery nurses and support assistants work in collaboration with the teachers and almost always support the children's learning satisfactorily, and frequently provide good support.
81. Relationships are very good, both among children and between children and adults and this supports the children in making progress. Work is planned effectively within the areas of learning recommended for children under five. The assessment of children under five is good. The school carries out the local authority baseline assessments following entry to the nursery and shortly after their entry to the reception class. Information from this, and from the regular assessment carried out, is used well to ensure that work is at the right level for individual children. The nursery has started recently using the 'P' Level primary guidelines for assessment and this is a good development in assessing children's performance and standards.
82. The nursery and reception classes have a good range of suitable resources to ensure that children who are under five experience a full curriculum based on the desirable outcomes for children's learning. Children under five learn in well-organised and managed environments where they quickly learn the rules and routines. Most children very much enjoy their school and they meet caring adults who ensure that they make good progress throughout this most important phase in their education.

ENGLISH

83. Pupils achieve standards in line with national averages in reading writing, speaking and listening. at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils under five achieve below the expected standards in all aspects of English. The results of end of key stage National Curriculum tests indicate that in 1999 pupils' attainment in English was in line with national averages by the end of Key Stage 2, and above national averages at the end of Key Stage 1. The number of pupils attaining well above the national average in writing by the end of Key Stage 1 was more than in most schools. Over the past four years the rate of improvement in the standards achieved by the pupils has been good and at a greater rate than the national trend. However, this progress has been erratic with some cohorts of pupils achieving much higher standards than others. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. Many pupils have poor levels of spoken language and underdeveloped listening skills.
84. In the last inspection, standards of attainment were found to be in line with national averages at Key Stage 1 and below national averages at Key Stage 2. Standards since the last inspection have been maintained at Key Stage 1 and improved at Key Stage 2. At the time of the last inspection, boys had consistently out-performed girls in end of Key Stage 2 tests. This trend has been reversed and girls are now out-performing boys to a greater extent than that shown by national test results. There is no significant difference in standards in the work produced by boys or girls.
85. Standards of speaking and listening on entry to Key Stage 1 are below average. . Many pupils have neither the skills nor the confidence to express themselves clearly nor to talk coherently about their work. Many pupils also find it difficult at times to listen to the teacher and to each other. By the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, standards of speaking are satisfactory. Pupils speak confidently in lessons and are able to explore their ideas orally, for instance in Year 2, where pupils had been sharing a book about whales, they could speak with animation about whales and how and where they live; in Year 6 pupils could debate the benefits and disadvantages of fast food restaurants following a lesson demonstrating the use of persuasive language. Standards in listening are variable but are satisfactory overall at Key Stages 1 and 2. Some pupils find it difficult to listen, particularly to other pupils or when they are working in a group. However, most pupils listen carefully and with good attention to the stories, poems and non- fiction books they share in the literacy hour.
86. Standards of reading are average overall by the end of both key stages, although some pupils attain high standards and some do not achieve the national expectations. Pupils at Key Stage 1 enjoy reading and many do so independently for pleasure, at home and at school. They read with improving fluency and accuracy with an increasingly good understanding of what they have read. They are able to recognise most initial and end letter sounds and understand the relationship between the letters and the sounds they make. They use this knowledge, together with context and picture clues, to work out words they do not recognise. There are, however, some significant inconsistencies and limitations in pupils' knowledge, particularly their knowledge of the phonemes, or units of sound, which make up the English language. These gaps or, in some cases, inaccuracies in their knowledge inhibit their progress in reading and writing. At Key Stage 2, pupils have developed a critical appreciation of a range of books and are able to talk with discernment about different authors they enjoy. They can read longer texts silently and for sustained periods. Pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs are often keen to read and read appropriate texts with enthusiasm. They can recall the main events of a story but cannot often draw inferences from the text and overall they make good progress. All pupils use the library regularly and their skills in locating information in books and in using the library system to find books are well developed.
87. Standards of writing are satisfactory at both key stages. Pupils write for a range of purposes and show an increasing awareness of the appropriateness of different formats and styles. For

instance, pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 know the difference between writing a formal and an informal letter, and at the end of Key Stage 2 pupils can write dialogue as a play script or as characters speaking in a story. Pupils at both key stages study and write poetry and at Key Stage 2 pupils studied Macbeth. Standards of handwriting are good in pupils' handwriting books where they regularly practise forming their letters correctly. Many pupils are beginning to develop a cursive script by the end of Key Stage 1. Standards of handwriting in pupils' workbooks are variable at both key stages although by Year 6 most pupils write in ink in a fluent, cursive style. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils can write in sentences, correctly using capital letters and full stops and are developing their vocabulary in response to the texts they share in the literacy hour. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of grammar and punctuation. They are able to use commas, apostrophes and speech marks correctly and can organise their writing into paragraphs. They can write sustained stories with a beginning a middle and an end, poetry and accounts. Standards in spelling are unsatisfactory at both key stages. Many pupils make very basic mistakes in their spelling of simple words such as 'when' or 'friend' and are not secure in spelling longer and irregular words. Pupils learn lists of spellings weekly but at Key Stage 1 have not systematically developed their knowledge of letter sounds or phonics, or of regular and irregular spelling patterns and conventions, and this is having a negative impact on standards at Key Stage 2.

88. Pupils in both key stages make satisfactory progress over time in all aspects of English except spelling. Many of the higher attaining pupils, and those pupils identified as having special educational needs, who receive one-to-one or small group teaching in basic literacy, make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs have detailed individual action plans which specify their targets for improvement in basic literacy. These plans form a useful basis for the planning of the support assistants and the class teachers. Lower attaining pupils without individual plans make slower than average progress when working in class without support.
89. The teaching of English is satisfactory overall. In the teaching of the under-fives and at Key Stage 2 there is good teaching and some teaching which is unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 1 the teaching overall is good. Here all teaching is at least satisfactory and there are examples of teaching which is good and very good. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and in great detail with appropriate reference to the objectives of the national literacy strategy. The learning outcomes for lessons are very clearly specified in most plans. Teachers make sure that the pupils know what they are expected to learn and how this links to what they have covered previously. In a minority of teachers' plans the learning expected from the lesson is not clearly identified and pupils are vague or confused about the purpose of the activities. The shared book time at the beginning of the literacy hour is often stimulating and motivating. The books are well chosen to capture pupils' interest and the text is used well by teachers to develop pupils' understanding of language. The specific teaching of phonic skills at Key Stage 1 is not always given sufficient time and teachers' expectations of pupils' progress in phonics are often too low. The literacy co-ordinator is aware that this is an aspect of literacy teaching where teachers need further training and this is planned for. The development of pupils' reading skills is generally good in the literacy hour. Teachers use big books with the whole class, or small group work to guide and extend pupils' reading knowledge and confidence. There is generally more reading than writing taught over a period of time and this imbalance should be corrected. Teachers extend pupils' speaking and listening skills well during the teaching of literacy. They model spoken language, building on pupils' own words and developing them further. They have high expectations of pupils' listening and target specific questions to individual pupils to ensure that they are concentrating and understanding. Questioning is often good, teachers use language carefully to help pupils to explore their own thinking. Teachers encourage pupils to understand characters and their feelings by asking questions such as 'How do you think the little boy was feeling when his plant began to wither?' Teachers' planning of independent activities is often good. For instance, at Key Stage 2, pupils who had been studying a book of instructions text were asked to write their own instructions on how to use a tape recorder and

then ask their friends to see if the instructions were accurate. The activities planned for the lower attaining pupils are sometimes routine and dull and these pupils become unmotivated and do not produce their best work. The end of the literacy sessions is often well taught with teachers using pupils' own work to emphasise the teaching point.

90. Classroom assistants who work with individual or small groups of pupils are very supportive and encouraging. They plan their work carefully to meet the needs of the pupils and to achieve the targets specified in the individual education plan. The teaching is well focussed and expectations are clear. These teaching assistants give pupils opportunities to succeed and give them good, specific praise when they do so. Some classroom assistants have not received training in the teaching of children with special educational needs or in the teaching of phonic and spelling skills and this training should be made available.
91. Teachers mark work regularly and the feedback given to pupils in lessons is helpful in enabling them to recognise and correct their mistakes. Written marking is variable and some is of a high quality with very specific comments made relating to the purpose of the work and helping pupils to improve. In some books the marking is cursory and unsatisfactory work is accepted without comment. Overall assessment of pupils' work in English is good and links closely with the planning. Teachers are aware of the different needs of the pupils and different work is planned to meet these needs. The identification of pupils with special educational needs is very effective in ensuring that individual education plans are drawn up and that these pupils have appropriate support. The school makes good use of testing to monitor standards and identify where improvement is needed. Most pupils have their own targets for improvement displayed in their work books but it is not clear how the achievement of these targets is monitored.
92. The breadth and quality of the curriculum in English is good. Pupils take part in drama and role-play activities in the classroom and in front of a wider audience. They use the school library and the local library regularly. They develop their use of information and communication technology in English by working through programmes of spelling or vocabulary activities and by using computers to locate and retrieve information. Teachers plan circle time to help pupils to express themselves and to empathise with others and they lead discussions to enable pupils to develop and express opinions. Displays relating to literacy are variable. In many classes the literary environment does not sufficiently stimulate, challenge and support pupils in the development of their reading and writing skills. It is not clear from observing literacy displays what the focus of learning is.
93. Pupils' attitudes to English are good. They enjoy reading, individually and in class, and they are well motivated to write. They are keen to talk about their work and eager to contribute ideas in class discussions. Pupils' evident enjoyment of the shared books enables all pupils, including the very youngest, to concentrate and listen well in these sessions. Pupils' behaviour in English is generally good and at times it is very good. Pupils' ability to work collaboratively in groups is good at Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 1 pupils need more opportunities to develop the collaborative skills of listening, taking turns and acknowledging and building on each other's ideas.
94. The school's emphasis on literacy is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' learning in other subjects. Pupils' library skills are particularly useful in supporting their research in subjects such as history or geography. The ability of pupils to recognise the importance of writing in different ways for different purposes helps them to write appropriately, for instance in science or religious education.
95. The school works effectively with parents in the teaching of literacy. Reading record books are kept and provide a useful dialogue between home and school, particularly at Key Stage 1. Homework, including reading, is set regularly and many parents are supportive in ensuring

that it is completed. The homework supports pupils in developing spelling and comprehension skills and builds on the work covered in class. The school has organised events for parents to ensure that they are aware of how the school teaches literacy and the changes brought about by the literacy hour

96. Management of English is good. The literacy coordinator has trained and supported all staff and the literacy hour is well implemented in every class and has a positive impact on progress made by pupils and their overall attitudes and standards. The co-ordinator monitors the teachers' planning to ensure that the objectives are covered and she monitors the pupils' work to evaluate standards and to see where further training or support is necessary. The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching of literacy and identifies useful areas for development for individual teachers. The coordinator is aware of the need for further training of teachers and support assistants in the teaching of phonics and this is planned. The quality and range of resources for English is good. There is a good balance between fiction and non fiction books and books are attractively displayed in classrooms and in the recently established library. This library is a new facility and an asset to the overall provision across the school.

MATHEMATICS

97. Pupils' attainment in mathematics on entering Key Stage 1 are below the national expectations. In the 1999 National Curriculum assessments pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was close to the national average for pupils achieving the national norms and for pupils achieving at a higher level. Their attainment was also close to the average for pupils in similar schools. This represents a considerable improvement over their performance during the previous three years. It also represents a substantial improvement over the attainment at the time of the previous inspection after a period of more modest improvement. The level of attainment by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 was well below the national average as it was for pupils achieving at a higher level. Boys' attainment was marginally lower than that of girls. This relatively low level of attainment represented a decline over the 1998 results but a significant overall improvement over the previous three years and since the time of the last inspection. The attainment was below the average for pupils in similar schools.
98. Inspection evidence shows standards at the end of Key Stage 1 to be broadly in line with national averages but for Key Stage 2 standards overall remain below the national average although there are indications of steady improvement, particularly in Years 3 and 5. By the end of the key stage a large minority of pupils continue to lack the skills, knowledge and understanding expected of 11-year-olds. The standards of attainment by each cohort throughout Key Stage 2 vary considerably from year to year.
99. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils begin to understand the links between repeated subtraction and sharing, the symbols for division and how to share equally. They recognise the notation for halves and quarters and can find one half and one quarter of two digit numbers. They are beginning to be confident in aspects of mental arithmetic, are able to use a number line effectively and are able to explain their methods and strategies for making mental calculations, can collect and record data, name and describe two-dimensional shapes and have some knowledge of standard measures used for time, length and weight. Some higher attaining pupils make good use of mathematical language, for example when explaining how to add pairs of numbers which are 'near doubles'.
100. Towards the end of Key Stage 2 many pupils are working in line with national averages, particularly in Year 5 where the majority can order sets of positive and negative numbers, recognise related facts between sets of numbers within a sum and the order of operations in a sum with several steps. Many Year 6 pupils, however, are not yet secure in quick recall of number facts and have limited understanding of strategies for subtraction and for operations

involving larger numbers. Many pupils struggle to explain their methods and have only limited mathematical vocabulary. Many, including the higher attaining pupils, have only a limited knowledge of how to use the calculator as an effective tool beyond its most basic functions. They have a better understanding of shape, the 24 hour clock and of place value and the decimal number system linked to money, the measurement of length and weight. Pupils are able to carry out investigations into number patterns and solve problems. The current rate of learning at both key stages is satisfactory overall in nearly all lessons. In many classes this has been helped by setting clear mathematics targets for individual pupils which are recorded in the front of their books. Teachers share the learning objectives of many lessons and return to them at the end of the lesson helpfully clarifying for pupils what progress they have made. The majority of pupils are responding well to the new style numeracy lesson concentrating and working hard at a good pace for the duration of the lesson. Many are very positive in oral and mental sessions at the beginning of lessons. In a few lessons small groups and individuals make little gains in learning; this is usually related to the work set not being at the right level for the pupils. On occasions, it is too difficult with too many new concepts being introduced at once. For example: a Year 4 group unable to partition or exchange money yet asked to complete a money problem, and a Year 2 group with learning difficulties struggling to find a quarter of a two-digit number before understanding the concept of one quarter. For other pupils in a mixed-age class the work set is matched to the needs of the younger pupils, lacking challenge for the older and more able pupils and so limiting the learning. Pupils in the speech and language base make very good and at times excellent progress where they are encouraged and motivated by well-chosen activities, imaginatively presented to enhance their interest and self-esteem. An example was a Year 6 pupil who made considerable strides towards understanding the exchange of money following some practical work and some direct questioning and clear teaching during the plenary at the end of the lesson. Pupils throughout the school use pencil to record their mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 have yet to be introduced to ink for mathematics.

101. The quality of teaching in mathematics across the school is satisfactory overall, although within this broad picture there is unexpectedly wide variation. At Key Stage 1, teaching is nearly, always at least satisfactory and frequently good or very good. At Key Stage 2, it is also nearly always at least satisfactory and on occasions is good, very good or excellent. Strengths in teaching include the detailed planning using the newly published National Numeracy Strategy Framework for Mathematics. Teachers plan carefully to ensure there is progression within the two key stages, there is coverage of all aspects of the mathematics curriculum and there is a balance of activities and styles within each mathematics lesson. The very best mathematics teaching, as seen in the speech and language base, inspires pupils and provides clear structures for learning and high quality purposeful activities. It sets short-term challenges, provides opportunities for the pupils to talk about their work, shares the purposes of the learning, encourages hard work and rewards effort giving clear explanations to the pupils as to why and what was good. Several teachers show good subject knowledge; they use accurate mathematical language as models for their pupils, explain new mathematical concepts very clearly, ask very specific and pertinent questions of pupils directly related to the planned learning objectives and plan activities which directly reflect the intended learning. Examples of this include work on adding three numbers together in Year 1, grouping and division in Year 2, and pencil and paper methods of addition and subtraction in Year 6. In many lessons, teachers make good use of high quality apparatus to support teaching and learning and to motivate the pupils in the mental and oral sessions and the main activity. Mathematics is frequently set as part of homework in many classes. Parents reported being very clear about homework and its contribution to pupils' learning, including mathematics learning.
102. In a minority of mathematics lessons the oral and mental session is not used to practise skills and to engage all the pupils in rapid recall work at a brisk pace. In a few lessons teachers talk for too long. They become bogged down in lengthy explanations with insufficient targeting of

individual pupils to involve them and check their understanding, and insufficient time given to working through the planned activities in the main part of the lesson. In a number of lessons the plenary is rushed and does not reinforce or extend pupils' understanding of the intended learning for the day. In such lessons as these the three part Numeracy Strategy lesson is not yet established. Unsatisfactory subject knowledge in Year 4 confused pupils and some poorly chosen activities in Years 1, 2, and 5 were not well matched to all pupils' levels of need. Most pupils' work is marked, often with encouraging comments. However, there are few examples of marking being used to show pupils how best to improve. Few examples were observed of ICT being used to support mathematics although it clearly features within medium-term planning. In one lesson pupils were observed using Dream Writer to practise simple computations. However, the software notation did not reflect the horizontal recording taught within the numeracy strategy. All classrooms have mathematics displays to support teaching and learning; many of these contain useful key-words and symbols linked to current mathematics topics. However, in few rooms is there any pupils' mathematics work displayed.

103. Pupils consistently demonstrate at least a satisfactory attitude to mathematics. In many lessons they apply themselves well. They work well together in pairs, for example, recording the addition of three numbers in Year 1, groups of three and four using a dice on fractions work in Year 2, and working together as a whole team on a timed activity in Year 5. In Year 4 pupils became frustrated within their groups at their own inability to complete a task which they found confusing. This undermined their otherwise positive attitude to the subject. Behaviour in mathematics lessons is frequently good and in the best lessons it is very good and even excellent. In most classes throughout the school the presentation of pupils' work is at least satisfactory and sometimes good, frequently being well laid out and methodical, demonstrating a pride in the work and a positive attitude towards the subject.
104. All aspects of the mathematics national curriculum are addressed in each key stage and teachers are carefully following the mathematics framework within the Numeracy Strategy. Other subjects are successfully contributing to pupils' numeracy; examples include data gathering and presentation in science, for example the work on friction, awareness of chronology and time in history with time lines in classrooms and, in geography, the use of grid references to support mathematical understanding of co-ordinates.
105. The joint subject co-ordinators have worked hard to implement the new National Numeracy Strategy during this school year. They are providing effective leadership for the subject across the school. They have produced a very good whole-school policy with good levels of detail to support colleagues' planning and practice. They have led professional development within the national programme for all primary teachers; have raised the profile of mathematics in all classrooms with clear displays of teaching materials and the provision of high quality materials; and then given useful guidance on curriculum planning. The headteacher has monitored teaching in mathematics across the school and has given individual feedback as well as drawing together overall trends shared with the co-ordinators and whole staff.
106. The school has made good progress in mathematics since the last inspection. Standards have improved in both key stages; the numeracy strategy is being introduced with commitment and professionalism; the numerate environment in classrooms has improved; and teachers have had substantial professional development to help improve their confidence and subject knowledge. The work earlier in the academic year on raising the attainment of higher attaining pupils has been less successful, with few pupils exceeding the national average in the 1999 tests despite some specific additional teaching at Key Stage 2 by a part-time teacher for the last two years.

SCIENCE

107. In the 1999 National Curriculum assessments pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was broadly in line with national averages and slightly below that of similar schools. In the 1999 Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests the percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard is above average. The number of pupils reaching the higher level was also above the national average. Based on average points scores, standards are close to the average compared to all schools nationally and well above average compared to similar schools. Standards of attainment in the national curriculum tests over the last four years have increased above the rate of national improvements. The tests show that girls' attainment is marginally better than that of boys,
108. Inspection evidence shows overall standards to be in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. During their study of experimental and investigative science Key Stage 1 pupils make comparisons and sort objects according to differences. For example, they correctly sorted material into natural material and treated material. Pupils found out the effect pushing and pulling has on speed. In Key Stage 2 a majority of pupils have sound knowledge and understanding of the required programmes of study. Pupils use their scientific knowledge to make predictions, such as the effect of sunlight on plants. They demonstrate knowledge and understanding about physical phenomena such as electrical circuits and which materials will conduct and which will insulate. Pupils carry out investigations to find which materials are absorbent and which are waterproof.
109. Overall, learning at both key stages is satisfactory. In Key Stage 1 pupils use scientific vocabulary such as friction when discussing work on forces. There is development over the key stage in the writing up of experiments and are beginning to realise that tests have to be fair. Pupils use different form of recording, such as observational drawings of the growth of their beans, charts, and answering questions that produce a more formal 'report'. In Key Stage 2 they have made electrical circuits including switches and found out how these switches controlled devices. Pupils found ways of varying current to alter the brightness of bulbs. They recorded the circuit they made in a diagrammatic form. Pupils carried out investigations to find which material kept a liquid the warmest over a period of time. In Year 6 the pupils are given the materials needed for an experiment and they are able to successfully organise the experiments. This was evident in their work on separating mixtures.
110. At both key stages pupils are confident and generally enthusiastic in their lessons although they reported some work in Year 6 involving copying work from the board to be boring. Pupils respond positively to tasks. They participate in investigations with enthusiasm and come forward with good ideas. They work well and show genuine signs of collaboration. At Key Stage 1 they are developing good scientific research skills. They show appropriate respect for, and take good care of, resource materials when undertaking experiments. The behaviour of the pupils at both key stages is generally good and they are keen to discuss their work.
111. In Key Stage 1 teaching is satisfactory overall with elements of excellent practice. Where teaching is excellent there is very clear planning explicitly related to previous learning. There is very good consolidation of pupils' prior learning. There are good links with other subjects such as literacy. Very clearly the focus of the lesson is maintained throughout and pupils are reminded constantly of new learning. The teacher is very well prepared and there is excellent use of resources. The pace is maintained whilst allowing room for pupils' ideas and thoughts. There are high and explicit expectations of behaviour and of listening, contributing and thinking.
112. In Key Stage 2 teaching is satisfactory overall with elements of good practice. Where teaching is good there is a clear balance in planning between enquiry skills and the acquisition of knowledge. A good practical activity was planned. The teacher's subject knowledge was

secure and she was enthusiastic about the subject. Probing questions were used to extend pupils' learning.

113. The subject co-ordinators have good subject knowledge and are providing effective yet temporary leadership. They have highlighted three areas that need further development. These are assessment of science throughout the key stages, data handling and the prioritising of Attainment Target 1: looking at outcome objectives. It is planned to use the science advisor to help address these areas. The tracking of pupils has been introduced. The co-ordinators monitor book samples and one of the co-ordinators has observed in Key Stage 1. This co-ordinator has given feedback to the members of staff observed. The other co-ordinator monitored when went into classes to support 'base' pupils in KS2.
114. The school has made good progress in raising standards of attainment since the last inspection. Investigative work has become very prominent and pupils are developing good investigative skills as a result. Individual targets in front of the science books have helped focus the pupils. There is opportunity in the teachers' planning to evaluate.

ART

115. Standards of attainment in art are good in Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2 they are at least satisfactory with some work of a high standard.
116. Pupils have a good understanding of colour and are able to mix their own colours from an early age. They use this skill well in their work, for instance in painting self portraits in Key Stage 1, and in matching the subdued colours in a Lowry print at Key Stage 2. Pupils also have a good idea of pattern and texture and use this effectively in two-and three-dimensional art, for instance, when making clay hedgehogs and fish in Key Stage 1. The standards of the ceramics work produced by pupils in both key stages is good. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have moulded and glazed ceramic fruits which are linked to some effective fruit prints they produced. Pupils at both key stages produce some careful and thoughtful work based on the work of a variety of well-known artists. They can talk knowledgeably about the work of the artists and this knowledge is often reflected in their own work. This is particularly evident in Key Stage 1 where pupils had studied the work of William Morris and developed a good understanding of his close relationship with nature. They are able to produce their own detailed ideas in response to his work. Work on Matisse has been covered in year 5 with pupils producing good collages based on very effective computer printouts. Higher standards are evident where the work of well-known artists is used to inform and improve pupils' own work. In Key Stage 1 pupils' large, exotic, 3D flower pictures were directly informed by Georgia O'Keefe's use of colour and bold design. In Key Stage 2 some pupils display a very superficial knowledge of the work of well-known artists and are not able to relate this knowledge to their own work. Pupils' skills in drawing are variable. Pupils produce careful observational drawings at both key stages and some of these drawings are good, but pupils' ability to represent simple images of the human form or buildings are not appropriately developed by the end of either key stage. For instance, at Key Stage 2 pupils have a limited understanding of perspective or how to represent shape and space in their art.
117. The quality of teaching in art is good at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory at Key Stage 2. Pupils are taught to use a variety of resources and a good range of media. For instance, in Key Stage 1 pupils are taught to develop their skills through painting on silk; in Key Stage 2 they produce detailed collages with a good use of texture and colour based on Tudor designs. Planned links to other curriculum areas are good. Particularly effective is teachers' use of information and communications technology to develop pupils' skills and knowledge in art and there are also good links with science, and design and technology. Art activities are appropriately planned to enable pupils to express their ideas and feelings, for instance as part of a lesson teaching personal and social skills. However, many pupils have not been

systematically taught sufficient techniques to represent abstract ideas and feelings, or are not offered a choice of appropriate media, and their work is limited and immature. In a newly introduced initiative, pupils in all classes use sketchbooks, often effectively, to record different aspects of art and to enable teachers to assess their progress.

118. Pupils' attitudes to art are good overall and at Key Stage 1 the attitudes of some pupils are very good. Pupils are enthusiastic in their approach to art and often painstaking in the execution of their work. Pupils can sustain their interest and persevere with a task. Many pupils talk eagerly about their work and can describe how they carried it out. Pupils are less able to evaluate their work or to suggest ideas about how it could be improved. Pupils' best art work is selected termly and kept in a portfolio as a record of their developing skills and knowledge.
119. The art co-ordinator has only recently taken on the role and is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subject. She has made a good start in monitoring plans and the quality and range of work produced throughout the school. She has drawn up an action plan for development of the subject although this is not a priority within the current school strategic plan. The action plan identifies some training needs for staff and resource needs but does not specify how these will be funded or time allocated.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

120. Only two lessons were observed in design and technology. Other evidence was drawn from discussion with teachers and pupils, from a scrutiny of teachers' plans and displays, and from talking to pupils.
121. Throughout the school, pupils' attainment is in line with the standards expected for their age. Key Stage 1 pupils design effectively and make bears with moving limbs, demonstrating good understanding of the use of levers and pivots. Their 'pop-up' pictures, based on *Hairy McLary*, and doll puppets enable them to develop their making skills, select appropriate materials and make choices about the appearance of the finished product. Other pupils design wallpaper, after William Morris, and produce effective and thoughtful work.
122. Key Stage 2 pupils design slippers. They gather information and generate ideas about the purpose of the slippers, linking their research to scientific ideas about friction, for example, when they consider the non-slip soles in their design. They examine various types of footwear, use measuring skills well and work safely and carefully to produce a finished model. Other pupils at this key stage design and make effective models of a Tudor house as part of their work in history. Similarly, linked to science work, pupils design parachutes well and make them carefully as they study air resistance. A good model of a human skeleton provides yet further links with the science curriculum. Throughout the school there are many good examples of ceramics work, linking design and technology with art.
123. Pupils develop their learning satisfactorily across both key stages. They develop skills in working with a variety of materials, including textiles and food, and recording what they have done. They grow more confident in solving design problems and use their previous knowledge imaginatively in new contexts. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to the other pupils in this subject.
124. Pupils' attitudes to design and technology are satisfactory. They are generally interested in their design work and most enjoy making their products. They often work well together and persevere in their efforts. They are proud of their finished work. Pupils are aware of safety issues and understand the need for care when using tools, for example.
125. From the limited evidence available the quality of teaching is satisfactory at both key stages.

Lessons are clearly and carefully planned, and appropriate guidance is given to pupils as necessary. Pupils are usually well managed and the teacher prompts pupils to reflect on their work and consider how they can improve it.

126. Design and technology continues to be satisfactory as it was at the last inspection. The co-ordinator has been appointed very recently. She has sound plans to develop the subject, including the provision of additional in-service training for staff. The school design and technology curriculum utilises the new national guidelines produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and this gives good support to teachers and has a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning. Resources for the subject are of good quality and are stored centrally for easy access by staff.

GEOGRAPHY

127. Standards in geography are broadly in line with what is expected nationally. Since the last inspection, the profile of the subject has improved in the school and some imaginative work has been done in some classes in Key Stage 2. The school is now making some good use of internet-based resources to improve pupils' knowledge of the world around them, and to keep track of major upheavals in different geographical regions such as Mozambique. The quality of work done by pupils in Key Stage 1 is good.
128. By age 11, pupils describe and make simple analyses of deserts, rainforests, rivers and mountain systems, the weather and their own and other localities. They can use a range of different atlases and can identify primary and secondary routes. They know compass points. They use web sites and search engines to locate geographical information, such as where to find information on mountain weather conditions. They make satisfactory progress overall as they go through the Key Stage, but it is not consistent, because they do less demanding work in some years. For example, the oldest pupils' written work includes large amounts of naming and labelling items in worksheets, whilst that in some other years is more challenging. Where routine worksheet completion tasks are set, lower achieving pupils make less progress than they should.
129. Pupils in Year 2 can investigate their classroom, school and local area and make simple classifications of their features. They can make simple maps with symbols and keys. They know why different types of transport are needed to bring food to an island. They make good progress because their work offers a consistent and increasing challenge as they move from age five to age seven.
130. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress in relation to their abilities because of the good support they get.
131. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers' long-and medium-term planning are satisfactory. It is most successful where teachers involve pupils in extended studies and investigations where they use real environments and sources, and where they are able to develop an extended study to a high standard of presentation. For example, Year 5 pupils in the week of the inspection were preparing guidebooks to the Andes, drawing on a range of map, book, documentary and internet sources. They were also developing good literacy skills by careful design of information presentation, including contents pages and indexes. They spoke of their work with pride and enthusiasm. Evidence of good teaching at Key Stage 1 was seen in workbooks where teachers had focused on developing pupils' skills and analysis of mapping. Where teaching is unsuccessful, teachers do not attempt to fire up pupils' enthusiasm though demonstrating or setting an intriguing challenge. They offer pupils sometimes unexplained tasks of listing keywords and identifying features of topics of which the pupils have little knowledge, such as the uses of water in industry. Whilst pupils maintain good behaviour, they show their discomfort by groaning when being set tasks whose point they cannot see.

Teachers' marking varies but is satisfactory overall. It supports pupils' learning well in Key Stage 1, where teachers help pupils focus on developing their skills. However, teachers do not systematically record pupils' achievement in geography.

132. Geography is competently led and managed. Recent book and IT acquisitions have strengthened subject provision since the last inspection. Because the school does not have a system of recording and monitoring all pupils' achievement in geography, the monitoring programme undertaken by the co-ordinator does not identify the inconsistencies of achievement, particularly for low achieving pupils in Key Stage 2.

HISTORY

133. Very little teaching of history was seen in the week of the inspection. Other evidence was drawn from teachers' documentation, pupils' workbooks and photographs, displays and other records. Standards of work in history are satisfactory overall. By age 11, the pupils have studied the Tudors, Ancient Greeks, and Britain since the 1930s. They have investigated their family trees. In the current year, the oldest pupils have also investigated key events and developments over the millennium. They know the main political and social events and changes in each period they study. For example, the studies of the Ancient Greeks enable pupils in Year 5 to study the Greeks' ideas about democracy, as well as the Greek myths. However, pupils have too few opportunities to study and evaluate historical sources and artefacts of periods other than the relatively recent past. The written work of the oldest pupils is sometimes largely language comprehension exercises, and pupils at Key Stage 2 have been set some tasks of colouring in illustrated commercial worksheets, which indicates poor teaching methods and low subject expectations. Pupils, therefore, make inconsistent progress in learning from ages 7 to 11. The higher attaining pupils and some of those who achieve less well than their classmates make less progress than they should. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress in relation to their abilities because of the skilled support they get.
134. At age seven, the pupils at Key Stage 1 have developed a sense of chronology. They understand the way people develop from babyhood to old age. They know some of the main differences between our own era and that of the Victorians. They have identified similarities and differences between toys of that era and today. They know about the lives of Queen Victoria and Florence Nightingale, and they can recognise typical Victorian patterns and styles of painting. They are beginning to be able to use CD-ROMs and other computer programs to find information about the Victorian era. This represents a good development of pupils' investigative skills in history since the last inspection. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress in learning history by age seven.
135. Insufficient evidence makes it impossible to give an overall judgement on the quality of teaching. Some imaginative and ambitious teaching was seen during the inspection which involved older Key Stage 2 children using a variety of CD-ROMs and book sources to find out about their topic. However, where the range of activities was too diverse, some groups of pupils did not make progress. Teachers' long- and medium-term planning are good, but the quality of lesson plans varies. Where the planned activities bring together history and the arts, for example, through creating textile patterns and embroidery based on studies of Tudor portraits, pupils are able to achieve good standards. The very striking history displays mounted in Key Stage 1 classes are also key teaching tools, which help pupils build their understanding of chronology and particular periods. Pupils in Year 5 make attractive bound books of their studies on the Ancient Greeks. Where teachers' planning is based on identifying facts in worksheets and similar low-level exercises, pupils' work is below their capabilities and they do not develop analytical skills. Some lower-achieving pupils regularly fail to complete work when set such tasks. The organisation of pupils' written work into a single humanities workbook,

which is also used for geography and RE, creates a confused sequence of work written for diverse topics. This holds back pupils from developing a more coherent overview of their work in history. In addition, teachers' marking at Key Stage 2 tends to focus on pupils' language skills and does not give enough guidance in how to improve work.

136. The school has a good range of books and ICT resources for history, and a useful collection of artefacts from the early and mid-twentieth century, which have been built up since the last inspection. The recently appointed co-ordinator is conscientious, carefully monitors medium-term teaching plans and sample workbooks. She plans to build further on the resources. However, she has not yet enough training for her subject responsibilities and the monitoring approach used in the school does not identify the weaknesses in some of the work set. There is no whole-school system for assessing pupils' work in history and this is holding back the school in developing better targeted work for the lower achieving pupils.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

137. Standards in information technology at the end of Key Stage 1 are good. Standards at Key Stage 2 are broadly in line with national expectations, and include some very good features. Since the last inspection, there have been many improvements to the school's provision. A network linking the Key Stage 2 classes, the library, and the speech and language base with the Hertfordshire schools intranet has been installed. This gives pupils access to internet sites and facilities which are safe for children to use. All classrooms now have at least two computers, and the range of software has been enhanced.
138. By age 11, most pupils are independent computer users who can successfully load, edit and print files and send and receive emails. They know the correct terms for program functions and icons. They locate web sites and use search engines. They use word-processing software and clipart, setting out poems and incorporating appropriate graphics. They use graphics packages to create images based on their studies of artists such as Matisse. They use a database to find out about children's experiences in World War Two. However, pupils in Key Stage 2 have very few opportunities to use control and modelling applications or to use spreadsheets and they do not yet develop the nationally expected levels of skill using these programs.
139. The progress pupils make at Key Stage 2 varies greatly from year to year. It is satisfactory overall. In many classes, there have been considerable differences in the amount of access to computers different children have had, and this has meant they have not gained the confidence and skills of their peers.
140. Pupils at Key Stage 1 achieve good standards overall. They achieve good standards in their knowledge of how to operate computers, including creating and saving files. They know the correct terms for the different parts of the computer and they acquire a good level of keyboard skills. They achieve very good standards in operating graphics software. For example, Year 2 pupils use a paint program to produce very attractive images in the style of Mondrian after studying his work. They share a word-processing task to create an attractively laid out class poem based on a Caribbean chant. They use CD-ROMs to find information about people in the Victorian era. Younger pupils use talking books to hear stories. They control a programmable robot, building on preliminary work in physical education to direct it to move right and left through a planned route.
141. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in learning IT at Key Stage 1. Most make good progress, but in some classes, a small number of pupils do not use computers as frequently as their classmates and this holds back their progress. Pupils in one class do not make as much progress in developing information skills as pupils of the same age in another class, because they do not use the computer in the library.

142. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language in both key stages have equivalent opportunities to their classmates and make satisfactory progress in learning how to operate computers.
143. Pupils served by the school's speech and language base use talking books and create simple texts. However, this group of pupils makes less progress than they could in learning to use information technology because the school has not yet identified the best ways in which its existing software and other specialist software could be used to help their learning.
144. Pupils of all ages and abilities enjoy using information technology and are proud of their skills. They enjoy helping other pupils learn to use programs. However, some pupils who get less access than others are not confident and tend to see the computers as being primarily for other pupils.
145. Information technology is well taught. The teaching of core computer skills is good, and often includes outstanding features. For example, teachers make excellent use of demonstration displays that include printed screen images of the icons and program functions which the pupils need to learn. They teach keyboard skills well from the youngest classes, and ensure that all children learn them. Very effective strategies have been used in Year 6 to involve pupils in teaching their classmates in how to create folders to store their files. Most computer activities chosen are very well linked to the subject curriculum. For example, the distant Andes mountains have been brought alive for Year 5 pupils by being able to access web sites which show current images and environmental issues affecting the peoples of the Andes. Very good use of a talking book program was seen in the school's speech and language base. The base co-ordinator extended pupils' speaking skills very effectively by using the features of the program to prompt pupils to offer comments. Teachers also use internet access very effectively to promote the older pupils' social and moral development by enabling pupils to keep track of the plight of the people affected by the Mozambique floods and other disasters. Using IT applications within subjects is sometimes ineffective where teachers do not directly supervise and guide pupils who are not independent users. In one geography lesson, pupils who were trying to use an internet search engine did not understand the web page layout and so were confused about where to enter their query.
146. Although the school's IT policy is committed to equal access, in practice teachers are not yet ensuring that all pupils have the opportunities they need to use computers. Some pupils, often low achievers with little confidence, have had little access compared with their classmates. In one class a teacher has assigned the same two boys to switch on the computer every day and introduce programs to others. Most teachers do not take account of whether pupils use computers at home in planning tasks, and so do not build on the higher skills of pupils with home experience. Staff supporting pupils with special needs rarely use such programs as talking word processors and word banks to enable them do the same tasks as their classmates. Teachers record pupils' use of computers, and the completion of tasks, skills and achievements.

The subject is very well led. The lead co-ordinator has been outstandingly successful in providing excellent models of how to introduce programs and their functions to pupils by her development of demonstration displays. She has ensured that all classrooms use the same style of display and that the sequence offered in successive years is appropriate to promote progress. She has also ensured that all classes have a common approach to planning and recording computer use. She and her fellow IT co-ordinator devote considerable time and energy to maintaining all the school's equipment in good working order and it is to their great credit that the school is able to make use of much older systems alongside new ones. Good use has been made of the substantial budget available for ICT development to install a network and internet access and ensure that the right software is available to use IT as part of

the whole range of the curriculum. Good informal training has been offered to staff, but the school has not yet identified its approach to the national training opportunities on offer. Not enough has been done to identify the best ways to use IT to support the school's pupils with special educational needs, particularly those who are part of the speech and language base, and the staff who work with them. The school has adopted the nationally recommended scheme of work for Information Technology. However, the proportion of time devoted to IT teaching is much smaller than most other subjects. Even allowing for the time given to IT applications in curriculum subjects, it is very low for a core subject. This is reflected in the strategies some teachers use of expecting pupils to do key classroom activities, such as e-mailing as part of their project studies, in their lunchtime break. The monitoring system in use is not identifying the differences between some classes in the amount of time they offer pupils for IT use in practice and the extent to which they actually cover the scheme. The monitoring system is also not identifying the differences in opportunities given to individual pupils in practice in some classes to work with computers.

MUSIC

147. In each key stage the standards achieved by the pupils are in line with national expectations.. In Year 2 pupils compose music to accompany a poem. They conduct each other whilst they perform their own music using un-tuned percussion. In Year 1 pupils came forward with some very good ideas to accompany the story *Going on a Bear Hunt*. As stimuli for this work they used the actual illustration from the book and also their own painting they did after hearing the story. Year 6 pupils are beginning to use standard notation to record their own composition on tuned percussion instruments. They can follow rhythm patterns and devise rhythm patterns for others to copy. Pupils sing well from memory a variety of songs in unison and in three parts. Throughout the year pupils perform at different venues and to different audiences. This year the choir sang at the Mayor's civic ceremony. Pupils listen to music from other cultures as well as their own. They study other composers and recognise ways in which their music reflects the time and place in which it was created.
148. Since the last inspection the school has improved the work in composition throughout the school. Pupils in Year 1 now use symbols to record their own composition on un-tuned percussion, which other pupils can interpret. In Year 6 pupils use standard notation although this is still at an elementary stage of development. Pupils throughout the school are able to sing in tune and rhythmically. More CDs and tapes to support the staff have been purchased.
149. Teaching at both key stages is satisfactory overall with elements of good teaching in Key Stage 1. In a good lesson the teacher made good use of resources. The teacher's questioning enabled the pupils to make very good suggestions. The lesson flowed easily from one activity to the next and the pace was good. The teacher was skilful in the way pupils were led into choosing, from those suggested, the ideas which would be the most effective.
150. Pupils enjoy music and eagerly suggest ideas for composing. They participate keenly and are enthusiastic. The pupils listen well to each other when they perform their compositions.
151. The co-ordinator is very keen and enthusiastic and is always ready to help and support colleagues. She gives freely of her time and provides the pupils with plenty of opportunities to perform. At the moment the only monitoring of her subject is through looking at the plans. She has no way of monitoring the teaching of the subject. Although the co-ordinator has built up a good selection of instruments there is a need for more, especially in the large Key Stage 2 classes. During the week of inspection in one lesson, groups of four pupils shared one instrument. This had an impact on the pace of the lesson, which slowed down the learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

152. A total of five physical education (PE) lessons were observed during the course of the inspection. Other evidence was gained from talking to teachers, co-ordinators and pupils; observing a range of extra-curricular PE-based after school clubs, photographs, and documentary evidence.
153. Overall standards in PE are at least satisfactory in each key stage and frequently they are above national expectations. In the reception year pupils are already able to develop simple sequences over a mat incorporating travel and balance in gymnastics. By Year 2 many demonstrate good rhythm in dance and the ability to practise and refine a detailed sequence involving partners within a country dance. They enjoy performing and appreciate others performances. In games standards at Key Stage 1 are above average with good throwing, catching and passing skills while travelling, by boys and girls, in readiness for invasion and attack skills at Key Stage 2. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils understand the importance of warm up and warm down, they handle apparatus responsibly for gymnastics, perform symmetrical and asymmetrical balances well and make good use of space. In games, they work in small teams and demonstrate satisfactory ball skills. Key Stage 2 pupils learn to swim. Almost all pupils quickly demonstrate confidence in the water and the vast majority achieve their 25 metres badge before the end of Key Stage 2. The school has been very successful in sport and competition demonstrating above average standards. Last year the netball team won the local district competition and both the boys' and girls' athletics teams were highly placed in district athletics competitions. Throughout the school pupils make at least satisfactory and frequently good progress in their learning. Examples of very good progress were observed in country dancing and gymnastics. Learning is enhanced in Year 2 and consistently at least good where the class sizes are small giving additional space for activity and more opportunities to perform. Learning is less secure in some of the larger classes in Key Stage 2.
154. Almost all pupils enjoy PE and are enthusiastic. They sustain concentration and respond well to extended periods of physical effort. A few older pupils in Key Stage 2 are less comfortable and a little reluctant to participate. A small minority forget their kit and are unable to take part. All pupils change suitably for games, dance, and gymnastics. The school PE kit is worn by all.
155. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is always at least satisfactory and frequently good or very good. Teachers plan well, address health and safety issues with pupils, and have high expectations, particularly at Key Stage 1. They provide good role models for pupils, dress suitably and take an active part by demonstrating moves or skills. Good use is made of classroom assistants who also frequently take a full part in the activity in their support for individuals. In the best lessons teachers give opportunities for demonstration, and time for refinement and improvement. They set clear and high expectations and give teaching points. In a Year 2 lesson some effective preparatory teaching took place in the classroom before moving into the hall and this effectively supported the rate of learning during the time in the hall. In small games activities the pupils are reminded of the links to major games and competitive sport. In some lessons too little time is allocated for pupils to work at the main activity and in few lessons are pupils encouraged to evaluate their own performance before refining and developing their work.
156. The PE national curriculum is fully addressed with games, gymnastics and dance in both key stages. In Key Stage 2 pupils experience a full programme of athletics, they attend weekly swimming lessons at a local pool for half of each year and there is a structured programme of outdoor and adventurous activities incorporating a programme of residential visits in years 4, 5 and 6. Financial support is available to ensure that no pupil is deprived of these curricular opportunities through financial hardship.
157. The subject is well led by two enthusiastic and highly qualified teachers. There is a good policy and guidance on curriculum planning. The PE equipment is very good, with high quality

apparatus, including the recent wall bars for gymnastics. Indoor and outdoor hard and grass surfaces are very good and there is good provision for the storage of equipment which is very well cared for and presented. Health and safety checks are carried out within LEA guidelines. Substantial progress since the last inspection has included the implementation of the new policy, the purchase of high quality apparatus, the extension of extra-curricular activities to include Key Stage 1, and the schools' success in competitive sport.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

158. At the end of both key stages, standards of attainment are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This reflects the findings of the last inspection. Pupils at Key Stage 1 are aware of the importance of valuing others, for example when Year 1 pupils discuss Mother's Day. They recognise the importance of their own families and friends. They make links with the ideas discussed when a Buddhist monk visited the school recently. Pupils have some knowledge of Christianity and Islam, and understand how symbols are used in those faiths. They know some stories from the Bible, such as Ruth and Naomi, or Joseph's coat. They have some knowledge of places of worship, such as Christian churches. Pupils are aware of the need for rules in daily life and understand the possible consequences of breaking them.
159. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 also have some knowledge of Buddhism, as well as Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. They identify some of the similarities and differences between religions, knowing, for example, that Muslims worship in a mosque, and they identify differences between that place of worship and a Christian church. They have knowledge and some understanding of various festivals, such as Eid-ul-Fitr, Christmas and Diwali. Pupils learning about the pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca and Medina, which many Muslims make, understand how members of different faiths regard holy places and wish to visit them. Other pupils at Key Stage 2 are familiar with stories that Jesus told and relate these effectively to moral principles such as the right or wrong way to do things. Other pupils, who are learning about Sikhism, demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of naming and initiation ceremonies in that faith and in Christianity.
160. As they move through the key stages, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory gains in acquiring new knowledge and understanding of the major world religions, such as religious buildings, rituals and life-styles. They develop and extend this knowledge within the context of their own lives and are interested in the way people worship and tolerant of different people's views. They widen their knowledge of stories from the Christian faith and are able to relate stories of Jesus and his followers. They develop greater awareness of the importance of family and community life and recognise the need for rules within these groups. Pupils begin to understand the need to ask questions, explore their own feelings and formulate their own opinions on what they see and hear.
161. Pupils' attitudes to religious education are at least satisfactory and, sometimes, good. They listen carefully to their teachers and often provide thoughtful answers to questions. They handle religious artefacts, such as the Qur'an, with great care, and carefully consider their use and importance. Their behaviour is generally good.
162. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and, sometimes it is good. Lessons are well planned and effective use is made of resources such as religious artefacts. Clear information is provided and this is enhanced occasionally by the use of visitors, such as the Buddhist monk who spoke recently to the pupils. Good use is made of questioning to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding and to give them an opportunity to offer their own opinions. Teachers provide a variety of activities for pupils to enliven and inform their teaching, such as visiting the local church. Teachers show that they value pupils' work by the use of classroom

displays. All of these aspects of teaching support pupils in developing their understanding of religious education. Teachers mark pupils' work but do not always add comments of praise or advice. This restricts pupils' progress.

163. The work in religious education supports all aspects of the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Various links are made with other subjects such as literacy, science, and design and technology, for example when pupils working on materials make Joseph's dream coat. The subject is effectively led by an experienced co-ordinator. A satisfactory variety of resources is provided and these are used effectively to enhance the pupils' learning. The school rightly plans to revise the scheme of work for religious education when the newly revised locally agreed syllabus for religious education is published.