

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Cunningham Hill Junior School**

St. Albans

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117250

Headteacher: Mr R Dawson

Reporting inspector: Mr N F Sherman  
16493

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2001

Inspection number: 194889

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Cell Barnes Lane St. Albans Herts
Postcode:	AL1 5QJ
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M C Scherman
Date of previous inspection:	19 <sup>th</sup> May, 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16493	Neville Sherman	Registered inspector	Mathematics; history; geography	The school's results and achievements. How well is the school led and managed? What could the school do to improve further?
1166	Rosemary Hussain	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes and values. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
4126	Clive Parsons	Team inspector	Science; information and communication technology; design and technology; pupils with English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
1714	Geoff Headley	Team inspector	Art and design; physical education; equal opportunities.	How well are pupils taught?
22147	Anne Holland	Team inspector	English; religious education; music; pupils with special educational needs.	

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>10</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>23</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Cunningham Hill Junior School is situated in the town of St. Albans in Hertfordshire. The school caters for pupils aged 7 – 11. At present, there are 223 pupils on roll with slightly more girls than boys. The school is around the same size as other junior schools. The number of pupils who have English as an additional language is above average. There is an average number of pupils who claim free school meals. The number of pupils with special educational needs is average as is the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need. Pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

The school is generally effective with many positive features. By the time they leave the school, pupils reach well above average standards in English and above average standards in mathematics. Standards in literacy are well above average and the school is successful in ensuring pupils' literacy skills are developed through other subjects. Standards are above those expected for 11-year-olds in art and design, history and music. Standards in science are average, and in ICT, are below expectations. While over half the teaching is good or better, especially in the development of pupils' literacy skills, the overall quality is satisfactory. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in one class in each of Years 4 and 5 and consequently, pupils make limited progress in these classes. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and the quality of relationships in and around the school are good. There is satisfactory leadership and management of the school. Strengths lie in the positive teamwork; however, there is a need to ensure that the monitoring of teaching and learning is more effective. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Standards in English and of literacy are well above average.
- Standards in mathematics are above average.
- By the age of 11, pupils reach standards in art and design, history and music that are above expectations.
- The behaviour, attitudes and personal development of pupils are good.
- Parent-school links and the involvement of parents in their children's learning are good.
- Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is well planned.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

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

- The quality of teaching in some of the Year 4 and 5 classes.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The use of investigation work to support pupils' learning of science.
- Assessment of pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Standards of ICT, which remain unsatisfactory except for younger pupils.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in May 1997. Since then the rate of improvement has been satisfactory. Generally, most of the weaknesses identified for improvement have been tackled. The quality of development planning has greatly improved and the current school development plan provides a clear picture of where continued developments are to be made. Good progress has been made in improving results in the National Curriculum tests, with more pupils reaching the higher levels in the tests each year. Procedures to assess pupils' progress in English and mathematics have been improved but how their progress is assessed in other subjects is unsatisfactory. While some progress has been made in monitoring teaching, this has not been totally successful in addressing the shortcomings identified in teaching at the time of the last report. The school shows sufficient capacity to improve further.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average points scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	B	A	A	A
mathematics	A	C	B	A
science	A	C	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The information above shows that in the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils reached standards that were well above the average in English. In mathematics and science, they were average. Similarly, when compared with similar schools (based on the number of pupils who claim free school meals), standards were well above average in English and average in mathematics and science.

The results of the 2001 tests indicate a similar picture in English and improved scores in both mathematics and science. The findings of the inspection are that standards are well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. Pupils' attainment in their scientific investigation work depresses their achievements in science. Pupils achieve well in English where literacy skills are well taught. Achievements in mathematics and science are satisfactory. Standards in art and design, history and music are higher than those normally expected for 11-year-olds. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are currently below expectations but the overall picture of learning is improving as pupils have more frequent access to computers in each of the classes. Standards in geography, and physical education are in line with expectations and learning is satisfactory. The school is well placed to achieve the national targets set for English and mathematics for 2002. Good progress has been made in raising standards in English in the school since the last inspection.

The school has a higher than average number of pupils with English as an additional language. Most receive effective support; however, the arrangements for the small number with a higher level of need were not seen to be secure and this impedes their progress. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support in class. This impacts well on their overall progress towards the targets outlined for them in their individual education plans.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have positive attitudes and are enthusiastic learners.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave well in and out of lessons. They know what is expected of them and they show respect for people and property.
Personal development and relationships	The school builds confidence in pupils, encouraging them to exercise responsibility and develop meaningful relationships. There is mutual respect between adults and children.
Attendance	Attendance levels at the school are in line with the national average.

Pupils enjoy school and undertake their work with high levels of enthusiasm. Relationships between all groups of pupils are good, ensuring that a positive atmosphere is evident.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils in:</b>	Years 3 – 6
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	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.*

While there is much good teaching in the school, the overall quality is satisfactory. Strengths lie in the teaching of English where effective links are made with other subjects, ensuring effective development of pupils' skills and good gains in learning. While the teaching of numeracy is satisfactory, it could be strengthened by more effective use of computers. There is good teaching in art and design, history and music ensuring that pupils achieve well in these subjects. At present, insufficient use is made of investigation work in the teaching of science. The learning of ICT skills is inadequate, and insufficient use is made of ICT in some subjects. In many classes where good teaching and learning occur this is characterised by effective management of pupils and where planned learning for them is made interesting and challenging. In less effective lessons, seen in some classes in Years 4 and 5, the pace of lessons is too slow, resulting in some pupils becoming inattentive and leading, in some instances, to misbehaviour and insufficient gains in learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	At present, statutory requirements for ICT are not met. Other than this shortcoming, the curriculum is suitably broad, balanced and enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities and visits to places of educational interest.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers and support assistants give the pupils well-planned support, enabling them to make good gains in their learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Arrangements for pupils who are at the early stages of learning English are not fully effective. Pupils who are more competent in their use of English are sufficiently provided for on a day-to-day basis.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is good provision for pupils' social, moral and cultural development through different subjects of the curriculum. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of working independently ensuring pupils' personal development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are well cared for by all staff, who have a good knowledge of the pupils as individuals. The school makes good use of National Curriculum assessment data to track pupils' overall progress in English and mathematics. At present written records, by which teachers can refer to pupils' learning in other subjects, are unsatisfactory.

Requirements for the National Curriculum for ICT are not fully met. There is a well-planned programme of activities to support pupils' learning beyond the school day. Pupils are well cared for; however, arrangements to assess pupils' learning in subjects other than English and mathematics are unsatisfactory. Many parents are supportive of the school and give good encouragement to their children, for example in completing homework.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership. He is well supported by the senior management team and all staff; however, the monitoring of teaching and learning needs to have a sharper focus on overcoming the shortcomings in teaching.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors support the school well and, with the exception of some elements of the curriculum for ICT, which are insufficiently developed, fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good use and analysis is made of National Curriculum tests and assessment data in highlighting where improvements should be made. The headteacher is less effective in evaluating teaching.
The strategic use of resources	The school has good procedures in place for discussing the allocation funds to support educational developments. The principles of best value are applied well when purchasing goods and resources.
Staffing, accommodation and resources.	There is an appropriate number of qualified staff. The adequacy of accommodation is good. Resources are satisfactory and effective use is made of the school library to support pupils' literacy development; however, there is a shortage of equipment to support science teaching.

While there is satisfactory leadership and management of the school, ways to monitor teaching and learning are not fully effective. Good attention is paid by the school to ensure that funds allocated to the school are carefully spent.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The community 'feel' of the school.</li> <li>How the school promotes pupils' understanding of being a member of a wider social group.</li> <li>The progress that their children make.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The quality of provision in one of the Year 5 classes.</li> <li>The amount of work their children are asked to complete at home.</li> </ul>

Inspection findings support the parents' favourable views of the school. The inspection team does not support parents' perspectives on the expectations that the school has of pupils in terms of homework. Inspection findings indicate that pupils in many classes are given a suitable and taxing range of work to complete at various points of the week; however, the inspection team does support some parents' views that the quality of education in one of the Year 5 classes is not as strong as in other year groups.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment. Evidence from Key Stage 1 National Curriculum and teacher assessments indicates that pupils enter the school with above average skills in reading, writing and mathematics with an above average number of pupils reaching the higher levels for seven-year-olds.
2. In the National Curriculum tests of summer 2000 for Key Stage 2, the number of pupils reaching the expected and higher levels in English was well above the national average. Over half of the pupils, for example, reached the higher Level 5. From 1998, the results and patterns of attainment in English have been consistently higher than the national average. The results from the 2001 tests indicate that standards are well above the national average. When the results are compared with similar schools (those with a similar number of pupils who claim free school meals), standards are well above average at both the expected and higher level.
3. The findings of the inspection are that standards in English are well above the national average according with the end of key stage tests and teacher assessments of recent years. Standards in literacy are well above average, and very good attention is paid by the school to ensuring that pupils' reading and writing skills are extended through other subjects. Attainment in speaking and listening is well above average and all pupils, including those at the early stages of learning English, are given good encouragement to participate in discussions and express their opinions. Many pupils are effective listeners and are keen to participate in class discussions and debates that often form a part of many English and other lessons. Standards in reading are well above average. All groups of pupils have a good understanding of the works of different children's authors and express informed opinions on why they prefer the writing of one author to another. Pupils are given regular opportunities to explore the range of books in the school library, and the frequent opportunities provided for them to undertake research enable pupils to develop good skills in reading books for information and synthesising the information gleaned as part of their general studies. Standards in writing are very high and well above average. Many pupils are able to write imaginatively using a wide range of vocabulary expressively to hold the interest and attention of the reader. Standards of handwriting, spelling and overall presentation are equally high. Many pupils take pride in how they present their work and many teachers have high expectations of the pupils in this aspect of their English development.
4. The results of the National Curriculum tests for mathematics in summer 2000 for Key Stage 2 indicate that standards were average overall and above average for the number of pupils reaching the higher level. When the results were compared with similar schools, standards were average overall and above average at the higher level. The tests for 2001 indicated that standards are above average and a significant improvement over those for 2000. This reflects the increased attention the school has paid to the teaching of mathematics. In addition, the school is aware that standards in mathematics have not been as high as those noted in English and has increased its attention to ensure that assessment information is used more effectively in planning pupils' learning. This is contributing to improved levels of attainment and good gains in learning as seen in the most recent National Curriculum test results. Inspection findings confirm that attainment in mathematics is above average. Good attention is paid to ensuring that pupils' mathematical skills are practised, used and refined through the use of everyday mathematical problems for them to solve.
5. The 2000 National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments in science for Key Stage 2 indicated that standards were average when compared to the national picture. Against similar schools, standards were average overall but with many pupils achieving the higher Level 5. The 2001 results indicate good improvement over those for 2000 and indicate that standards were well above the national average. The findings of the inspection are that standards are in line with the national average. The difference between inspection findings and National Curriculum results is attributable to the lower attainment in investigation work; and pupils could achieve more in this aspect of their scientific learning. The school is aware of the need to place increased importance on ensuring that pupils learn new scientific knowledge through regular use of investigation work.

6. In information and communication technology (ICT) by the end of the key stage, standards are currently below national expectations. The school has made sufficient progress since 1997 in improving the number of computers in a suite to which all pupils have regular timetabled access. This is starting to have a positive impact on standards reached and learning made by pupils as they move through the school; however, at present, information and communication technology is insufficiently developed through other subjects of the curriculum for it to have a positive impact on the standards reached by pupils in the upper part of the school. Pupils could achieve more in this aspect of their learning.
7. Standards in religious education are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. In art and design, history and music, pupils reach standards that are above those normally expected of 11-year-olds nationally. Pupils achieve well in these subjects. In geography and physical education standards are in line with expectations. Pupils' achievements in these subjects are satisfactory. Insufficient evidence was available to make a judgement on standards in design and technology.
8. The school has an above average number of pupils who have English as an additional language, some of whom are at the early stages of learning English. Many of these pupils enter the school with a good level of proficiency in speaking, reading and writing English. These skills are sufficiently developed as they move through the school, and the majority of pupils make satisfactory gains in their learning both in English and in other subjects as they move from class to class; however, the small number of pupils who are at the very early stages of learning English do not always have their learning needs suitably met in all lessons and the gains they make in learning are not always sufficient or match their true capabilities.
9. The school has an average number of pupils who have special educational needs. Where these relate to literacy and numeracy, the pupils are well supported and make good progress towards overcoming their particular difficulties. During the inspection, pupils with behavioural difficulties, particularly in one class in Year 4, did not always have their learning needs effectively addressed and their progress faltered as a consequence.
10. Overall, the school has successfully managed to raise standards in English, mathematics and science since 1997 with significant gains being made in ensuring that a higher than average number of pupils reach the higher levels in National Curriculum tests. Standards have also been raised in history and music as well as being maintained at the high level noted at the last inspection in art and design. At present, the school is satisfactorily placed to reach the targets set nationally for all pupils by 2002.

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

11. Pupils look forward to coming to school and are happy, polite and eager to talk to visitors. Standards of behaviour are good in school and out of school on visits. In lessons, pupils are enthusiastic learners who listen and respond well and are keen to participate. In a Year 4 English lesson, for example, their thirst for knowledge was palpable in finding new words to extend their creative writing. The majority of pupils settle to work quickly at the beginning of lessons and concentrate well on their individual or group tasks without direct supervision. A good example of this was seen in a Year 3 art and design lesson when pupils moved from task to task without the need to consult the teacher. In some lessons, a few pupils with challenging behaviour can become restless and distracted, particularly in whole class discussions, but their impact is minimal where the teacher is alert to signs of inattention and they have a good level of support. Where the pace of the lesson is slow, however, it can take time to re-engage pupils whose attention has wandered.
12. Pupils' behaviour around the school and at lunchtimes is good. They play happily together in the playground or quietly in classrooms during wet playtimes. Pupils are aware of the needs of those around them and older pupils are careful when younger ones are near. They are courteous and readily hold open doors not just for visitors but for each other too. Most pupils were eager to talk to inspectors and delighted in sharing their experiences. They were curious and asked many questions. A few parents spoke of occasional instances of bullying, but are confident that the headteacher takes these very seriously and acts quickly and appropriately, and pupils confirmed this.

13. Most teachers have a good rapport with pupils who respond well with respect. They enjoy good relationships with their peers and show an understanding and tolerance of different cultures and backgrounds. Pupils work well collaboratively in pairs and larger groups. In a design and technology lesson they were seen to engage in focused group discussions about the design of Tudor houses. They behaved democratically so that all the pupils in the group had a chance to participate. Parents expressed appreciation for the increased confidence gained by pupils in public speaking which helps them to flourish. Pupils enjoy being given responsibilities and carry these out earnestly, for example by helping in the library or taking the registers to the office. Responsibilities and expectations increase as pupils progress through the school. Year 6 pupils are given privileges such as table tennis as recognition of their seniority in the school and which also provide an opportunity to show they can be trusted.
14. Attendance is satisfactory; it is in line with the national average. Punctuality at the start of the school day is good; pupils know the classroom routines well and quickly settle to work on arrival. Registration is carried out quickly and efficiently and lessons start on time.

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

15. Teaching was good when the school was last inspected in 1997; now the overall quality is satisfactory. Lessons vary greatly in their effectiveness. The majority are good and a few are very good; one physical education lesson, taught to Year 3 pupils, was excellent. The weaknesses occur in one class in each of Years 4 and 5. Significantly, two of the core subjects, mathematics and science, were taught unsatisfactorily in some lessons in both year groups. The good standards achieved in English are a reflection of the way the subject is taught. There is some good English teaching in all years. This is because teachers have secure knowledge of the subject and appropriately high expectations of what their pupils should learn. The literacy levels continue to rise because the skills receive close attention and teachers explain well when the pupils encounter difficulty. Effective links are also made with other subjects, with pupils being given clear scope to develop their literacy skills in other areas of the curriculum. Questioning is used effectively in most English lessons, and is a common feature of the best lessons in other subjects.
16. Although the majority of teaching was satisfactory, good or better, there were some unsatisfactory lessons in mathematics and science. Where the good teaching occurs, the teachers use what they know about the pupils to set a range of suitably demanding tasks, and the good rapport that exists enables the lessons to move along at a brisk pace. Good classroom management contributes significantly to teaching in several subjects. Where this is enhanced by clear expositions, the reinforcement of subject specific language and teachers' enthusiasm, the lessons are good. The added ingredients of the very successful physical education lesson were the levels of challenge placed upon the whole group and individual pupils, and the teacher's rigorous follow-up in ensuring they performed a range of imaginative and good quality movements. Across the school, too little emphasis is placed in science on developing pupils' abilities and skills in investigation work. While teachers do ensure pupils carry out experiments, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to carry out open-ended investigations. Their learning is restricted as a result. While the school is making increased use of ICT to support teaching, there are lessons when the potential to use computers is overlooked by some teachers.
17. The teaching of basic skills, especially literacy skills, is a good feature of the school's work. In contrast, there is unsatisfactory use of assessment to support pupils' learning and the overall standard of teaching is constrained as a consequence. Although teachers often remind the class of what they have done, and planning takes this into account, in the majority of subjects the work is not set on firm assessment of what pupils understand and can do. In the lessons that are taught satisfactorily the strengths outweigh the weaknesses, but sometimes the pupils, particularly the higher-attainers, are presented with a modest challenge. The unsatisfactory teaching affecting some pupils in Years 4 and 5 is causing them to make insufficient progress. There are several reasons why some lessons are unsuccessful: sometimes it is because the teacher's subject knowledge is weak and pupils are given incorrect information; occasionally the learning objectives are unclear, and a lack of focus results in a disjointed lesson; sometimes, pupils' learning is depressed because the presentation of material is dull, and sometimes because the teacher does not have the strategies to help them learn when they are working in groups after initial input to the whole class. As a result, some children become restless and their subsequent behaviour is not always effectively managed.

18. Satisfactory teaching overall results in pupils learning satisfactorily. Homework, especially in the form of regular reading, is used well as an element of teaching. The provision made by teachers and support assistants for those who have special educational needs is good in most classrooms. The pupils generally progress at the rate expected of them because planning takes account of their needs, the learning tasks are mostly at the appropriate level and the support they receive is focused. In contrast, the number of pupils who have English as an additional language, and need help in acquiring language skills, do not always make sufficient progress. The small amount of support given by the specialist language service uses a narrow range of strategies and fails to stimulate learning. Furthermore, because the school is not monitoring the pupils' acquisition of English language closely enough there is inadequate information on which to set them targets and for teachers to modify classroom practice.

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

19. The school provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities, most of which are of a good quality. The provision of extra-curricular activities, coupled with an extensive range of trips, visits and visitors welcomed into school, is a strength and extends well the experiences and achievements of pupils. Many of these activities make good use of the local community, including, for example, the emergency services. The literacy strategy is being implemented very well and, together with the focus placed on developing the English curriculum, has helped to ensure that learning is good and the pupils' attainment has improved. The numeracy strategy is being implemented well, although this has yet to have the very positive impact of the literacy strategy and more opportunities need to be planned to develop number skills across the curriculum. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, with very effective management. Good relationships with other local schools help to ensure good progression for pupils when they move from one phase of their education to another. This could be usefully extended to provide more contact between subject co-ordinators to ensure that the curriculum takes full account of the pupils' previous experiences.
20. Teachers plan well together, so that pupils of the same age but in different classes have a good consistency of experience. Sometimes, however, the planning for a year group does not reflect the expectations of the scheme of work that the school has developed. On other occasions the activity used encompasses a number of different subjects. While this can lead to a useful reinforcement of ideas and the opportunity to apply ideas in a new context, it can also result in the requirements of the different subjects not being met. More care is needed to ensure, for example, that work on elastic band powered rollers in Year 6 has a definite emphasis on design and evaluation, as needed for design and technology, and, at the same time, an investigative approach to develop skills in science. There is a heavy emphasis in Year 6 on improving the results of the national tests in science. While this does produce very high results, it skews the curriculum, so that there is insufficient emphasis on developing the pupils' skills of scientific enquiry. Some parts of the information and communications technology (ICT) curriculum are not being taught and the school lacks the equipment to do so. Some good use is made of ICT in some subjects, such as using the Internet or CD-ROMs to research topics. There is a need, however, to increase the opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning more widely.
21. The pupils' personal, social and health education is being developed well. The school is starting to audit what is happening, to identify any gaps or areas needing development and to co-ordinate provision more coherently to ensure that this aspect is strengthened further.
22. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not planned across the school; however, provision for this aspect of its work is good overall, a similar position to the last inspection. Spiritual development is dealt with satisfactorily through the daily assemblies, which sometimes give time for pupils to reflect or consider the plight of others; however, other than religious education, there is little contribution from subjects. Moral, social and cultural development is good. 'Circle Time' (sessions where pupils meet as a class and discuss issues that they find most relevant to them as a group), has been extended and is used to raise moral and social issues. This is also done in assemblies and through storytelling. The promotion of good behaviour is a very good feature of the school. Teachers have a calm and patient approach to helping pupils understand right from wrong, by giving clear explanations of how anti-social behaviour has a detrimental effect on themselves and others.

The concept of the school as a community is promoted effectively and contributes to pupils' social development. There is a culture of mutual trust; pupils respond well when they are given responsibility; they work and play well together, and they understand the school's message about the importance of politeness and good manners. Cultural development is promoted effectively through visits to such places as a Buddhist temple. Several subjects contribute effectively. For instance, art provides opportunities to look at a range of artistic styles; pupils listen to African music as a way of learning about rhythm, and they look at signs and symbols associated with Sikh and Christian religions. The many visitors to the school who talk to, or work with, the pupils enhance their personal development in different ways.

23. More consideration now needs to be given to using ICT to support learning in other subjects of the curriculum, in addition to developing ICT as a subject. There is also a need to ensure that some aspects of the National Curriculum are actually covered. This applies in particular to being able to make things happen, linked to work in design and technology, and to monitor events and respond to them, as expected in science. The school will also need to ensure that the appropriate resources are available to enable this work to take place.

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

24. The care and guidance afforded to pupils is good. Parents praise the strong ethos and sense of community of Cunningham Hill. All groups of pupils are treated with respect for individuality in a happy, family atmosphere. Parents of special educational needs pupils in particular praised the high quality of provision.
25. Child protection procedures follow the local authority guidelines and teachers are instructed on carrying these out. The care for pupils who become ill at school is very good. Several staff are trained in first aid training which the school receives free of charge as it is the headquarters for the local St. John's Ambulance. There is a timetable of responsibilities to ensure coverage throughout the school day. There is a satisfactory level of supervision at lunchtimes. An after school club is organised on site as a response to parental need. This is well organised with the emphasis on fun. Pupils are given snacks and drinks and clearly enjoy the activities provided.
26. The high expectations of good behaviour through effective and consistently applied policies on behaviour, anti-bullying and anti-racial harassment produce good results. A consistent approach to behaviour is also encouraged through regular staff meetings and monitoring. The school motto, '*Do as you would be done by*' serves as a reminder of how pupils are expected to behave.
27. Monitoring of attendance is effective and absences are quickly followed up. Parents and pupils are aware that the school places a high priority on good attendance. This message is reinforced in the school brochure and the home school agreements.
28. Parents stressed that the school places particular emphasis on pupils' personal development. The importance of good health and responsible citizenship are promoted through the personal and social education programme, helping pupils to come to terms with the issues of growing up. Most staff know the pupils and there is a good flow of information about pupils' development, for example from the special educational needs co-ordinator; however, not all staff are as aware as they could be of the information being passed on.
29. Good links exist with the infant school through teacher liaison and reciprocal visits. The curriculum links in English in particular, have proved successful. Pupils go on to a number of secondary schools and links have been established with those nearest to Cunningham Hill. Pupils from the local secondary schools undertake work experience at the school, and sports facilities and other resources are occasionally shared. There are some links with Francis Bacon School for able mathematicians, but few other curriculum links with secondary schools exist. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting stated that the school prepares pupils well for the move to secondary education.
30. Health and safety provision is good. Procedures follow the local authority guidelines and risk assessment is carried out regularly. The school is proactive in monitoring possible risks and no areas of concern were noted during the inspection.

31. The arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and the progress they are making are unsatisfactory. Procedures were being put in place when the school was last inspected but they have not been developed sufficiently since then. As a consequence, too little is known about the standard of pupils' work compared to national expectations in most subjects. Although there are useful discussions between teachers when pupils move up a year and into a new class, these discussions are not informed by accurate records of their achievements. The lack of this information weakens teachers' planning because lesson content and teaching strategies can not be devised on the basis of what pupils already know and can do. The adoption of National Curriculum schemes of work in the foundation subjects has provided an assessment framework for each, and the school's intention to use these must be applied as a matter of urgency. English and mathematics stand as subjects where assessment practice is good. Teachers monitor the standard of work thoroughly, they mark it with helpful comments, and they set targets for pupils to achieve. Good assessment in the subject helped focus the school on the need for strategies to raise the attainment of boys. This has now been achieved because of adjustments to the curriculum and the way teachers teach the subject.
32. The school meets its obligation to assess pupils with special educational needs. Practice is good and results in individual education plans that give important information and specific targets. The assessment of the very small number of pupils who have English as an additional language is unsatisfactory because it rarely reveals anything other than what a pupil has done in the little time spent receiving one to one support.

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

33. Cunningham Hill has a committed and responsive parent body offering a very good level of support. They responded favourably to the questionnaire and at the parents' meeting about most aspects of the school. Nearly all parents said that their children like school and they are happy with their progress. The concerns raised through the questionnaire were about the amount of homework given and the range of extra-curricular activities. Neither of these was confirmed as a major issue at the parents' meeting nor during the inspection; indeed the range of extra-curricular activities is good. There were a number of parents at the meeting who expressed concerns about the quality of provision in Year 5 leading to less progress for some pupils compared with others. Evidence gained during the inspection confirmed inconsistencies in provision in Years 4 and 5.
34. The school's links with parents are good, impacting well on pupils' achievements. Parents appreciate the open door policy and the opportunities to meet their children's class teachers before and after school each day if they wish. They find the headteacher and the staff in the main very approachable. Parents receive good quality information through the school brochure, newsletters, curriculum information each term and the annual governors' report. Pupils' annual reports are satisfactory in detail and parents state that comments reflect the individual pupils. Parents' consultation evenings each term are well attended, as is the governors' annual general meeting. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are invited to view targets at the beginning of each term and are involved in annual reviews.
35. Parental involvement in the school is very good. Several parents help regularly in classes, in the library and in accompanying school trips, making a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They also provide significant resources such as computers and paper through their own business links, which is much appreciated by the school. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is very strong and offers a very high level of support through funds raised at social events and volunteers to maintain and enhance the campus. A group of parents has recently been involved in digging out and preparing the outside pond area which is to be used as a learning resource as well as an attractive and peaceful area in which pupils can relax. They have also painted parts of the inside and outside of the school. The PTA has set up a number of sports teams for parents and a craft group, so enabling parents to get together often.
36. Most parents support their children's work at home well. The school homework policy was drafted after consultation with parents, and though there are a few inconsistencies in adhering to the homework timetable and the quality of marking, most parents are happy with the amount and range of homework given.

37. The school has good links with community groups through the use of its facilities in the evenings and at weekends. These benefit the school financially and also increase its standing in the local community. Some of the community groups directly widen pupils' experiences, such as the local Junior Chess Association and brownies.

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

38. There is satisfactory leadership and management of the school. The headteacher is highly regarded by staff, governors and parents and provides the school with fitting leadership. He has a clear view of the school's strengths and of the areas in which improvements could still be made. The headteacher and senior staff work effectively together and there is a strong sense of teamwork by all staff. This helps to promote a clear sense of purpose and ensures that the school's aims are met. A further effect of the strong teamwork is the positive relationships at many levels in the school. A strong sense of racial harmony is evident and all pupils are made to feel valued.
39. Following the promotion of the previous deputy headteacher, the school took the decision to appoint two 'assistant headteachers' both with clear roles and responsibilities, to form the senior management team. Early indications are that this new management structure is working well. Both staff give good support to their colleagues and help to oversee, for example, the planning arrangements that guide pupils' learning in each of the year groups. In addition, both staff have been fully involved in ensuring that requirements for introducing performance management are secure. Appropriate targets for teachers have been set that have taken into account the school's immediate curriculum needs.
40. The school has been very successful in raising pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests since the previous inspection. The pupils' scores in National Curriculum tests, particularly in English, have improved since 1997. There are more computers, and pupils in the lower part of the school are reaching higher standards than in the past. Further progress has been made in improving the quality of development planning. The current process where all members of the school team including governors participate in discussing its formulation has resulted in a document providing a clear view of where improvements are to be made. In addition, developments are carefully costed and progress carefully monitored. The school has improved procedures for assessing pupils' progress in English and mathematics and this work has made a significant contribution to raising standards in these subjects. The school has, however, yet to develop systematic procedures for assessing pupils' progress in other subjects.
42. The school, together with the Local Education Authority, had addressed the shortcomings in the quality of teaching identified in the last report, and more monitoring of teaching has taken place since 1997. Nevertheless, evidence from this inspection found weaknesses in teaching. Management has not been sufficiently rigorous in identifying, for instance, the examples where pupils are asked to undertake the same work in some classes in Years 4 and 5. As a result, pupils' progress in these classes falters and is not as significant as noted in other year groups. The role of the co-ordinators has been developed since the previous inspection. Roles and responsibilities are clear and they are suitably empowered to take a lead and develop a subject. In addition, co-ordinators take appropriate responsibility for the day-to-day management of their subjects and are both supportive of and supported by their colleagues; however, not all co-ordinators are provided with sufficient opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects of responsibility and this lessens the impact of their work.
43. The Governing Body is effective in its work and, with the exception of some aspects of the curriculum for ICT, fulfils its statutory responsibilities. Governors work closely with the staff and many are frequent visitors to the school, joining in many of the school-based activities that are organised for pupils. This gives them a good understanding of the school's needs and where improvements are being made. They are kept fully up-to-date in relation to all school matters through detailed reports from the headteacher and through discussions at, for example, their committee meetings. Governors with a specific responsibility such as overseeing arrangements for ensuring that literacy and numeracy strategies are being implemented effectively visit the school and undertake formal monitoring of lessons. This work, together with the strong and purposeful rapport that governors have with the headteacher, ensures that all governors have an up-to-date understanding of the school's needs and of the contribution they can make to securing further improvements.

44. The school makes good use of the funds that are devolved to it. In recent years, a strain has been put on the budget owing to the school's decision to increase the number of classes in the school from seven to eight. This process has been managed well and both the headteacher and the governors have undertaken a careful watch on the school's finances. There are secure financial arrangements that support the school's strategic development both in the short and medium term. The governors are keenly aware of the need to fund the redecoration of the school's exterior and plans are in place to extend part of the school to provide improved facilities for ICT. Funds raised by parents are appropriately used to provide additional resources for the pupils. The school is successful in applying the principles of best value. Quotes for major projects are regularly sought and careful consideration is given to ensuring that quality resources are purchased to support pupils' learning. Governors regularly appraise themselves of expenditure patterns of similar schools and use this information to guide their own spending decisions. Moreover, the decision to enable one of the learning support assistants to manage the school library has proved highly cost-effective in that the management of book provision is now far more secure with fewer books being lost. Day-to-day management of the budget is secure. Effective use is made of information and communication technology to support the school's day-to-day administration.
45. The school is generally effective in ensuring that the various grants given to support pupils' learning are properly deployed. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is managed very effectively. Support is carefully targeted. Pupils have full access to the curriculum and they make good progress. Support staff make a very positive contribution to the pupils' learning; however, the management of arrangements for the small number of pupils who receive support from outside the school to improve their skills in English, is now secure. Prior to and during the inspection, time was not effectively allocated when sessions run concurrently with games lessons. These arrangements have been altered following the inspection.
46. The school has an appropriate number of suitably qualified staff to match the demands of the curriculum. Wherever possible, co-ordinators' roles are matched to their professional qualifications, expertise and experience, and staff are deployed appropriately. Newly appointed members of staff receive a good level of support from teacher mentors. Appropriate job descriptions are in place for all. Staff appraisal procedures are in place and opportunities for staff development and service training are secure. The school benefits from dedicated support staff. The quality of their input when working with pupils is frequently good.
47. Resources are generally satisfactory with those to support pupils' literacy skills being good; however, those for science and design and technology are unsatisfactory. The accommodation is spacious and makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. The interior is kept clean, tidy and well maintained by a very effective and conscientious site manager. The school is about to make improvements to the exterior décor of the school. Classrooms are quite large; however, where the information and communication technology suite is sited proves somewhat cramped. Again, plans are in place to extend this. The library is well stocked and managed and is used effectively to support pupils' learning. Governors are forward-looking in seeking ways to further enhance the facilities.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. In order to improve the quality of education that the school provides, the headteacher, governors and staff should:-
- (1) **raise the quality of teaching in some of the Year 4 and 5 classes by ensuring that:**
- work planned for pupils is challenging and carefully matches their ability
  - teachers have effective strategies for managing pupils' behaviour
  - teachers' expectations of how pupils present their work are raised;
- (paragraphs) 15, 17, 42, 59, 63)
- (2) **develop a clear, rigorous and well-planned programme for effective monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and subject co-ordinators;**
- (paragraphs) 42, 60, 65, 69, 71, 75)

**(3) raise standards in ICT by ensuring that:**

- greater use is made of computer equipment to support pupils' learning in daily lessons
- requirements for the subject are met
- lesson plans highlight the skills pupils are expected to learn;

(paragraphs J 6, 16, 20, 23, 44, 59, 74, 78, 80– 83)

**(4) raise standards in pupils' scientific investigation work by:**

- raising teachers' knowledge and confidence in using investigation as part of their science teaching
- improving the quality of resources and practical equipment
- making greater use of ICT to support pupils' learning;

(paragraphs J 5, 16, 20, 23, 46, 61– 65)

**(5) develop assessment procedures in subjects other than English and mathematics.**

(paragraphs J 31, 69, 79)

**Other minor issues that should be considered by the school: -**

- improve the range of equipment for some aspects of science and design and technology
- monitor more closely the progress of the small number of pupils at the early stages of language acquisition.

(paragraphs J 18, 32, 47, 65)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	4	19	17	5	1	-
Percentage	2	9	40	36	11	2	-

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for parttime pupils)	223
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	50

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	20

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

### Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	5.7	School data	0
National comparative data	5.2	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 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	24	33	57

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	19	18	23
	Girls	24	23	27
	Total	43	41	50
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	77 (75)	72 (82)	88 (93)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	16	17	19
	Girls	24	26	25
	Total	40	43	44
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	70 (75)	75 (82)	77 (93)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	9
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	6
Indian	4
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	6
Chinese	0
White	184
Any other minority ethnic group	12

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

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	-	-
Black – African heritage	-	-
Black – other	-	-
Indian	-	-
Pakistani	-	-
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	-	-
White	1	-
Other minority ethnic groups	-	-

*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: Y3 – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.7
Average class size	28.4

#### **Education support staff: Y3 – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	84

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	451 450
Total expenditure	438 793
Expenditure per pupil	2 001
Balance brought forward from previous year	8 458
Balance carried forward to next year	21 115

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	223
Number of questionnaires returned	52

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	37	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	42	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	63	4	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	50	23	2	0
The teaching is good.	50	42	4	2	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	50	10	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	31	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	42	6	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	32	55	8	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	50	35	10	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	40	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	52	8	8	2

### Other issues raised by parents

No other issues were raised by parents.

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

### ENGLISH

49. National Curriculum test results in English for eleven-year-olds in 2000 were well above the national average and well above average compared with similar schools. Results in English are above those in mathematics and science. Results in 2001 indicate that these high standards have been maintained and show a considerable increase in the number of pupils attaining the higher Level 5. Test results have risen consistently since 1998. Standards in all three aspects of the subject, reading, writing and speaking and listening, are all well above national expectations for pupils of this age. Pupils with special educational needs make good gains in their learning as they move through each of the classes. Many of them, for example, achieve the level expected for an eleven-year-old before they leave the school in all aspects of their literacy development. There is no significant variation in attainment between the sexes. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory gains in their learning as they move through each of the classes.
50. Inspection evidence shows that overall standards in English are well above average for eleven-year-old pupils. A very high proportion of the pupils in the current Year 6 are already attaining the level expected for their age, and nearly half of these are on line to attain the higher level by the end of the school year. The school has raised standards in reading, writing and speaking and listening, from good to very good, since the last inspection. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has been accompanied by a whole school focus on writing, and this has had a beneficial effect on learning throughout the whole curriculum. The overall quality of English teaching is good, with no unsatisfactory lessons observed. High expectations of behaviour and work are features of the best teaching. This has significant impact on pupils' learning. In a Year 4 lesson observed, the teacher's care in ensuring that all the class fully understood the learning objectives of the lesson resulted in pupils producing work of a high standard. Learning was palpable. Pupils generally behave well, remain on task throughout the lesson and make very good progress. Activities are carefully planned with a good choice of resources.
51. Support for the development of literacy in other subjects is very good. Subjects such as history, geography and religious education are used for developing subject-specific vocabulary and explanation. The provision for reading is very good. Initiatives such as 'Booster' classes have proved beneficial for pupils at the early stages of learning English. Pupils with special educational needs are appropriately supported and they make good progress. Their individual education plans have a clear focus on their needs in language and literacy.
52. Pupils make very good progress in speaking and listening as they move up the school and attain standards that are well above the expected level for their age by the time they are eleven. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. Most pupils make contributions to lessons and answer teachers' questions readily and with enthusiasm. Pupils pay attention to what others say and use appropriate language in discussions, which is often aided by good teaching. In a Year 6 lesson, the teacher used questioning very effectively when encouraging pupils to compare similarities and differences in a text and the subsequent film script of the book *Matilda*. Pupils also give very good responses during the revision of previous learning and the summarising of the lesson.
53. Pupils make very good progress in reading; they achieve very well, and their attainment is well above national expectations by the time they are eleven. Careful records of progress and very good provision of books support progress in reading. Most pupils in Year 6 read fluently and accurately, with expression and understanding. They discuss the main points and themes of the texts they read, and make predictions and inferences. Pupils in all years enjoy reading a wide range of literature. For example, they read modern children's novels, classics, poetry and fiction. In Year 3, pupils could explain why they liked poetry and explain the difference between a poem and a story. Teachers generally have a good understanding of how to teach reading as well as developing pupils' taste for literature. Throughout the school, pupils acquire skills for finding information from books and other sources and use them in various study projects. In Year 3, pupils were confident about using the Internet to find information to support them in their studies. A well-stocked library that is used efficiently by pupils supports the development of reading.

54. The high standards in reading are reflected in the pupils' writing. Standards in writing have risen consistently since 1998. The school has focused on English, and writing in particular, which has resulted in the introduction of various strategies to support its development. Particular attention has been paid to raising levels of attainment in boys' writing; test results reflect the success of this strategy. Increased opportunities have been provided throughout the school for pupils to write across a wider range and for a variety of purposes. For example, Year 6 pupils have produced their own newspaper and in Year 5, pupils were being encouraged to write their own plays. A Year 4 class has written a play and performed it to the adjoining Infant School as well as parents. Teachers ensure that pupils acquire conventions of writing from what they read and there are many examples on display where older pupils have developed good technical accuracy, which is evident in their use of grammatically correct complex sentences and a range of punctuation. They attain good standards in spelling and handwriting, which is fluent, joined and legible.
55. Careful analysis of the school's results, the monitoring of planning and improvements in assessment of the subject have resulted in the school identifying possible weaknesses and introducing strategies to tackle them. A good example of this is the improvement in the standards of writing reached by the boys. Marking is consistent throughout the school and individual literacy targets are written in pupils' workbooks. There is a policy but it was written prior to the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and would benefit from updating to give a clearer picture of the school's approach to the teaching of English. A review of the policy is a priority in the school improvement plan. There is a newly appointed subject manager, who is committed to sustaining and improving the current high standards in the subject.

## MATHEMATICS

56. The National Curriculum test results in mathematics for eleven-year-olds in 2000 indicated that standards were in line with the national average and average when compared with similar schools. The results in 2001 indicate that standards have been raised, with a greater number of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 reflecting the work that the school has undertaken since 2000 in raising attainment in the subject. This has included the introduction of further materials to support teachers in planning pupils' learning. Inspection findings indicate that standards are above the national average. This is a similar picture to that found at the end of the school's last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs make good gains in their understanding of mathematics and pupils who have English as an additional language make equally good gains in their learning. There is no significant variation in attainment between the sexes.
57. By the age of eleven, pupils make good gains in their approaches to mathematical investigation work. The teaching of mathematics ensures that pupils in all year groups have good opportunities to develop their confidence and understanding of such work ensuring good gains in learning. Pupils in Year 6, for example, know how to solve a long multiplication problem using a Russian method of calculation, or that by making all the numbers possible from three digits, adding the total and dividing by the total number of digits always gives an answer of 22. All pupils, including those with special educational needs make good gains in their learning of number. Many are proficient in solving everyday mathematical problems using the skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Pupils have a good understanding of multiplication tables and this is well supported by the frequent tests that are administered with the aim of extending pupils' confidence in using this knowledge. Many pupils have a good understanding of shape and space and are confident in solving problems using different units of measurement. Handling a range of data is the weakest aspect of their development. While pupils are able to devise and interpret charts and tables, given the higher than average levels of attainment many pupils demonstrate, their work indicates pupils should be given more challenge in this aspect of their learning. ICT is only just beginning to be developed in this respect and evidence from many pupils' written work suggests that the use of ICT is not a regular feature of their everyday mathematical learning.
58. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, although evidence from the inspection suggests that this varies from year group to year group with more consistently good teaching evident in the Year 6 classes ensuring that pupils make more rapid gains in their learning. The numeracy hour is a regular feature of everyday mathematics teaching and many teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of the principles that underpin this and apply them well to their teaching. Teachers are enthusiastic about the teaching of mathematics and this has a positive effect on the pupils' own levels of enjoyment in

the subject, which are good. Other examples of good teaching include the effective use of practical equipment to support those that need it and, where necessary, careful explanations of the mathematical steps involved when solving a problem. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to explain the nature of the work undertaken to the rest of the class and this helps to boost pupils' confidence and personal development in approaching the subject. Additional support for those who are less confident in their work is well guided and effective in ensuring that these pupils make good strides in their learning.

59. There are shortcomings in the teaching of the subject that weaken pupils' learning in some year groups. The most notable of these are in one of the classes in Year 4 and Evidence from pupils' work strongly indicates that many pupils are given the same work as others in the class and insufficient use is made of the knowledge teachers have of the pupils' abilities when setting work. Marking is weak and consists largely of ticking pupils' work and as such does not give pupils clear guidance as to how they might improve their work. Time in lessons is not always used effectively and some pupils mark time as they wait for the teacher to come to them to explain in more detail what it is that they have to do. Across the school, teaching could be strengthened with more effective use of ICT in everyday lessons or by enabling pupils to follow their own lines of mathematical enquiry through other subjects such as science or design and technology.
60. There is satisfactory management of the subject by the two coordinators undertaking the role. Both are supportive of their colleagues and help to guide teachers in their planning of what pupils are to learn. Careful evaluation of pupils' end of key stage tests and teacher assessments are undertaken to gauge where developments should be initiated in the subject. There is some monitoring of teaching and learning through direct observation and by exploring the standards of pupils' work through evaluating work in books; however, such work has not been successful in overcoming the shortcomings seen during the inspection. Resources are satisfactory and many classrooms have mathematical dictionaries to support pupils' understanding of mathematical terms.

## SCIENCE

61. Results in the national tests in 2001 improved significantly on those achieved in 2000 and returned to the higher levels of previous years. Inspection findings show that pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. Pupils with special educational needs make good gains in their learning of scientific ideas and concepts. The discrepancy between test scores and inspection findings is attributable to the lower achievement of pupils in terms of investigation and experimentation work. In general, insufficient emphasis is placed on this aspect of the pupils' scientific learning and this depresses standards in the subject.
62. As they move from class to class, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and the early stages of learning English make sufficient progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas. Pupils' knowledge of living things, materials and physical phenomena develop well. The pupils are very well prepared for national tests in Year 6, completing previous tests and answering question sheets as homework, for example. This strong focus on test preparation does distort the curriculum offered to older pupils, however. The many practical activities in younger classes help the pupils to develop their ideas through experiments and investigations, as well as developing their scientific enquiry skills. The increasing emphasis on preparation for the tests in Year 6 with older classes does mean, however, that the pupils' skills do not develop at an equivalent rate to their knowledge base. Many pupils in Year 5, for example, are uncertain about why it is important that the tests that they carry out need to be 'fair'.
63. There are a number of additional reasons why the pupils' scientific experience is inconsistent and lacks coherence. Teaching is unsatisfactory or poor in one of the classes in each of Years 4 and 5. These lessons are insufficiently planned, with not enough attention paid to what the pupils are expected to learn and how this will be achieved best. Consequently, the lessons lack rigour, pace and direction. This can result in an unsatisfactory response from some pupils who lose interest and motivation, thus diminishing learning still further. On occasion the focus of the lesson is inappropriate, covering, for example, work that is only expected to be covered by much older pupils and using poor quality resources. Some activities are chosen as part of a broader topic, linking, for example, with design and technology. More care is needed to ensure that the requirements of both subjects are incorporated in the activity, with appropriate emphasis on investigation. There are also

inaccuracies in the worksheets used that remain uncorrected and translate through into the pupils' written work.

64. Some teaching is good, such as a Year 5 lesson starting to investigate transparent objects and a Year 3 lesson exploring the nature of sound. The activities in these lessons were well chosen to support the learning intended, with introductions and demonstrations by the teacher drawing pupils into the lesson. The pupils and activity were then managed well and learning took place with a good focus and at a good pace. Nevertheless, the overall quality of science teaching in the school could be strengthened by more effective and creative use of investigation work as a means of extending pupils' learning.
65. Leadership and management of the subject have been unsatisfactory. Inadequacies in the quality of teaching have not been rectified. The curriculum for older pupils has become distorted in the drive to improve test results. The content of some lessons is inappropriate or inaccurate. There is no formal assessment system to support teachers in reaching judgements about what the pupils know and can do and transferring this to the pupils' next teacher. The development plan for the subject does not sufficiently cover this need. There is a lack of resources for pupils to use ICT as expected and to ensure that older, higher attaining pupils are able to make observations and measurements with the degree of accuracy expected. Nevertheless, the new co-ordinator has a secure understanding of the requirements and expectations of the National Curriculum and what needs to be achieved to raise standards to a higher level. The headteacher has also recognised the need to change and adapt the curriculum in response to the guidance issued by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

## ART AND DESIGN

66. Standards in art are above the national expectation, as they were when the school was last inspected. Pupils with special educational needs and those at the early stages of learning English make good gains in their learning as they move through each of the classes. On this occasion it was possible to observe only two lessons; however, pupils' work on display in classrooms and the public areas of the school shows that they undertake an appropriate range of activities and deal with the skills and processes competently, and in some cases very well. Most of the displayed work had been done by pupils in the previous academic year, when the subject was co-ordinated by a teacher with specialist subject expertise and obvious ability to guide other members of staff. Pupils have clearly benefited from this influence, and by the age of 11 most are able to use their grasp of some key skills to work successfully in two and three dimensions. The challenge for the teacher who has taken over the co-ordinator's role is to maintain standards and ensure that her knowledge and enthusiasm for art translates into firm support for other staff, particularly those who are new to the school and are not so confident about teaching the subject.
67. High standards have been achieved in ceramics, where the headteacher has shared his skills as a potter to teach pupils several specialist techniques. This has resulted in, for example, model houses, each with good shape and form, and enhanced by careful paintwork to give them character and a degree of originality. Where Year 6 pupils have produced paintings based on the work of the artists Picasso and Delaunay the work shows an understanding of the particular techniques used. Care has been taken to avoid copies and make the pupils aware of the artistic style and what inspired and influenced the artists. Planning documents indicate that such matters are introduced well, allowing pupils the opportunity to appraise critically work done by established artists. Some Year 5 pupils' ability in aspects of drawing is evidenced by some landscapes, done in pencil and giving attention to shape, contour and tone. Other pencil drawings confirm that the pupils have an emerging understanding of the significance of shading techniques to achieving tonal quality. Where staff are not so confident about teaching the subject pupils' work tends to be less refined; although it is generally at the expected level, painting and observational drawings, for instance, are less precise and show insufficient attention to detail.
68. In one of the two lessons observed a Year 3 class was well taught, and as a consequence they learnt well and showed that they are already beyond the level expected for their age. In discussing painting by the artists Monet and Rembrandt the teacher questioned them skilfully until they were able to comment on how the light had affected the colours. Subject specific terminology was promoted well so that later, when talking about abstract art, they were confident and knowledgeable. This was good preparation for the practical aspects of the lesson when they experimented with drawn shapes and the formation of pattern; some pupils took their ideas further by using a drawing program on the

computer. In the other lesson seen, Year 5 pupils worked below the expected level, showing limitation in their ability to communicate their ideas and particularly weak drawing skills. The lesson was satisfactory overall because the teacher's skill in classroom management and close oversight of the tasks were good and ensured that some progress was made from a relatively low base; however, some aspects of the lesson content and some uncertainty about how to develop pupils' technical and expressive abilities prevented more rapid progress. Despite the wide variation in attainment, pupils in both classes behaved well, working enthusiastically with good concentration.

69. The school's plans to make time available for subject coordinators to function more effectively should ensure that assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is strengthened and teaching and learning in art are monitored.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

70. Only two lessons of design and technology were observed during the inspection. Little evidence from last year remained in school to demonstrate the standards achieved across the expected programme of study. Consequently, it is not possible to make judgements about the quality of teaching and the overall standards achieved by the pupils. The quality of work observed was variable and below the level expected by the end of Year 6. Although the quality of teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory and good, it is evident that the individual teachers' planning does not always follow the scheme of work, and that is the main reason for the below average standards. In a Year 5 lesson designing Tudor houses, the pupils had spent much productive time researching their own ideas which were then discussed with other pupils. This helped the pupils to refine and improve their ideas further. The teacher placed a good emphasis on planning, which encouraged higher attaining pupils to identify the materials that they would use and to consider how they would go about the construction. By contrast, Year 6 pupils made a very simple sketch of the pieces of equipment they intended to use to build an elastic powered roller, with little consideration given to the materials being used and their properties.
71. Individual teacher's planning does not always follow the scheme of work intended. The links made with other subjects, such as science, can be helpful in reinforcing ideas and encouraging the pupils to apply their ideas to new contexts. Care is needed, however, to ensure that the requirements of both subjects are incorporated into the activity, with appropriate emphasis placed on design and evaluation. The new coordinator has identified the need to review current practice and provision for the subject. This should include monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and attainment.

## GEOGRAPHY

72. Attainment is in line with that expected for pupils in this age range. At the time of the previous inspection, the picture was similar. Learning by all groups of pupils, including those with English as an additional language, is satisfactory.
73. Pupils in Year 3 have a satisfactory knowledge of the locality. They appreciate the need for different types of shops, and are able to give some examples of the types they see and other buildings and everyday objects such as post boxes or water hydrants they may observe on their way to school. They know that there are different types of housing and know that the town of St. Albans has grown as a result of new homes being built. As they move through the school, pupils are able to identify what types of climate are found in different parts of the world and the impact that, for example, a hot climate has on the working and living conditions of people. By the end of the key stage, pupils have explored the different features of rivers and associated terms such as confluence, tributary and delta. They know about terms such as a 'River Food Web' and why creatures found in a river feed on and off others. Pupils have a secure understanding of the main features, towns and rivers of other continents. The weaker features in attainment lie in pupils' knowledge of maps.
74. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, ensuring that pupils have suitable attitudes to the subject. Stronger features of teaching lie in the good opportunities provided in many classes to develop pupils' geographical skills through independent enquiry. The geography curriculum is sufficiently developed, enabling pupils to explore geographical work in sufficient breadth and depth. This contributes well to pupils' personal development. The pupils' well developed literacy skills also

enable them to produce work that is well presented. Teaching could be strengthened with less reliance in some classes on commercially produced worksheets and by making more effective use of ICT to support learning. The marking of work could also be strengthened. There is an expectation that pupils present their work in folders as part of a geography topic and teachers do not always mark individual pieces of work in sufficient detail that would give the pupils clearer guidance as to how they might improve their efforts.

75. The subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' moral, cultural and social development. For example, older pupils are given scope to discuss the moral implications of deforestation, pollution and the impact that man is having on the natural environment. Fieldwork opportunities are provided, and for older pupils a residential visit to the Isle of Wight makes a contribution to their understanding of the geographical features of another part of the country. The management of the subject is satisfactory and the co-ordinator has ensured that the school has kept abreast of curriculum developments in the subject since the last inspection. At present, however, there are few opportunities for him to gauge the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms by direct observation of teaching.

## HISTORY

76. Attainment is above that expected for pupils in this age range. The school has raised standards in the subject since the last inspection when they were judged to be in line with what year-old pupils are expected to attain. The very good links that have been made with literacy have contributed significantly to extending the pupils' historical knowledge and understanding. This has had a beneficial impact on the standards that pupils attain in the subject and the rate of their learning, which is good. Pupils with special educational needs make equally good gains in their learning. Standards reached by pupils with English as an additional language are satisfactory.
77. By the age of eleven and by the time they leave the school, pupils have a well developed understanding of the past and of the groups of invaders and settlers who have occupied Great Britain in different periods of our history. They know and are able to explain that the Romans had a strong impact on how life in Great Britain developed and how their ideas, for example, to heat a room form the basis of the principles of central heating evident in today's homes. Pupils have developed a good knowledge and understanding of the Viking and the Saxon periods and by the time they leave the school, they appreciate how the culture of the Ancient Greeks impacted on the traditions of many cultures including, for example, the development of the English language. Pupils in Year 4 have a developing knowledge of how life was for different groups of people in the Victorian era and that this was a period of enormous development in the cities as many people moved from the countryside to work in factories and mills. Teaching is effective in developing pupils' knowledge of the past; in the development of their enjoyment of and curiosity about how people lived; of what famous events helped to shape history and in identifying lasting effects.
78. Teaching in many parts of the school is good. In one Year 3 lesson, for example, pupils had to imagine themselves as 'spies' for the Roman Army as they explored and discussed a list of statements about the Celts and why facts such as 'Some women fought with the men' may have been of interest to the Roman generals. Such activities are not only successful in developing the pupils' understanding of life in the past but give them good opportunities to discuss and debate issues in pairs thereby developing their speaking and listening skills. Equally strong features of teaching include effectively ensuring that pupils develop their research skills by exploring a range of books about the various historical themes and eras being studied and then compiling this work in booklets that are very neatly presented. In addition, teachers ensure that where possible, effective links are made with other subjects such as geography and art and design and this helps to deepen pupils' understanding. Although teaching is good, making more systematic use of information and communication technology could further strengthen the gains that pupils make in their learning. Little evidence was to hand that pupils use ICT in the form of compact disc software or databases as a means of developing their perception of the past. Where teaching seen during the inspection was less effective the pace of learning was too slow and tasks did not sustain pupils' interest or enthusiasm. As a consequence, pupils made too few gains in their learning.

79. There is satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. At present, there are few formal methods to record and track pupils' progress. The coordinator, who has managed the subject since the previous inspection, supports his colleagues well in ensuring that the planning of pupils' learning is effective. Resources are satisfactory, with a good range of non-fiction books available for pupils to use; however, there are too few artefacts available to support teachers in their work. The subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' cultural development. The regularly planned visits to places of historical interest and visits by outside speakers complement provision.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

80. The school has recently introduced an ICT suite. This is enabling more focused teaching of ICT, which is leading to an improvement in the rate at which pupils are developing their skills and capability. The current room is, however, only large enough for half a class group at a time. This limits the impact, although teachers are careful to ensure the halves not using the suite are well monitored and engaged in productive activity and learning.
81. The result is that younger pupils are now working at the level expected and most are competent and confident users of ICT. Pupils in Year 3, for example, are skilled at loading programmes, using the mouse to access menus and, when using painting software, colour palettes. They can print their pictures and compare them with the screen version. Pupils in Year 6 have developed their basic skills, such as using programmes and the speed and accuracy of mouse movements, to a satisfactory level. The skill with which they use painting software is at a higher level, with more complex products, than Year 3. This is not yet at the level expected, however, because they have not had access to such focused teaching throughout the key stage. Pupils in all year groups are now making satisfactory progress in the aspects of the National Curriculum covered, albeit from a relatively low starting point for older pupils.
82. Teaching is satisfactory, with teachers' own skills developed to a secure level to support pupils and to solve problems as they arise. Instructions and explanations are clear, so that the pupils know what they are doing and get on with their tasks quickly and effectively. Monitoring and evaluation of the pupils ensures that they remain on task and work with a good focus. Sometimes the teachers' planning could be more specific in identifying the skills that are being developed, to what level, as well as the activities chosen and the end product.
83. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection, although developments have not been at the pace achieved nationally. Nevertheless, the coordinator provides a clear direction for further development and has provided good support for colleagues in developing their ICT skills. More consideration now needs to be given to using ICT to support learning in other subjects of the curriculum, in addition to developing ICT as a subject. There is also a need to ensure that some aspects of the National Curriculum are actually covered. This applies in particular to being able to make things happen, linked to design and technology, and to monitor events and respond to them, linked to science. The school will also need to ensure that the appropriate resources are available to enable this work to take place.

## MUSIC

84. Music is a good feature of the school and there has been improvement in the standards achieved since the last inspection. Its appreciation, performance and enjoyment play an important part in the life of the school.
85. By the end of the key stage, pupils in Year 6 are reaching a good standard in music. Throughout the school, pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress in the subject. Two lessons were observed during the inspection and in both of these the teaching was good. The teaching displays high expectations of pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour. This was also the case in a singing assembly and choir practice, which were observed. Teaching methods successfully integrate singing, music-making, performance, composition and appreciation. This involves all the pupils' senses, celebrates their skill as musicians and is most enjoyable to see. Pupils have carefully planned opportunities to sing, both accompanied and unaccompanied, and to understand beat, rhythm and tempo. They are encouraged to create their own beat and rhythm. In a

Year 6 class, pupils were divided into two halves; one half was beating the time whilst the other half sustained the rhythm.

86. Pupils sing clearly with enthusiasm in assemblies and choir practice. The words are clear and the sense of rhythm is strong. They are developing a good repertoire of a wide range of songs many of which they know by heart. They sing in parts, listening carefully to each other's parts and are confident enough to volunteer to sing solo. They understand, and use effectively, crescendo and diminuendo.
87. Pupils learn to understand music and appreciate music from a wide range of sources, including classical, religious, folk music and pop. They are encouraged to listen to music in everyday settings, for example coming in and out of assemblies. There is a school choir, orchestra, and recorder group. The peripatetic violin teacher supports the development of the orchestra. Concerts are held on a regular basis that results in music holding a high status in the school.
88. The newly appointed coordinator for the subject is a skilled musician. The school uses a series of television programmes to support teachers who are less confident in the subject and this was used to good effect in a Year 3 music lesson. The policy is currently under review and it is planned to introduce a national scheme to provide an effective scheme of work and to ensure that assessment in the subject is introduced and used to support the progress pupils make in the subject as they move from class to class. He is also committed to developing strong cross-curricular links with other subjects, for example mathematics and literacy. There is a wide range of resources for the subject, which are used appropriately. The subject makes a good contribution to the social and cultural development of pupils.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

89. When the school was last inspected attainment was mostly at the nationally expected level, and this is still the case. The subject is regarded as important to the pupils' development and is taught three times a week to each class. This is ample time for most pupils including those with special educational needs, to achieve an appropriate standard in the range of activities required by the National Curriculum. For example, those in Year 6 have sufficient games skills to handle a ball successfully and understand a few basic rules and conventions of rugby. Year 4 pupils demonstrate reasonable control and accuracy when learning to pass and dribble in hockey. In Year 3, there is a wide variation in the attainment of boys and girls in dance. Most of the boys are unable to give an adequate movement response to a musical stimulus, whereas the girls have an awareness of sound that enables them to show rhythmical and imaginative actions. Year 6 undertake a programme of fitness activities. They carry these out well enough because they are sufficiently coordinated and agile; however, they are not gaining enough understanding and knowledge about the principles of fitness and how particular exercises and modes of training contribute to its improvement. Standards in gymnastics vary greatly and reflect the difference in teachers' confidence and skill to develop pupils' movement potential and improve the quality of their work. Year 4 pupils enjoy moving and balancing; they have agility but many give a limited response and are unable to make their movements more precise. In contrast, Year 3 pupils are attaining high standards because they benefit from excellent teaching which ensures that everyone in the class explores different levels, speeds and directions, and can apply these when putting their movements in sequence. The pupils thrive on the teacher's high expectations and rigorous approach; they rise to the challenges that are set for them, learn well and make rapid progress.
90. In addition to the example of excellent teaching, some other lessons are good. This is because teachers are clear about what they are trying to achieve, they organise individual and group activities well, and require simple analysis and evaluation as a way of helping pupils improve. In response, pupils are enthusiastic; they try hard and do what is asked of them. As a consequence they learn well enough to make progress. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, although planning needs strengthening to ensure skills are built upon and there is always provision for the variation in pupils' attainment. Staff changes since the last inspection mean there is no longer a high incidence of subject expertise among the teachers. Currently, not all teachers have sufficient knowledge about the subject. As a consequence, they miss opportunities to promote movement ideas or to advise on skill and technique development. The adverse affect on pupils' learning is lessened somewhat

because of teachers' willingness to learn from each other and apply tried and tested teaching methods. Nevertheless, standards are constrained.

91. Co-ordination of the subject results in help for teachers who are not comfortable about teaching it, but it does not result in procedures for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of provision, nor does it ensure that attainment and progress are adequately assessed. Committed staff offer an extra curricular programme with opportunities in several activities for pupils to attain higher standards through practice or competition. The programme receives an equally good response from boys and girls and some activities also receive support from parents. There were no weaknesses noted in the last inspection report. Against this backdrop there has been consolidation and satisfactory progress.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

92. By the end of the key stage, standards are generally in line with, and sometimes above, the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. The school has maintained its provision in the subject since the last inspection. All pupils including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory gains in their learning. Pupils have a sound awareness of the sequence and events of the Christian calendar. Pupils understand what is required of them in terms of attitude, work and behaviour. Pupils also have a clear understanding and knowledge of the special ceremonies and the importance of symbols to various faiths. By Year 4, they already understand that there are many similarities between the differing faiths. As their learning develops, they can be seen to make progress in their understanding of comparative religions.
93. The teaching in religious education is satisfactory and sometimes good. The good teaching is characterised by the clear objectives shared with the pupils, and the good preparations for the lesson that are evident. Pupils who find learning more difficult are managed effectively. There are high expectations of behaviour and these are insisted upon. This good teaching ensures that pupils build upon the lessons that have gone before and that learning moves forward.
94. There is a newly appointed coordinator for the subject. The policy is due to be reviewed in this academic year to update it in line with the recently amended local authority syllabus. A wide variety of visits are arranged in order for pupils to have a broader understanding of all faiths taught in the school. Year 3 pupils visit the local church, Year 4 pupils visit a synagogue, Year 5 visit a Hindu temple and Year 6 visit the Buddhist monastery in Great Gadsden. A Jewish parent comes in to tell the children of Jewish ceremonies and a Hindu parent visits to explain rites and ceremonies of her faith. The vicar takes assembly on a regular basis and a married couple with strong Christian connections, come in and take assembly every half term. There are also plans to visit St Albans Abbey and Verulamium to link religious education with history.