

INSPECTION REPORT

WHEATCROFT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Hertford

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117328

Acting Headteacher: Mrs G. Cochrane

Reporting inspector: Mr J. Sorsby

14042

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 6th March 2003

Inspection number: 247763

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Stanstead Road
Hertford

Postcode: SG13 7HQ

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr David Chamberlain

Date of previous inspection: 19th January 1998

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14042	J. Sorsby	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
19567	M. Malin	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20950	R. W. Burgess	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography Educational inclusion	
12209	G. Edwards	Team inspector	English Music Religious education Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	How well is the school led and managed?
8845	H. M. Sumner	Team inspector	Science Design and technology History Modern foreign language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
24758	D. Townsend	Team inspector	Art and design Physical education Provision for pupils with special educational needs Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
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	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	21
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	22
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wheatcroft Primary School is larger than average, serving 269 pupils aged 3 to 11 from the town of Hertford in Hertfordshire. The majority of pupils study in single age classes, while those in Years 1 and 2 are in mixed age classes. Very few pupils are not of United Kingdom heritage, these being mainly of dual nationality. The six pupils who speak English as a second language, none of whom are in nursery or reception, do so fluently. Less than three per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than usual. Less than two per cent of all pupils joined or left the school during the past year at a time other than normal, which is also low compared with most schools. Twenty-four per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is about average, and 1.9 per cent have statements of special educational needs, which is also about average. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Children's attainment on entry to nursery is below that expected for their age, and lower than at the time of the last inspection. There has been very rapid turnover of staff.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

As a consequence of very recent major changes introduced by the part-time acting headteacher and the full time acting deputy headteacher, who joined the staff less than two months before this inspection, and the very good leadership and management they are providing, this is now a very good school that is improving very rapidly. Teaching is now very good in nursery and reception and solidly good in the rest of the school. Standards, which had been slipping as a consequence of the quality of teaching, very rapid staff turnover and weaknesses in leadership and management, are now once more rising as a consequence of the very recent improvements, including that in the quality of teaching. Given the average cost per pupil, the quality of teaching and leadership and management and the rising standards observed, the school is providing good value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching and pupils' learning is very good in nursery and reception and good throughout the rest of the school. Consequently, pupils make good and often very good progress, resulting in above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils have good attitudes towards school and studying and they behave well. Their personal development is very good as are relationships between them and with staff.
- Leadership and management by the acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, leadership team and governors are very good.
- The school has developed, and maintains, very close and productive working relationships with parents.
- The school cares for its pupils very effectively.
- The school provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

What could be improved

- Teaching should be further improved by adopting a whole school approach to marking and target setting.
- The consistency with which higher attaining pupils are set appropriately challenging work.
- The consistency of procedures for monitoring what pupils know, understand and can do and the use of this information to plan lessons that accurately meet their needs.

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 January 1998. Written evidence demonstrates that in many respects the school had deteriorated since then, but has now begun a very rapid series of improvements. Consequently, there are no areas in which things are worse than previously and several where they are better. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved in the nursery, reception and Years 1 and 2. Also improved are pupils' personal development and relationships, the curriculum that now meets statutory requirements, provision made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, procedures for child protection and health and safety. The leadership and management of the school by the acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, senior and subject managers, including the manager for special educational needs, and governors have also improved. Standards have improved in geography while, given the rapid turnover of staff, improvement in all other subjects except physical education has been satisfactory. While physical education standards have been maintained in Year 6 they have fallen in Year 2 and overall improvement in this subject is therefore unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A*	C	C	D
mathematics	A	C	B	C
science	A	C	B	C

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The results of the 2002 tests for eleven-year-old pupils demonstrate the decline in standards that occurred over several years. English is a good example, where standards fell from being in the top five per cent nationally in 2000 to being average in 2002, and below average for similar schools. In mathematics and science standards fluctuated over three years from being well above average to above average, and average for similar schools. In similar tests for seven-year-old pupils, standards fluctuated and in 2002 they were average in writing and mathematics and above average in reading. They were however below the average for similar schools in all three subjects.

Inspection evidence demonstrates that standards are once again rising. In reading, writing and mathematics, pupils currently in Year 2 are achieving above average standards, while in science, standards are average. Pupils in Year 6 are achieving standards that are average in English and science and above average in mathematics. In all cases, examination of past work indicates that these levels are an improvement on standards as recently as September 2002. In 2002, the school just exceeded its targets for eleven-year-olds in English and mathematics. It is well placed to exceed its more ambitious targets in 2003.

In religious education, art and design, design and technology and music, standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with expectations. In ICT and physical education they are as expected in Year 2 and above expectations in Year 6. Insufficient evidence was available to

judge standards in history and French. Overall, as a consequence of very good teaching, pupils are achieving very well in nursery and reception, and because of good teaching in the rest of the school, they achieve well in Years 1 to 6.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils display pride in their school and their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and of the school's expectations of them. There have been two fixed period exclusions in the past year.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are mature for their age and responsible. The very good relationships between pupils and adults are based on mutual respect.
Attendance	Good. The rate of attendance is higher than average and punctuality is much improved.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching and learning has improved overall since the last inspection, and, as seen through examining pupils' past work, particularly in recent months. The quality of teaching and learning in reception is now very good and results in very good learning and progress. Teachers have a good knowledge of young children and what interests them most. Their teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is good and they have very high expectations of their pupils. Teaching in these classes is particularly characterised by very good planning that ensures lessons meet the needs of each individual, by careful consideration of what they already know, understand and can do.

In Years 1 to 6 teaching is now good overall. High expectations, very good planning and good teaching of literacy and numeracy result in pupils learning well and improving their standards. As in nursery and reception, very good use is made of support staff in ensuring that the needs of each individual are well met.

Relative weaknesses in teaching in Years 1 to 6 are the consistency with which marking helps pupils to understand how to improve their work, the extent to which data on what pupils know, understand and can do is used to set individual targets – again, something that would help pupils understand how to improve their work - inconsistencies in the challenge set for higher attaining pupils through the work set for them and a lack of assessment data in some subjects. However, each of these relative weaknesses is about consistency, and overall, the school meets the needs of all its pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum now meets statutory requirements and is one of the aspects of the school that is improving rapidly. The school follows the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good and there is a good range of activities for pupils outside of lessons.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are well supported by teachers and support staff and benefit from careful planning by teachers to meet their needs in every lesson.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Although not needed at this time, because all pupils speak English fluently, the school's arrangements for helping pupils who are at an early stage of learning and using the language are well developed.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Very good provision for moral and social development and good provision for spiritual and cultural development, which contributes significantly to pupils' very good personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The health, welfare and safety of pupils receive the constant attention of all adults. Good use is made of information on what pupils know, understand and can do to ensure that their knowledge grows step by step in English, mathematics and science, but in other subjects, its use is inconsistent.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Very well. In recent months a very good working relationship has been developed and parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and general matters concerning the school and the curriculum.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Following the appointment of the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher in January 2003 very good leadership and management are resulting in rapid improvements in the school and rising standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors have a very good knowledge and understanding of the school and fulfil their statutory and other responsibilities very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good since recent senior management appointments. All available data has been very well interrogated to establish and respond to strengths and areas for development.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of all resources including staffing, accommodation and learning resources, and the use of each is well targeted at raising standards. Very good attention is paid to achieving best value in all the school does. Staffing and accommodation are good, and learning resources are satisfactory, meeting the needs of the curriculum well, overall.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That their children like school• That they make good progress• That teaching is good• That the school has high expectations of pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The information they receive about their children's progress• The leadership and management of the school• Pupils' behaviour• The closeness with which the school works with parents

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views but disagree with their negative statements. The questionnaire was completed and returned just two weeks after the appointment of the new acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher, and before a range of very significant improvements took place in the working of the school. Parents interviewed during the inspection commented positively on major changes in those items previously considered to be negative.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the nursery with standards in their communication, language and literacy, their mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world, their personal, social and emotional development and physical and creative development that are below those expected for their age in all areas of their learning. As a consequence of very good teaching, all children achieve at least well, and by the time they reach the end of their reception year, standards in all six areas of learning are above those expected for their age.

2. On beginning Year 1, pupils' standards in reading and writing are above those expected for their age. The quality of observed teaching of English in Years 1 and 2 is very good. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading and writing remain above those expected for pupils' ages. The reason standards do not improve despite the very good teaching seen is that this quality of teaching is very recent. This follows discontinuity of teaching caused by very rapid staff turnover prior to January 2003, and prior weaknesses in leadership and management which are identifiable through examination of pupils' past work. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are now achieving well, as seen by the progress they are making in individual lessons.

3. By the end of Year 6, standards in English are in line with national averages. This is despite the good quality of teaching seen and the good progress being made in lessons. Again, this is the result of discontinuity of teaching caused by very rapid staff turnover prior to January 2003, and prior weaknesses in leadership and management which are identifiable through examination of pupils' past work.

4. Improvement since the last inspection has, on the basis purely of standards, been unsatisfactory. Current assessment of children's knowledge and ability when they join the school, compared to that reported at the time of the last inspection, demonstrates that standards are lower now than in 1998. Given the lower standards of children joining the school, pupils have made similar progress as at the time of the last inspection and improvement is therefore judged to be satisfactory. There is also strong evidence that the rate of progress has improved significantly in recent months. The improvement is the result of the effective implementation of the national literacy strategy and recently increased emphasis on the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and planning and of what pupils know, understand and can do.

5. Improvement in mathematics since the last inspection has been satisfactory. As with English, the improvement is the result of the effective implementation of the national strategy and recently increased emphasis on the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and planning and of what pupils know, understand and can do. Current inspection evidence indicates that standards are good and above national expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6. There has been a difference between the attainment of boys and girls in recent national tests, but this was not evident in work seen during the inspection.

6. Pupils start Year 1 with standards in mathematics that are above those expected for their age. Good teaching throughout the school results in pupils achieving well. Standards remain above rather than well above expectations at the end of Year 2 and 6 because of discontinuity of learning prior to January 2003 due to rapid staff turnover, and to weaknesses in prior management.

7. As at the time of the last inspection, standards in science are average at the end of Years 2 and 6. Despite a long period of disruption caused by rapid staff turnover, and previous weaknesses in management, the quality of teaching is now very good. However, the very good teaching, while having raised standards to satisfactory from standards that were well below average as recently as September 2002, has not yet raised them above the levels present at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are now achieving well and the overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

8. As at the time of the last inspection, standards in art and design are as expected at the end of Years 2 and 6. Despite a long period of disruption caused by rapid staff turnover, and previous weaknesses in management, the quality of teaching is now good in Years 3 to 6. No lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2. The good teaching in Years 3 to 6 is resulting in pupils achieving well in these classes. Pupils' past work indicates that they are also achieving well in Years 1 and 2. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

9. As at the time of the last inspection, standards in design and technology at the end of Years 2 and 6 are as expected for pupils' ages. The quality of teaching is good in Years 3 to 6. Insufficient evidence is available to judge teaching in Years 1 and 2. Despite pupils' good achievement in Years 3 to 6, standards at the end of Year 6 are satisfactory rather than good because of the disruptive effect of rapid staff turnover prior to January 2003.

10. Improvement in geography since the last inspection has been good. At the time of the last inspection standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 were below those expected. Current inspection findings are that standards are now satisfactory and are those expected by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils are making greater progress and an appropriate curriculum for geography is now being taught following the appointment of a new co-ordinator in September 2002. There are also newly adopted and appropriate arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the curriculum being taught.

11. Insufficient evidence is available to judge the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' achievement or the standards they attain in history and French.

12. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in ICT. Standards are satisfactory in Year 2 and good in Year 6 because teachers plan well for pupils to practise their ICT skills while studying almost every other subject. As a consequence of good teaching, throughout the school, pupils achieve well.

13. Standards in music are as expected at the end of Years 2 and 6. At the time of the last inspection, standards were above expectations at the end of Year 6. Teaching is now satisfactory throughout the school and pupils are achieving satisfactorily. The apparent fall in standards in Years 3 to 6 since the last inspection is due to disruption to pupils' learning caused by rapid staff turnover. This has now been overcome, and pupils are once again achieving satisfactorily. Hence, improvement overall is judged to be satisfactory.

14. Since the last inspection, there has been satisfactory improvement in physical education standards these are now in line with expectations at the end of Year 2 and above expectations at the end of Year 6.

15. Religious education is taught well in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactorily in Years 3 to 6. Consequently, pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactorily in Years 3 to 6 and standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are meeting the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. They are not better because of the discontinuity of teaching and management in recent years as a consequence of rapid staff turnover.

16. Pupils with special educational needs achieve standards appropriate for their age and ability. They are well behaved, enjoy their activities and have good attitudes to learning, wishing to succeed. They take a pride in their activities and have good self-esteem. In all subjects, pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to all other pupils, because teachers plan activities for them well, and they receive good support in lessons. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language do so fluently, have no special problems and make similar progress. Planning to meet the needs of higher attaining pupils is inconsistent in its quality. Consequently, in reading, mathematics and religious education, these pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by the work they are set, and do not always progress as well as they might in lessons or reach the standards of which they are capable.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good, an improvement since the last inspection, and, as at the time of the last inspection, their attitudes to their work and school and their behaviour are good. As confirmed by parents, pupils enjoy school.

18. The school is successful in encouraging all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to have positive attitudes to learning, to value and respect each other and to behave well in lessons and throughout the school. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language do so fluently, are well integrated and have no special problems. Pupils participate enthusiastically in all the school offers. Even pupils who have behavioural difficulties behave appropriately. Pupils' good and often very good behaviour has a positive effect on their learning and the standards they achieve and is evidence of their good personal development. For example, lessons are calm and the majority of pupils concentrate very well. No inappropriate behaviour was seen during the inspection. Pupils understand adults' expectations of them, and these are reinforced by the school rules, which are displayed throughout the school building. There is a clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils develop well into mature and confident young people who demonstrate care and concern for each other's feelings and help each other in lessons. Only two exclusions took place in the past year. These were for fixed terms, were well handled and resulted in the successful reintegration of the pupils concerned into their classes and school life generally.

19. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils approach staff with confidence and they respond warmly and thoughtfully. There are very good relationships between girls and boys and between pupils of different ages, abilities and ethnic backgrounds, all of which contribute to the positive atmosphere of the school. Playtimes are happy occasions with no evidence of bullying, over boisterousness or oppressive behaviour.

20. The rate of attendance is good, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school and their very good personal development. Punctuality at the start of the day is much improved.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching and learning in nursery and reception is very good. Teachers are highly skilled at motivating young children and develop formal lessons and opportunities for educational play and exploration that children enjoy and in which they want to participate. This strongly supports their very good learning and enables them to raise their standards of communication, language and literacy and mathematical skills from below those expected for their age when they join the nursery to above expectations by the time they are ready to begin their National Curriculum studies in Year 1. Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are taught and learned very well. Similar improvements in standards occur in children's personal, social and emotional development, as teachers encourage well both their independence and their ability

to co-operate in their learning, for example, in taking turns. Very good emphasis on physical activities, for example, through the use of large play equipment out of doors, and on finer motor skills, for example through the use of scissors and pencils results in very good improvements in children's physical development. Children also make very good progress in their creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world, for example through the very good teaching of early music making skills and use of ICT.

22. Teachers in nursery and reception are very confident that their children will do well and have very high expectations of them. They plan their lessons very well with due attention to the needs of each individual child, whether he or she has special educational needs or is potentially a higher attaining child who requires extra challenge to maintain his or her interest. Children are managed very well in a supportive and caring environment, resulting in them behaving very well and contributing very well to their learning. Squabbles and misunderstandings are rare, and those that do occur are very well resolved by teachers. Non-teaching support staff in nursery and reception play a very important role and are integral to the successful teaching and learning that takes place.

23. Characteristically, the quality of teaching in a school evolves, particularly as the direction, support and guidance of new senior managers take effect. At Wheatcroft, there has been something of a revolution in teaching! Immediately upon their secondment to the school the acting head and deputy head teachers carried out an intense survey of the quality of teaching and learning and of pupils' past work. This identified the need for immediate improvement in some areas. Much of the improvement was in standardising how the teachers, many of whom were themselves new to the school, used their skills and helped all pupils to learn regardless of their ability and their particular individual needs. That this was the case was clearly evident from the marked improvement in the quality and standard of pupils' past written work, as examined during the inspection. The quality of the work produced in the two months prior to the inspection was of a distinctly higher standard than that produced in the previous term between September and December 2002. It is for this reason that throughout this report references are made to standards in particular subjects not having risen as far as would be expected, given the good quality of teaching. There has been insufficient time for the recent improvements in the quality of teaching to have had their full effect.

24. Now, teaching in Years 1 to 6 is good, as is the quality of pupils' learning. Consequently, pupils are making good progress and improvements in the standards they are attaining are visible. For example, the quality of teaching of literacy and numeracy in English and mathematics lessons is good and, as noted earlier, standards are rising. ICT skills are being particularly well taught, despite the limitations of the organisation of available hardware. A particularly strong feature of teaching, which has come about through the re-invigoration of subject co-ordinators and the attention they are now paying to teachers' detailed lesson planning, is the development of opportunities for pupils to enhance their basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and ICT in their studies of other subjects. It is particularly good that this cross-curricular enhancement of learning also includes other skills, such as the application of science skills in art and design. Teachers, enhancing pupils' learning and their enjoyment of lessons, capitalise upon every such opportunity.

25. As well as their planning and their teaching of basic skills, a further particular strength of teaching is the very good use made of learning support assistants. Through teachers' skilled and targeted involvement of these additional staff, they are able to identify each individual pupil's particular needs and to support them very effectively in their learning. Thus, in particular, the teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good.

26. In response to the good teaching they now receive, pupils are learning well. That they enjoy and are interested in their lessons is evident. Particular strengths of learning that are now present are pupils' independence, their ability to think through problems and find ways of solving them and how well they concentrate throughout lessons. The overall impression one gains in classrooms is one of hardworking teachers motivating and exciting hardworking pupils, and an overwhelming desire by all to do their best and succeed.

27. With the rapid changes that have taken place, some inconsistencies and relative weaknesses in teaching have become apparent and require attention. These relate to aspects of the collection of information on what pupils know, understand and can do and the use of such information in order to more accurately plan to meet the needs of individual pupils in each lesson and to further inform pupils how to improve their work. In some subjects, such as English and mathematics, much of this aspect of teaching is well handled, while in other subjects, it is not. For example, while much very good information is collected and used in some subjects, such as mathematics, little information is collected in other subjects, for example, design and technology and geography. The school does not yet have procedures in place that would allow teachers to have sufficient information available to be able to ensure that they always meet individual pupils' needs. A further area of weakness is marking. While the best practice seen was very good, and marking was accompanied by comments that informed pupils of how to improve their work, in almost every subject and class there were examples of uninformative marking. While these weaknesses tend not to affect adversely the teaching of pupils with special educational needs, because their needs are being accurately identified through other means, examples were seen where the work being set for higher attaining pupils was insufficiently challenging to occupy their available time or to push forward the limits of their experience and learning.

28. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching and the resultant learning is good in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, ICT and physical education. The teaching of science is very good throughout the school. The teaching of music is satisfactory. In religious education teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Insufficient evidence was available to judge the quality of teaching or learning in art and design, history and French, the latter being taught to Year 6 pupils only.

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

29. At present, the school provides satisfactory learning opportunities for its pupils that meet all statutory requirements. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Under the experienced leadership of the newly appointed acting deputy headteacher, the school is in process of reviewing and enhancing the curriculum.

30. The school has already implemented the curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes where learning opportunities are well designed to help children achieve expected standards. A 'Curriculum Outdoors' initiative is in the process of implementation to enhance children's learning opportunities. Especially in the areas of literacy and numeracy, the curriculum leads smoothly into the school's main curriculum, where provision for English and mathematics is good and the literacy and numeracy strategies effectively established. The science curriculum is satisfactory at present and rapidly improving as the school puts

scientific enquiry activities at the centre of pupils' learning about aspects of the natural world. Formal assessment of pupils' attainment in these subjects is well used to guide curriculum improvements, though there is, as yet, no systematic approach to the use of assessment to inform developments in other subjects.

31. Planning for ICT is good, though current facilities restrict the school in what it can offer. Provision for physical education is also good, providing pupils with access to the required range of learning opportunities well enriched by a broad range of extra-curricular activities. A new scheme of work has been introduced in music to enhance support for learning. Music too, benefits from the range of opportunities for pupils outside of lessons. Religious education is based on the locally agreed syllabus for the subject, in line with statutory requirements, and is satisfactory in its delivery. The curriculum in other subjects is currently satisfactory, though undergoing review. Cross-curricular links, such as the use of mathematics in science and literacy skills in history, are a particularly strong and effective feature of the school's curriculum.

32. Though not required at present, because the pupils for whom English is an additional language speak English fluently, the school has access to professional curriculum support for such pupils, when needed. The school is alert also, to any gender issues that arise, scrutinising formal testing for any anomalies between the attainment of boys and girls, and has acted upon them.

33. The range of subjects taught, the amount of time devoted to each and the relevance of how subjects are taught to individual pupils' needs are satisfactory. Never the less, a comprehensive review is underway, to improve further the range and content of the curriculum. All subject co-ordinators have written up to date policies and long term plans have been drawn up for each subject to ensure that all areas of learning are covered in a way which provides the continuity in learning opportunities that will lead to improvement in pupils' achievements and their standards. Termly units of learning that are relevant to the needs and interests of the different age groups have been identified for each subject. However, the planning is being made more difficult by the mixed age classes in Years 1 and 2 where lessons have to cater for both age groups involved, whilst also providing for continuity in the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Where teaching time is limited, two subjects such as geography and history, art and design and design and technology are currently allocated alternate, termly, timetable slots. This means that pupils' visits to each of the subjects are widely spaced, which reduces the opportunities for timely reinforcement of learning. To avoid this, the school has moved, wisely, towards half-termly slots. The more detailed, medium term plans for each of the chosen units of work set out National Curriculum learning objectives, relevant activities, ICT opportunities and success criteria. The improvement of lesson planning has already been completed. Both developments are having a very positive effect on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements. Through these various planning changes school is moving rapidly towards a much-improved curriculum.

34. A good range of visits out of school enriches the curriculum. Examples are school journeys in Years 5 and 6, museum visits, visits to Whipsnade Zoo and to historical sites such as Verulamium. Visitors to the school include older local residents who contribute to learning in history, various theatre and dance groups, football clubs and groups from other schools, including Pinewood School Steel Band. Book weeks and visiting authors provide invaluable support for the development of literacy skills. Extra-curricular opportunities are also good. They include a range of clubs such as recorder playing, football, netball, choir and a French club.

35. Health education is delivered mainly through science lessons. Drugs education and sex education are suitably covered. Citizenship education is also provided, in part through

exciting learning opportunities for Year 6 pupils, organised by the local police and staffed by local volunteers with high levels of expertise. This is just one aspect of the very good contribution of the community to pupils' learning. It also includes very good and frequent support from parents and generous involvement by several local firms in the facilities available to support learning. The school also enhances the learning opportunities open to pupils through good partnerships with local schools.

36. Pupils with special educational needs are given the same curriculum opportunities as others. Pupils follow structured programmes identified in their individual education plans. Individual education plans are reviewed regularly. They contain targets that are realistic and achievable. In order to follow the structured programmes identified in their individual education plans, a limited number of pupils are taught outside normal lessons for very limited periods of time.

37. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is very good. The school accords it high priority and sees it as an integral aspect of the curriculum that enhances both the personal and academic development of pupils. The atmosphere of the school, with its deeply felt concern for the welfare of its pupils, promotes these broader aspects of pupils' development through measures both obvious and barely evident. The latter derive from the caring attitude of staff towards the pupils which, in turn, is based on respect for the uniqueness of each individual. There is special concern for pupils who have particular problems that make learning more difficult for them. Such values permeate the life of the school and contribute to pupils' all round development as human beings.

38. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Daily acts of worship provide the most obvious source. Hymns of thanks and wonder, stories and prayers, celebrate the non-material aspects of life as they are shared in a community setting. A sensitive approach to prayers allows for pupils from the different religions represented to address their own deity. Pupils choose the music that provides the reflective atmosphere. Silence is observed as pupils move in and out of the assembly, marking it out as a special occasion in the day. Religious education lessons provide pupils with an understanding of how beliefs held by people of different religions affect their values and ways of life, giving rise to communities that are enriched by shared celebrations and a sense of belonging. The spiritual stimulation provided in the secular aspects of the curriculum is relatively limited. Best examples were seen when the youngest children in the school showed quiet wonder at the beauty of daffodils as they captured their subtle colours and airy shapes in their paintings, whilst slightly older pupils awaited with some excitement the germination which will follow their seed sowing. Year 6 pupils responded with amazement to the effects of invisible microbes in decaying vegetation.

39. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. It permeates the life of the school and is most effectively conveyed by the examples of staff in their day-to-day dealings with the pupils. Supported through reflections during religious education lessons, it is also promoted by the well-developed provision for pupils' personal and social education as they regularly join in small, mixed age discussion groups to discuss every day issues arising in the school. These discussions promote sensitivity to the needs of others in a range of contexts. Respect for others has a high priority in all contexts. High expectations of behaviour in the school are supported by strategies based on discussions that guide but do not humiliate those who misbehave, so that pupils learn to trust their teachers' fairness. Pupils also learn to emulate them in their dealings with each other, so that behaviour in the school is good. They develop an intuitive understanding of right and wrong, showing respect for property, as well as for other people. Opportunities are taken to support and care for others in need, in the school, the local community and the wider world. Examples include Year 6 pupils

who provide help for the youngest children at the start of each day and pupils' day-to-day support for the school's policy of inclusiveness as they show positive attitudes towards children facing special challenges. Harvest parties are provided for elderly people in the neighbourhood and contributions made to charities such as the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children. The school's mantra is 'to respond appropriately' rather than to ensure equal opportunities.

40. Provision for pupils' social development is also very good. There is a well-planned policy for pupils' personal and social development. The school is proud of its arrangements in this area of learning. It has been committed to citizenship education for several years and now reinforces it in Year 6, through a comprehensive and exciting series of citizenship experiences run by local, volunteer experts and coordinated by the police. Pupils learn how to respond to a range of testing situations that can occur at any time in the local community. They range from fire emergencies to reporting crime incidents, from responding to offers of drugs to dealing with bullying. Another major contribution comes from participation in the 'Pupils' Voice' initiative which has replaced the previous school council because it is more inclusive, including every pupil in the school. Year 6 pupils take responsibility for leading discussions, whilst Year 5 pupils make notes. Pupils are thrilled as they feel they are contributing to the development of their school. Discussion with older pupils showed that it is having a very positive effect on pupils' social development, in line with the school's key values. Pupils speak of a growing sense of maturity, of feeling responsible for setting an example and of a sense of responsibility. They were delighted to have had the opportunity of teaching their group about aspects of geography, acting as leaders in learning about flags, maps and orienteering as one example. This initiative is building on the day-to-day classroom responsibilities, which all pupils carry, and effectively promoting pupils' self-esteem, which the school emphasises as a key element in social development. Residential experiences for older pupils encourage independence, building on the school's pervasive support for pupils to think things through for themselves, both academically and personally. The school provides further encouragement through the giving of trophies, for short term keeping, in response to outstanding examples of courtesy, endeavour and citizenship.

41. Opportunities for fostering pupils' cultural development are good. They sometimes coincide with social occasions such as involvement in the local carnival and in dramatic productions for local community enjoyment, such as 'Joseph and his Multicolour Dreamcoat', which involved co-operation with a local secondary school. School assemblies and religious education lessons often reinforce knowledge of established cultural celebrations with religious origins, including those from different faiths. Examples include Christmas celebrations, Pancake Day, Chinese New Year and Divali. History, music and art and design lessons provide opportunities for appreciation of cultural achievements in both the Western world and other societies including those of Ancient Egypt and Greece. Cultural pursuits are encouraged through extra-curricular learning opportunities. In sum, provision for pupils' personal development is a strength of the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. This is a very caring school, in which pupils' well being is of equal priority to their academic success, and one where they feel valued and protected.

43. The school's arrangements and procedures for the protection and welfare of pupils have improved since the last inspection and are now very good. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher are well versed in the local authority's guidelines for child protection, and deal promptly with any issues that arise. Procedures for promoting the health and safety are very good. Pupils are helped to develop a good understanding of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle, through science and physical education and also

through a good programme of personal, social and health education. Governors carry out their responsibilities for health and safety well, and regular risk assessments are performed. Governors have also adopted an anti-racism policy. Good procedures are in place for recording accidents and incidents and sufficient staff are trained in first aid procedures.

44. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Prompt and efficient registration at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions complies with statutory requirements. The school is quick to follow up unexplained absences. The school works very closely with the education welfare officer who visits on a regular basis. Procedures have been put in place, that have resulted in an improvement in punctuality.

45. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and dealing with incidents of harassment or bullying are good. The behaviour policy is very well applied by all staff. The policy emphasises positive reinforcement as the preferred means of improving behaviour and pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils are also reminded of expectations by the displays of school rules throughout the building and playgrounds. Consistent implementation of the school's procedures minimises the effect of the challenging behaviour of a small number of pupils and contributes to pupils' learning and the standards they achieve.

46. Overall the procedures for monitoring and supporting personal development are good. The procedures are currently informal but the support given to pupils is very good through the citizenship and personal, social and health education programmes. The 'Pupils' Voice' initiative provides an avenue for communication of school values and an arena for discussion of concerns arising from rules, celebrations, worries and successes. This process confirms for pupils that they are valued and involved while providing important feedback to senior management of how pupils feel about the school. Such feedback is taken very seriously and acted upon.

47. Adults know the pupils well. Relationships throughout the school are very good and teachers and support assistants demonstrate a genuine concern for pupils' support, care and guidance. Staff treat pupils with respect and set good examples of how to behave appropriately. For example, when talking to pupils, adults wait their turn to speak and are courteous and genuinely interested in what pupils have to say. The school works extremely hard to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and equal opportunity to succeed in learning. The school's determination to meet the needs of all its pupils is reflected very clearly in its policies and practices.

48. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and all statutory requirements are met. The level of care and support given by teaching and non-teaching staff is of a high standard and is a strength of the school. Needs are identified early and outside agencies are used effectively, as required.

49. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their academic progress are good overall, although formalised ongoing assessment is not yet fully developed across all areas of the curriculum. From the time children start school their achievements and progress are monitored. Baseline assessment is used to identify those children who have particular needs. This enables teachers to plan work that is matched to all children's needs and, consequently, they make good progress in the nursery and reception classes.

50. Assessment, both formal and informal, is good in literacy, numeracy and science but less well developed in other subjects. Through very good feedback during lessons, and through marking of written work, teachers ensure pupils have good knowledge of their learning and motivate them well. There are, however, a few examples of marking not being as informative to pupils as it might be in English, mathematics and science in a few classes.

Good use is made of test results. Teachers analyse results of assessments and adjust their lessons and plans to challenge pupils appropriately. Results are used to monitor the progress of individuals and year groups and to set school targets. Data analysis is developed well in the school and teachers know pupils' strengths and weaknesses from the information available. In subjects other than English, mathematics and science insufficient information is collected on what pupils know, understand and can do and too little use is made of such information to accurately plan all lessons to meet the needs of individual pupils.

51. A variety of tests and assessments provide the information needed for class teachers to maintain comprehensive records of pupils' attainment in English and mathematics. In the other subjects of the curriculum this practice is not fully in place. The introduction of a system for tracking pupils' progress in all subjects and all classes is at an early stage following the appointment of the assessment co-ordinator in January 2003. She has already shared a draft policy with her colleagues and drawn up an action plan to improve the quality of assessment and its use throughout the school drawing on existing best practice and introducing computerised records.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

52. The school's work with parents is very effective and the new management team has rapidly established very good links with parents and carers, which are of a similar quality to those reported at the time of the last inspection. Particularly through newly introduced consultative procedures, parents are now making a very good impact on the work of the school.

53. The majority of parents responding to the parents' questionnaire and attending the meeting prior to the inspection in January had some harsh comments regarding the school. These are reflected in the parents' questionnaire published later in this report. However, the timing of these comments is very important. They were expressed less than three weeks after the appointment of the new acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. While being negative about the school, many parents acknowledged that their views concerned the school prior to the start of this term and that they had already witnessed much improved communications. They further expressed the feeling that the leadership and management of the school are much improved, as are communications with the school, that the school is much more approachable and they are listened to and that the school is developing rapidly. However, while welcoming the changes, all parents continued to be concerned about long term arrangements for the leadership of the school, a subject which at the time of the inspection, for legal and contractual reasons, governors had been unable to communicate with them.

54. In acknowledging rapid improvement in a very short period of time, parents who spoke to inspectors during the inspection agreed that the school works closely with them, that staff are very approachable and helpful and parents are extremely supportive of the school and what it is striving to do. This is a very welcome improvement in only a matter of weeks.

55. Aspects of the quality of information for parents, especially about their child's progress, have been quickly reviewed and improved and overall, it is now good. Reports are detailed and clearly state what pupils know, understand and can do and also include some targets for the pupils to achieve. Parents are encouraged to comment and give their view. The provision of two consultation evenings each year, which are well attended, enables parents to be well informed about the work their children are doing and the progress they are making. The revised detailed prospectus and newly introduced regular informative newsletters are very helpful, and keep parents well informed about school events. As pupils move through the school, each year group has a welcome meeting that parents are invited to attend with their children and each class has a curriculum meeting. The school has now also adopted the practice of seeking parents' views on matters of importance and involving them in planning the direction of the school. For example, immediately after her appointment, the acting head teacher involved all parents in assessing priorities for inclusion in the school development plan, through a series of "welcome meetings".

56. The school is very well supported by a very active Parent Teacher and Friends Association that raises funds that are used to provide resources for pupils. There are at least ten parents and one grandparent who volunteer their time in the school on a regular basis; this number is growing steadily. They help in a range of activities, such as listening to pupils read, helping in class and helping with the library. There is a veritable army of parents who volunteer to help with educational trips, work on the school's gardens and spend their weekends decorating the school. Most parents take an active interest in helping their children with homework, for example, with reading at home and making sure work is completed. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are actively involved at all stages of the Code of Practice and are fully involved in review procedures. When needs are reviewed on a termly basis, parents and pupils are invited to contribute. An example of the support given to families by the school is the monthly Saturday Club for the brothers and sisters of children with disabilities. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. The part time acting headteacher was appointed less than two months before the inspection, in January 2003, to lead the school in the absence of the substantive headteacher who is on extended sick leave. Despite the very short time between taking up post and the date of the inspection, it is evident that the acting headteacher provides very good leadership of the school. In this she is very ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher, appointed at the same time, and the school's leadership team. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have a broad range of complementary skills and a very good working relationship. By agreeing on a very clear division of labour, they have managed to introduce their clear vision for the educational direction of the school and to secure the support and confidence of the governors and staff in order to achieve this. The leadership and management of the school since January 2003 show much improvement on that reported at the time of the last inspection. This, and the resultant high morale among staff, is the key to understanding the position of the school now, compared to just a few weeks ago, as seen through the quality of teaching and provision and demonstrated through pupils' past and present work. There is now good reason to believe that continuity of leadership and management is assured.

58. The school has been through a period when there has been a rapid turnover of staff and this impacted on standards of attainment, teaching and learning. The staffing situation is now stable although many of the teaching staff are new to the school. However, for a number of years, many classes have had a succession of new teachers. For example, as well as two long periods with no permanent teacher and a series of supply teachers, current Year 6 pupils have had 16 different teachers since being in reception. They should have had seven.

Many teachers left in recent years and only two teachers have been on the staff for more than two years.

59. During her first few days in post the acting headteacher, in conjunction with the governors, wrote a new school development plan and targeted appropriate areas for raising standards. She has gained the respect of staff and pupils and has established good relationships with governors and parents. As a result the school is well placed to improve standards further. Despite the very short time that the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have been in post, all areas of leadership and management are running smoothly, teaching is much improved and standards are rising.

60. The school has clear aims and values that are reflected well in its work. The school aims to provide a stimulating environment in which each child is encouraged to fulfil his or her potential in all areas of the curriculum regardless of background, gender, disability or ability. The school largely succeeds in these aims.

61. The management of the school is very good. There is now a clear management structure that ensures that there are effective communication and decision-making systems. Delegated responsibilities are clearly defined. The key stage and subject co-ordinators have clear job descriptions and all staff members are aware of their roles and responsibilities. This was an issue that had not been fully addressed from the previous inspection, until January 2003. This clarity has had a marked effect on raising staff morale. Co-ordinators focus on raising standards by monitoring teachers' planning and pupils' work. A planned programme of classroom observations is under way. Co-ordinators have a clear picture of each subject's strengths and weaknesses and this enables them to devise subject development plans focused on raising attainment. In discussion, co-ordinators indicated that they relished their role in the school. From discussions with teaching and support staff it is clear that they are committed to the shared values of the school. They feel valued, both professionally and personally.

62. The monitoring and support of teaching and learning are very good. Their effectiveness is reflected in the overall good quality of teaching observed during the inspection. The acting headteacher identified that the school's performance management system had operated in the past with insufficient rigour. Performance management is a target in the school development plan and the issue of clarity of objectives and how they can be achieved is being addressed. There is a clear link between the school development plan and the school's budget. As a result the governors have agreed that there will be a training budget to serve the needs of the performance management system.

63. There are appropriate arrangements for the induction of new staff. Newly qualified teachers all have mentors who manage their induction programme. The management of induction has been particularly effective given the large number of new teaching staff.

64. The school development plan is focused sharply on raising standards and results from the acting headteacher's early evaluation of the school's situation. The plan has clear objectives and evaluation criteria. Objectives are timed and there are direct links with the budget. Structures are in place for effective evaluation of the plan by the governors and staff.

65. The governors provide very good support for the acting headteacher and the school in general. They fulfil their statutory duties very well. They have a very good working knowledge and a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have a good knowledge of standards in the school through discussions with the acting head and staff. When difficulties emerged last year the governors were at the forefront of taking action to

resolve issues. They are clear that the quality of teaching and learning is the central priority for the school.

66. The chair of governors meets regularly with the acting headteacher and also with the special educational needs co-ordinator. The newly appointed co-ordinator maintains the register of pupils for special educational needs efficiently. She has a clear vision for the development of special educational needs and is committed to strive for excellence. This contributes significantly to the good level of provision, effective support and the good progress that is made by all pupils. Outside agencies are involved as required. Several governors are regular visitors and use their expertise to support the school, for example in finance and health and safety. Some governors are regular helpers in the school.

67. Governors ensure that educational priorities are supported by shrewd financial planning. The reserves in the school's budget had been eroded by the demands in 2002 for supply cover but the governors have planned to restore the reserves over a number of years. The school makes good use of resources that are allocated to support specific groups of pupils such as those with special education needs. The governors' finance committee monitors the school budget rigorously and on a regular basis. There are satisfactory financial controls in place. The principles of best value are applied very well. The school seeks competitive tenders for all major expenditure decisions to ensure sound value for money. It assesses the school's performance in comparison with other schools and consults to gain the views of parents, staff and pupils. Day-to-day administration is efficient and computers are used effectively for placing orders and maintaining financial records.

68. The school is well staffed to meet the needs of the curriculum, with teachers and learning support assistants. This also enhances the ability of the school to meet the needs of individual pupils including those with special educational needs. Well-maintained, good accommodation enables all aspects of all subjects to be taught, supported by satisfactory learning resources. The number of computers meets government targets for 2003. However, the arrangement of computers in banks associated with individual or pairs of classrooms, particularly in Years 3 to 6, does not lend itself to the most effective use of ICT or to teaching ICT skills. The school has full disabled access and facilities.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. In order to further improve the quality of education provided, the acting headteacher, governors and staff should:

- (1) Develop and implement a whole school policy for marking and target setting so that all pupils are consistently well informed about how to improve their work and the next steps required of them.
(Paragraphs: 27, 50, 88, 98, 105,118)
- (2) Ensure that higher attaining pupils are consistently, appropriately challenged by the work set for them, by improving the collection of information on what all pupils know, understand and can do and the use of this information in teachers' lesson planning.
(Paragraphs: 16, 27, 81, 85, 99, 110, 140)
- (3) By extending the good practice in English, mathematics and science to the rest of the curriculum, provide assessment systems that monitor what pupils know, understand and can do and use this information to plan work that more accurately matches their needs.
(Paragraphs: 27, 49-51, 113, 118, 126, 131)

The following minor issues should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Handwriting and the presentation of pupils' work require improvement, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
(Paragraphs: 84)
- The arrangement of available ICT resources, particularly for use by pupils in Years 3 to 6, needs improving.
(Paragraphs: 68, 104, 111, 125)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	19	23	9	0	0	0
Percentage	6	35	42	17	0	0	0

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 one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	24	245
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	4	64

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	24	23	47

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	21	24
	Girls	21	20	21
	Total	42	41	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (88)	87 (88)	96 (97)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	24	24
	Girls	21	19	21
	Total	42	43	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (88)	91 (97)	96 (85)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest 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
	2002	16	18	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	12	16
	Girls	18	17	17
	Total	30	29	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	88 (83)	85 (80)	97 (97)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	12	16
	Girls	18	18	18
	Total	30	30	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	88 (87)	88 (73)	100 (80)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	157	1	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	81	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.3
Average class size	27.2

Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	238

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	47
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32
Number of pupils per FTE adult	23.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	622 020
Total expenditure	639 802
Expenditure per pupil	2 063
Balance brought forward from previous year	20 259
Balance carried forward to next year	2 477

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	269
Number of questionnaires returned	88

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	32	7	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	34	55	6	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	10	60	19	3	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	57	17	1	9
The teaching is good.	30	60	3	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	11	57	26	1	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	48	5	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	28	60	6	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	15	66	19	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	9	55	19	2	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	23	64	6	1	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	50	9	3	6

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

70. The school assesses how much the children know and understand when they first join the nursery. These assessments indicate that there are widely varying standards especially in speaking and listening, mathematics and personal independence. Overall, however, standards are a little below those expected for their age. As a consequence of very good teaching in each of the six areas of learning described below, all children, including those with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils, achieve very well. There are no pupils in nursery or reception for whom English is an additional language. By the time they reach the end of their reception year standards in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development are above those expected for their age, and the early learning goals have been reached and exceeded.

71. The overall quality of teaching in nursery and reception, is very good. Lessons are well planned in both the nursery and the two reception classes. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The teachers have very good relationships with the children. The children are very well behaved. They understand the general classroom routines and demonstrate respect for the teachers, support staff and parent helpers. The support staff make significant contributions to the children's learning.

72. The nursery and reception class are well led and managed. The co-ordinator has worked hard to plan a lively and engaging curriculum for the under fives, well linked to the requirements of the age group. There is a sense of pride in the nursery and reception classes, a team spirit and a commitment to be ever more effective. This is reflected in children's very good attitudes and behaviour.

Personal, social and emotional development

73. The teachers' and non-teaching staffs' relationships with the children are very good and adults provide very good role models for the children. In both year groups the children are consistently well behaved and friendly towards each other. They play and work well together. They understand the daily routines and help to tidy away after activities. They are encouraged to talk about what they have learned; as a consequence they show confidence in their achievements. The very good teaching and planning provides many opportunities for the children to develop confidence and independence in their learning. There is a good balance between teacher led activities and group, paired and individual work. Consequently, children are very enthusiastic about their learning and make very good progress. For example, two children were so inspired by the work about leaves that they collected a selection of leaves from their garden and made a leaf design on paper. This provided an excellent opportunity for them to further develop their confidence and self-esteem when talking to the class about these pictures.

Communication, language and literacy

74. Children in the nursery can recognise their own names in print, for example at registration when they find their own name cards as they enter the class room. They enjoy books and can match sounds to letters. Initial letter sounds are introduced well in the nursery for example, one child enthusiastically commented "Pancake begins with a P". Children in the nursery understand that print carries meaning and is read from left to right and top to bottom. Speaking skills are given appropriate emphasis in all activities. The teachers' skilful

questioning styles promote confidence in children's speaking, listening and thinking skills. In both year groups the children are excited about books. They enjoy listening to stories and answering related questions. Older children in reception are very confident readers and higher attaining children can read fluently with an understanding of full stops, capital letters and speech marks. They can hold and use pencils well and many can correctly form letters. They are developing good writing skills. Because of the very good teaching, children achieve very well.

Mathematical development

75. As a consequence of very good teaching, pupils' mathematical skills develop very well. Early numeracy is carefully planned and teaching is well focussed so that children are confident in the use of mathematical language. For example, one child commented when counting and sorting a selection of vegetables by size, "this one is the biggest, the pea is the smallest". The younger higher attaining children were able to count the numbers of peas from one to fifteen. The higher attaining children in reception can count from one to fifty. One child counted from one to one hundred and fifty six with only limited support. Most children are able to identify and add on one, two and three to numbers up to ten and count them in order. Pupils support each other well in their mathematical development, for example, one child commented "You've got six, put one finger down, that'll make five". They can recognise two-dimensional shapes such as triangles, circles and squares.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

76. As a consequence of very good teaching children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developed very well. They know, for example, how plants grow from seeds and that light and moist conditions are needed for growth. They can recognise flowers, stems, leaves and roots. This topic was enhanced by the very interesting 'Planting table' display in the reception classroom. The children can also recognise seasonal changes, for example, when walking around the school grounds and observing the daffodils, snowdrops and blossom. One child commented, "When the sun comes up the flowers pop out". They are familiar with using ICT, and manipulate the cursor keys and mouse with confidence. They know that the computer stores information and that this can be printed.

Physical development

77. Teaching to develop children's physical skills is very good and children achieve very well. Effective use is made of support staff to promote a safe learning environment and to give confidence to those children who are hesitant. The nursery children observed, demonstrated control and co-ordination in their movements. For example they were able to stretch, curl, jump, run and copy movements demonstrated with accuracy. They showed consideration for others around them in the hall and made good use of all the space. When talking to reception children they were able to give a detailed account of their learning in a physical development lesson. For example, "We helped put the apparatus away, we jumped, moved and worked in pairs, we like PE". Children handle construction materials with increasing dexterity making effective large and small models. One child commented on her friends' achievement, "I can't believe that he's just made a vase". Boys and girls play well together and share in all activities equally.

Creative development

78. Very good teaching results in children making very good progress. In the nursery, they quickly learn how to use scissors, glue sticks, tools and mark-making instruments. They are skilful in using different seeds and pulses to make designs on card. In the reception classes, children are confident in the use of a wide range of materials for art and design. The stimulating displays of their work, in the nursery and reception classes, promote their confidence and self-esteem. Children in the nursery thoroughly enjoy listening to music whilst they work. The nursery provides very good opportunities for them to play on a selection of untuned percussion instruments. They are able to demonstrate the difference between loud and quiet and have very good control when performing sounds on their chosen percussion instruments. The children observed in reception sing well, with a good knowledge of pitch, diction and rhythm. The excellent light and music ceiling display within the nursery music room enhances pupils' creative learning.

ENGLISH

79. Overall, standards in English are satisfactory and have improved since the last inspection. By the end of Year 2 pupils demonstrate good speaking and listening skills. They are confident in speaking in a variety of settings. Pupils in Year 2, for example, contributed to a discussion on animal communication and each waited until others had finished speaking and then spoke taking into account the others' contributions. Pupils are equally confident when speaking to the whole school in assemblies or in school productions. Pupils in a Year 3 class enjoyed work on a poem about 'My Dad'. One group reported back by performing a poem they had composed and showed a good sense of rhythm. Another Year 3 class enjoyed sharing onomatopoeic words and discussed how different pronunciation could make writing more interesting to the listener. By Year 6 pupils have a clear idea of how spoken language changes according to contexts. In one lesson, pupils were examining different accounts of a car accident and were able to use role-play to illustrate the difference between everyday colloquial speech and that of formal official statements. The opening sessions of literacy lessons make an important contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' speaking and listening skills and these are developed well. Pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils, make good progress. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language do so fluently, have no special problems and make similar progress.

80. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop good reading skills. Pupils are able to read simple texts and most have good strategies for working out new words for themselves. Year 2 pupils use initial letter sounds and familiar clusters of letters to identify unfamiliar words. Pupils read fluently and with expression. They are confident with text and are able to predict what might happen next in a story. Higher attaining pupils are able to summarise accurately books that they read. They are able to explain why they prefer certain stories or authors. Pupils are able to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction texts and know about how and when to use a dictionary. They develop an understanding of terms such as 'glossary' and 'contents'. Reading regularly forms part of pupils' homework and the reading record that is completed by teachers and parents is a valuable way of keeping parents informed of progress with early reading skills.

81. Pupils in Year 3 to 6 build successfully on earlier learning and most achieve satisfactory reading skills by the end of Year 6. Pupils have good opportunities to read a range of texts during literacy lessons, as well as in other subjects. They have satisfactory strategies for tackling unfamiliar words. They understand that there are different types of fiction, such as adventure, science fiction, myths or legends. One able reader in Year 6 was able to describe how he noted in a book from the 1950's that the language was 'dated' and

used colloquial expressions that are no longer in everyday use. However, and particularly at the end of Year 6, there is insufficient challenge for more able readers in terms of texts that might be tackled and associated tasks. The school has already identified this as an issue and is putting in to place plans to improve standards in reading by higher attaining pupils.

82. In all years pupils enjoy reading and pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language do so fluently, have no special problems and make similar progress. Pupils are familiar with the use of dictionaries, word banks and other reference sources. Pupils throughout the school know how to use the library. By Year 6 pupils understand how to locate a book by a particular author or how to find information books on a particular topic.

83. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve good standards in writing. There is a good range of opportunities for writing and pupils develop an understanding of the different purposes for writing. They are able to write stories, descriptions, lists, instructions and captions. By the end of Year 2 pupils' writing has a clear structure and they know that sentences must have capital letters and full stops. They use punctuation with confidence and most can spell common words accurately. Pupils are encouraged to try out the spellings of unfamiliar words using the spelling rules they have been taught. Their vocabulary is extended through various activities. For example, a Year 1 and 2 class was examining the use of the dictionary and one group was devising new definitions. One pupil defined 'statement' as 'it has been said or written by a person'. Pupils in Year 1 print words and their letters are mostly well-formed. They start writing patterns as a preparation for joined writing. By the end of Year 2 many pupils are using joined handwriting. A very good Year 2 handwriting lesson was observed, where many pupils wrote confidently and were developing a well-formed handwriting style. Pupils were able to link accurately the groups of letters in their handwriting with the sounds they represented.

84. In Year 3 to 6 pupils build on skills acquired in Years 1 and 2. Pupils experience a wide range of writing opportunities and by the end of Year 6, most attain the standard expected nationally. This includes factual writing, such as reports, book and film reviews and detailed instructions, as well as imaginative writing including stories, diaries and poetry. They draft and revise their work and are able to structure stories and factual accounts sequentially. Most pupils spell everyday words accurately and have developed strategies for tackling unfamiliar words. Written work is usually punctuated appropriately and pupils understand sentence structure and the use of paragraphs. The standard of handwriting is variable across Year 3 to 6. Not all pupils form their letters well and some have yet to master completely joined handwriting by Year 6. Presentation of work is inconsistent in Year 3 to 6 and this detracts from the overall standards of work. As with reading, there needs to be greater challenge for more able pupils in writing. The inspection evidence suggests that these pupils are capable of attaining higher standards if tasks and activities were more closely matched to pupils' individual needs.

85. Across the school teaching is good, overall. Teachers start literacy lessons by explaining clearly the learning objectives to pupils and then review these at the end of the lesson. Teachers' planning of lessons is very good. The lesson structures are clear with detailed notes on tasks for groups. The last few minutes of literacy lessons are used well to reinforce what has been learned and enable pupils to share their work. This also enriches pupils' listening skills. Lessons have a good pace and a sense of purpose. Teachers' questioning skills are very effective. Pupils' needs are well-matched to tasks in Years 1 and 2 but in Years 3 to 6 there needs to be a better match for higher ability pupils. Good use is made of teaching assistants who make an important contribution to pupils' achievements. Teachers have implemented the National Literacy Strategy effectively. There are good opportunities in the lessons for pupils to work together in pairs and groups, which enable

them to practise social skills and to listen to others' views. Teachers make good use of ICT to support pupils' learning in literacy and pupils enjoy this aspect of the work. Good use of homework is made to enhance what is learned in the classroom. For example, in a Year 1 and 2 class pupils were asked to follow up at home how animals communicate. Pupils' literacy skills are well reinforced through the teaching of other subjects, in which reading, writing and speaking and listening are further practised. There is good emphasis on learning the technical language needed, for example in mathematics, music and geography.

86. Throughout the school pupils with English as an additional language make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall because support is targeted and is matched to their carefully constructed individual educational plans.

87. Work in literacy makes an important contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development. Pupils reflect quietly on texts they read including a range of literature from other cultures.

88. Teachers monitor pupils' progress during lessons and through assessment tasks. Marking in Years 3 to 6 is not consistent. Some work is fully evaluated with pupils being given clear targets for improvement while other work is merely ticked. Assessment is an issue that has already been identified by the school and is included in the current English development plan. Overall, resources are of sufficient quality and quantity and library provision is satisfactory.

89. The management of the subject is good. The newly appointed co-ordinator has been in post since January 2003 and is an experienced and knowledgeable teacher. She monitors teachers' planning and is revising the English policy. She has produced an effective development plan for English, which includes raising the standards of higher attaining pupils. A structured programme of lesson observations has been started so that she can help and advise colleagues. An analysis of statutory tests has been undertaken and areas for development identified. The co-ordinator has a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. As a result the senior management of the school knows what improvements are needed and is well placed to raise further pupils' standards of attainment.

MATHEMATICS

90. Overall, standards in mathematics are good and there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

91. The school's results in the National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 6 in 2002 were above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher, level 5, in the 2002 National Curriculum tests was similar to the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are above national expectations by the end of Year 6. Since 1998 the improvement in the school's results in national tests has been similar to that achieved nationally. In the 2002 tests for pupils in Year 2, the schools' results were average when compared with all schools nationally and below those of similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher, level 3, was slightly below the national average. Current standards for most pupils in Year 2 are above those expected nationally. Since 1998, results have improved for pupils in Year 2.

92. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language do so fluently, have no special problems and make similar progress. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well. Pupils also achieve well in most groups in Years 3 to 6. Achievement is good in Years 1 and 2 because of the good, and sometimes very good,

teaching. Rapid turnover of teachers has adversely affected the progress of pupils currently in Year 6, but, overall, achievement in Years 3 to 6 is now improving due in part to very good lesson planning. This helps to ensure that all pupils are fully included in lessons and that they are set work at an appropriate level. Pupils who need extra help to reach the expected levels in Year 6 are given additional support.

93. Pupils in Year 1 are familiar with a range of mathematical language, for example, they confidently use 'count on', 'more than' and 'total' in relation to addition, and 'minus', 'less than', 'count back' and 'difference' in relation to subtraction. By the end of Year 2, pupils recognise that addition is the inverse of subtraction and use this knowledge to solve number problems. They can find solutions to problems expressed in words and figures. They know that a triangle is two-dimensional and has three sides and three corners. Pupils discuss the features of shapes and higher attaining pupils know that a pyramid has triangular sloping faces that meet at the top. By the end of Year 2, pupils use mental recall with confidence. Most recognise that multiplication is the inverse of division and apply this relationship simply, without the need for pencil and paper. Higher attaining pupils understand the meaning of words such as 'estimate' and 'circumference'. Using money, this group of pupils can approximate to the nearest 10p and calculate mentally that 65p is the correct change from £1 after spending 35p.

94. By the end of Year 6, pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are developing well. Lower attaining pupils steadily develop their confidence in mathematics, often with the very good support of teaching assistants. Pupils are able to explain the meaning of terms such as 'percentage' and recognise the relationship between fractions and percentages. For example, they know that half is the same as 50 per cent. Higher attaining pupils collect and collate data and use mathematical language such as 'mode' and 'median' when studying graphs. This group of pupils has a clear understanding of different mathematical shapes and is able to explain confidently the properties of various regular and irregular shapes. They apply their mathematical knowledge well to other areas of work. The highest attaining pupils understand and apply sophisticated concepts, such as negative co-ordinates, accurately.

95. Pupils develop speaking and listening effectively in mathematics, through the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. There is appropriate emphasis on the development of specific subject vocabulary and there are good opportunities for pupils to learn through investigations in mathematics lessons. This provides the opportunity for pupils to organise their thoughts and develop mathematical ideas. Teachers make good use of numeracy in other subjects. Pupils in Year 5 applied their mathematical knowledge and understanding by collating data in a science lesson when recording pulse rates. Pupils use their understanding of measurement in science lessons and collect and collate information in geography. The school offers good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in ICT in mathematics lessons.

96. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in mathematics lessons are good. They work independently, fostered by high teacher expectations of good behaviour and concentration.

97. The quality of teaching is good overall, with some very good and excellent teaching taking place. Teachers use the National Numeracy Strategy well to plan lessons. Many lessons start with a brisk mental exercise that motivates and inspires pupils. Planning is very good in most lessons. Lessons have a clear structure giving pupils a good balance between mental work, direct instruction from the teacher and practical exercises. Teachers extend pupils' previous learning and give them opportunities to work in groups at different levels of difficulty. Pupils are told what they are expected to learn and do in each lesson. Learning is good in lessons because the teacher provides pupils with instant feedback on their progress. It is also good when teachers use praise effectively to motivate pupils and boost their

confidence and self-esteem. In Years 3 to 6, homework is used and it provides appropriate opportunity to consolidate, reinforce and extend what is learned at school.

98. Pupils' written work is generally well presented and always marked by teachers. The quality of teachers' written comments varies from class to class. In the best examples marking is supported by positive comments, although this is not consistent through the school. Teachers assess and record pupils' progress effectively. Pupils are set targets for improvement, which most refer to and understand. The tracking of pupils' progress and the setting of targets based on National Curriculum levels are at an early stage of development. Targets are currently too broad for some pupils to understand. Teachers are increasingly using the results of assessment to inform curricular planning. When present, teaching assistants play a significant role in helping pupils with special educational needs to focus well on their work and organise their mathematical ideas. Teachers ensure that assistants are clear about what pupils are expected to learn; however, more support is needed for pupils in mathematics lessons.

99. The subject co-ordinator provides very good leadership. She has ensured the successful implementation and adaptation of the National Numeracy Strategy to meet the needs of all pupils. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject is good. The subject co-ordinator has worked closely with the acting headteacher and members of staff from the local education authority to analyse and evaluate the results of national tests, to review teachers' planning and pupils' work and to identify areas for development. She has monitored the quality of teaching and learning with advisers from the local education authority. This identified the need to improve the provision for the higher attaining pupils. There are good plans for the school's continued monitoring of the subject.

SCIENCE

100. As at the time of the last inspection, standards in science are average at the end of Years 2 and 6 and, overall, there has been satisfactory improvement.

101. In the 2002 national tests for pupils in Year 6, standards were above average when compared to all schools and average when compared to similar schools. Pupils' standards in Year 2 in 2002, as assessed by teachers, were average. Evidence indicates that the current Year 6 pupils have been more affected than last year's Year 6 by the consequences of frequent staff changes and by weaknesses in the leadership and management of the subject. Consequently, while standards in Year 6 are now the same as they were at the time of the last inspection, they are lower than a year ago.

102. Following a long period of staff disruption caused by rapid staff turnover, and previous weaknesses in the management of the subject, teaching is now very good. However, this very good teaching, having raised standards that were well below average as recently as the term prior to inspection, has not yet elevated them to above the levels present at the time of the last inspection. Confirmation of the effectiveness of the current quality of teaching is seen in a very significant minority of Year 6 pupils now achieving above nationally expected level for their age, as are a few Year 2 pupils. Pupils generally are achieving well and overall improvement in standards is satisfactory.

103. Pupils' learning across the year groups has begun to reflect the high quality of the teaching they are now receiving in most lessons. This is clearly evident in the quality of their illustrations and their record keeping in notebooks, in which they are beginning to take a pride. Their acquisition of knowledge is more secure and they are rapidly developing the skills of scientific enquiry. For example, in a Year 1 and 2 lesson seen, pupils learned that the process of investigation involves the making of clear-cut predictions that, in this case, were

based on a prior investigation of plants growing on different sites within the school grounds. In this lesson, pupils made very good progress in understanding that the variables had to be controlled if clear conclusions were to be drawn. The introduction to these demanding principles was especially effective by an imaginative planning poster, which the pupils were helped to complete by the use of well focused questioning from their teacher.

104. Such high quality planning and motivating assignments are a feature of science teaching across the school. They are based on teachers' good understanding of the subject. In Year 6, for instance, pupils investigated the role of micro-organisms in the decomposition of vegetable matter as it changed into compost. They were not sure whether they were horrified or delighted when asked to handle the specimens at a rather advanced state of decomposition. However, in line with their good attitudes to science, they kept their nerve and drew up good records of their observations. All had already learnt a little about the basic characteristics of microbes. Higher attaining pupils were suitably challenged when learning about the key chemical changes involved in the decomposition. The teachers' assistant provided invaluable aid to slower learners in the class. This pattern of matching work to the prior attainment of different groups of pupils is now a strength in almost all the science lessons. A rapidly improving strength of the school's science provision is that all learning draws on the investigative skills which inform the process of scientific enquiry. Typical examples are the younger pupils' 'fair test' experiments on the results of changes of slope on the speed of toy cars, and similarly controlled Year 5 investigations into the effects of different forms of exercise on the pulse rate. A further strength is the integration of literacy, mathematical, artistic and technology elements into learning experiences. ICT is also used where possible, including, for instance, the use a computer-linked sensor to record changes in temperature. However, facilities for the use of ICT are limited at present. The school makes good use of environmental resources to enrich learning, especially during the Year 6 pupils' residential experience. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils are making similarly good progress. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language do so fluently, have no special problems and make similar progress.

105. The newly appointed co-ordinator of science, who is very well supported by a colleague with responsibility for implementing improvements for younger pupils, has high levels of expertise in the subject and is very committed to the systematic improvement of the provision, with a view to raising pupils' attainment. An action plan and an improved policy for science have already been drawn up. Formal assessment of pupils' attainment is well used to track the progress of individual pupils and to inform curriculum planning. The monitoring of planning and teaching is to be further strengthened, the matching of learning experiences to pupils' prior achievements is to be refined and provision for gifted and talented pupils considered. The quality of marking of pupils' work, currently inconsistent, is to be improved.

ART AND DESIGN

106. Based on pupils' past work, teachers' planning, displays around the school and conversations with pupils and the art and design co-ordinator, standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with expectations. Due to timetable constraints, too few lessons were seen to judge the quality of teaching. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

107. In the one lesson seen, in Year 6, the quality of teaching was good. Pupils were designing and making their own special hats, to be worn at the 'Mad Hatter's Tea Party' or a 'Hat for the future'. They worked well individually and supported each other throughout the design and making process. This was a very good opportunity for pupils to further develop their speaking, listening and social skills. They fully understood the design process and were

very confident when using the range of materials given to create interesting and tactile designs. They used a variety of materials to add interesting colour, texture, pattern, shape and form to their designs. All pupils had very good relationships with each other. This was demonstrated by their ability to investigate and share ideas together. They took a great deal of care and pride in their work and showed respect for the work of other pupils.

108. Displays of completed work demonstrated that pupils study and practise a broad range of art and design techniques. This was confirmed through conversations in which pupils spoke about their art and design lessons with knowledge and enthusiasm. For example, pupils in Year 2 spoke in detail about their developing skills in observational drawing, collage and the use of oil pastels. Pupils in Year 6 were able to recall a number of art and design themes studied, for example, 'Movement in Art' and the drawing of cartoon characters, 'Still Life' drawings and watercolour painting. Pupils confirmed their use of computers for design and colour work.

109. The recently appointed co-ordinator has made a good start on the management of the subject and has a good vision for the further development of art and design in the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

110. Standards in design and technology match national expectations for pupils reaching the ends of Years 2 and 6. However, a minority of pupils now exceed these expectations by the time they approach the end of Year 6. Achievement across the years is good overall, reflecting the good, occasionally very good, quality of the teaching of the subject throughout the school. The standards achieved are similar to those evident at the time of the last inspection. They are generally satisfactory, rather than good, because of the disruptive effects of a rapid turnover of staff prior to the current term. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language do so fluently, have no special problems and make similar progress. The pupils with special educational needs are helped by slightly easier learning challenges and support from their teachers or their very competent teachers' assistants. Though many of the learning assignments are open-ended, allowing for differing levels of response, higher achieving pupils do not always experience the more difficult problem solving which can lead to enhanced progress. An exception is the complexity of responses expected of higher attaining Year 6 pupils as they exercised imagination in the designing of cars and worked to identify and understand the interaction of the basic mechanisms which control the movement of vehicles. Their correctly labelled diagrams showed very good observation skills and understanding.

111. Teachers have a good understanding of the subject and their expectations of most pupils are high. Pupils start from their reception experiences of using junk materials and construction kits and soon move to more complicated model making. They learn to make models with moving parts. Examples include greetings cards with moving pictures and models of very attractive, paper and card windmills. Pupils' understanding of movement mechanisms draws on and reinforces their learning about 'push and pull' forces in science lessons. This learning is further enhanced by examination of the construction of moveable toys. During the inspection, pupils began work on a food technology project linked to a healthy eating theme. Such cross-curricular work is one aspect of the very good planning which informs teachers' lessons. Others include the use of literacy and number skills and the occasional use of ICT, though facilities for this are limited.

112. During Years 3 to 6, pupils gain an elementary understanding of the design and technology process as a whole, especially its emphasis on designing and making to serve a purpose and the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of the final item. For instance,

Year 3 pupils were observed evaluating the strength and stability of a wide variety of commercially produced picture frames, prior to making their own. Their responses were much enhanced as they learned to recognise the importance of hanging and standing arrangements which incorporate a triangle of forces, so bringing together previous learning in mathematics and science. Pupils respond well to the motivating assignments that teachers provide. Currently, they include the designing and making of belts, money containers, slippers, and hats for a variety of occasions. These provide good opportunities for pupils to follow the process through from start to finish.

113. Understanding is fostered by the good questioning techniques which teachers employ to stimulate thinking. However, pupils' understanding of the principles behind the design and technology process that guides the production of man-made items in the everyday world, is at an early stage of development. The well-informed senior manager, who is currently leading developments in the subject, has recognised this as a key area for improvement, so that pupils' understanding begins to match the good production skills of which older pupils especially, are capable. There are also well-judged plans for adjusting long and medium term planning to provide for lessons that build more systematically on previous learning. Assessment arrangements are another recognised weakness and their improvement has been accorded high priority.

GEOGRAPHY

114. Standards in geography are satisfactory and there has been good improvement since the last inspection. By the end of Year 2, pupils acquire a satisfactory range of geographical skills, increase their knowledge and gain a deeper understanding of the physical and human aspects of the subject. They appreciate that maps provide different types of information and use their skills of geographical enquiry to ask questions and search for answers. Pupils can recognise the different countries of the British Isles and identify their flags and main cities. They talk knowledgeably about the features they observed in local streets and classified by their type. For example, a very good discussion was observed when Year 2 pupils discussed the reasons for the new pelican crossing near the school.

115. By the end of Year 6, although pupils' attainment is sound overall, aspects of their attainment in geography are good. They achieve well and make good progress in their understanding of maps and they refer with confidence to atlases and globes. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 also confidently use books and the Internet to gather information, and use their knowledge and understanding to gain a growing appreciation of the world. They describe continents, countries and major physical features following their study of the different environments found across the world. With good teaching and the introduction of a more structured curriculum, pupils' achievement is increasing as they move through Years 3 to 6, and their skills of geographical enquiry develop well. Pupils in Years 4 have studied India and contrasted life in India with their own. Throughout the school, pupils who have special educational needs achieve at a satisfactory rate. They make good progress when work is set at an appropriate level. Higher attaining pupils achieve well; one higher attaining pupil in Year 3 explained that the purpose of the scale on a map is to enable him to calculate how far places are apart. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language do so fluently, have no special problems and make similar progress. In a Year 5 lesson pupils demonstrated good map reading skills and used their numeracy skills to read distances from a table and to estimate and measure distances between major cities of the United Kingdom.

116. Pupils' attitudes to geography are good and they show great interest. They usually complete their work in the time available and are keen to do well. They work well collaboratively and demonstrate respect for one another. Pupils usually present their work

well and draw diagrams carefully. The work of some Year 6 pupils is particularly well presented.

117. Skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are promoted and developed effectively. Pupils apply their mathematical and writing skills by recording their work in charts, grids, graphs and reports. Their reading develops as they improve their research skills. ICT is used appropriately by older pupils. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 have gathered data on volcanoes in different parts of the world and used the information gained in their individual project work. They used the Internet to collect information and other software to collate it but there is only limited software for pupils to extend their knowledge, understanding and skills further in the subject.

118. Teaching is good throughout the school, reflecting the teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding. Effective planning includes a wide range of interesting learning opportunities so that pupils are well motivated. In the best planned lessons, teachers provide opportunities for investigative work and tasks which allow pupils to use their own ways of finding things out. Pupils are given good opportunities to show the results of their work in different ways, including presentations to the rest of the class. Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good and work is well matched to their needs. The quality of learning is good overall. Pupils learn effectively because the topic areas and the good quality of teaching motivate them. Learning is constrained by the lack of formalised teacher assessment of skills developed to inform planning. Pupils' written work is marked but sometimes only by ticks. The quality of teachers' written comments varies from class to class.

119. Subject leadership is good. The co-ordinator took over responsibility for the subject in September 2002. She has identified appropriate initial targets for the current school year. Classroom teaching and learning has not been monitored in geography because of the school's appropriate emphasis on monitoring the introduction of the literacy hour and daily numeracy lessons. The co-ordinator has led the staff through some brief scrutiny of pupils' work across the school but has not monitored teachers' planning. Further improvement was achieved by a very effective geography week organised by the co-ordinator and held in the autumn term, which raised the profile of the subject and helped to ensure a balanced coverage within the curriculum.

120. The school is aware that previous management problems led to insufficient time being spent on some aspects of the curriculum in Years 3 to 6, and that this adversely affected the attainment of pupils. Now, all pupils, including those who have special educational needs, have appropriate access to the full range of activities. The curriculum makes good use of the school grounds, for example, during work on conservation and pollution. The local area is also well used as a resource, for example, to carry out traffic surveys. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution towards pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

HISTORY

121. Because history is taught in termly blocks alternately with geography, no history lessons took place during the inspection. Insufficient evidence was available from other sources to support secure, overall judgements on the standards attained by pupils, the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement or the quality of their learning in history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

122. Standards in ICT are satisfactory in Year 2 and good in Year 6, and there has been good improvement since the last inspection. In Years 1 and 2, pupils acquire a broad range of skills and become increasingly confident in using computers. They recognise that many day-to-day devices, such as video recorders, respond to commands and signals. They know that ICT is used in many places outside school, such as supermarkets and airports. By the end of Year 2, most pupils word process competently to write short pieces of prose, poetry and lists. They include text, such as their names, on drawings produced with drawing software. They save and retrieve their work and can make simple changes to what they have done. In Years 1 and 2, ICT is used in short sessions to enhance pupils' skills, for example, during the last part of lessons, when teaching assistants work with pupils on their reading or writing.

123. In Years 3 and 4, pupils build effectively on their earlier learning and achieve satisfactorily, while in Years 5 and 6, the rate of progress improves and pupils use increasingly sophisticated equipment. For example, pupils experience controlling robotic toys and they exchange information and ideas through e-mail. Pupils learn well and simultaneously develop their social skills. Their awareness of the uses of ICT in the world outside school is good. Pupils look for information in a range of websites linked to their work in other subjects. For example in Year 5 they searched for information linked to their study of plants in their science work.

124. Pupils enjoy using ICT and are keen to improve their skills and explore programs. They behave well when using the computers and share their knowledge considerably with their peers. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 helped one another to achieve success as they worked in pairs at the computer.

125. Teaching is good throughout the school, but it is hampered when machines or systems are out of order. During the inspection computers were in frequent use in lessons in several different subjects. In specific lessons in which the skills of ICT are taught, there is some good work, for example, when pupils in Year 5 were involved in mature discussions about the effectiveness of website pages when retrieving information. Although ICT is not planned with sufficient rigour and included in long-term planning by all subject co-ordinators, teachers use the software available to best advantage. The inclusion of ICT in lessons is very good. It is used effectively for research and to enhance the pupils' work in most subjects. When it is used well pupils make good progress but teachers need clearer guidance from all subject co-ordinators so that ICT is used more consistently as a tool for learning. The teaching of ICT skills is severely hampered by the lack of suitable accommodation and the present arrangement of computers within classrooms, particularly in Years 3 to 6.

126. The management of ICT is good and its development is a priority in the school improvement plan. The co-ordinator works hard to support staff, organise resources and ensure that the curriculum meets national requirements. Parents are told of their children's use of the Internet and appropriate precautions are taken to protect the pupils. Issues concerning equipment, the extension of pupils' skills, the recording of assessments of pupils' progress and wider use of ICT are clearly identified. Improvement in the subject is principally a management issue that has financial implications. The school recognises this and has it in hand.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

127. Because French was not taught during the inspection and insufficient evidence was available from other sources, no judgements were possible on the standards attained by pupils in Year 6 to whom the language is taught, the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement or the quality of their learning.

MUSIC

128. Standards in music are satisfactory, as has been the improvement since the last inspection. In a Year 1 and 2 lesson, pupils identified different groups of instruments and were introduced to the concept of symbols representing different sounds. Pupils realised that there were various ways of playing the instruments and producing different types of sounds. They expressed pleasure at this. By the end of the lesson they were able to produce graphic symbols to illustrate the sounds of the instruments. Pupils in a Year 3 class learned how music can be used to describe animals and how musical elements can be used to create different effects. They were able to link their descriptions of animals to vocabulary work in an earlier literacy lesson. They also realised that a piece of music was similar to Tudor music they had studied in a history lesson. Pupils in Year 6 sang confidently and followed the shape of a melody. They also learned about the effects of pitched notes played together. The class was able to maintain a clear rhythm in a clapping accompaniment. Pupils were able to use musical vocabulary confidently, for example, 'sharp', 'flat', 'pitch' and 'forte'. The teacher was confident in the use of her voice and was able to illustrate well the objectives of the lesson.

129. Most pupils enjoy singing and work hard, for example in assemblies, where they sing tunefully and with enthusiasm. They enjoy hymns and modern worship songs, especially when accompanied by actions. In the most effective lesson seen, teaching was direct and brisk. The activities built on pupils' previous experience. Where teachers are confident in the subject this is reflected in pupils' performance and understanding.

130. Pupils develop their musical appreciation by listening to a range of music from different times and places. A variety of recorded music is played in lessons as well as when pupils enter and leave assemblies. Music to be played in assemblies is chosen by older pupils, enhancing their sense of responsibility.

131. The music co-ordinator manages the subject well. She is knowledgeable and provides good support to colleagues. A scheme of work, which reflects National Curriculum requirements, has been introduced and is particularly helpful for non-specialist teachers. Planning is monitored and a start has been made on classroom observations. Further development of assessment is planned. Pupils' performance is also monitored by the co-ordinator.

132. There is a good range of extra-curricular musical activities. There are choir and recorder clubs and pupils have the opportunity of taking part in the annual local schools' music festival and a festival in the Royal Albert Hall every three years. There are regular concerts and productions in the school, which are popular with pupils and parents. Occasionally, visiting musicians perform at the school. Pupils also have the opportunity of learning musical instruments such as guitar, saxophone, clarinet, flute or violin.

133. There are sufficient resources for teaching music and the co-ordinator is currently investigating CD-ROMs for use in music lessons. Music makes an important contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

134. Standards in physical education are satisfactory in Year 2 and good in Year 6, which shows standards have been maintained. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

135. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 show developing under and over arm throwing skills. They can throw and catch with reasonable accuracy and demonstrate good teamwork skills. Older pupils develop their problem solving and team work skills when faced with challenging activities. Overall, fitness levels are higher than expected. The pupils clearly benefit from high levels of physical exercise during circuit training lessons and after school clubs.

136. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and pay appropriate attention to health and safety with clear warm up and cool down routines. Lessons usually proceed at a good pace. When appropriate, teachers make good use of pupil demonstrations. Pupils are encouraged to assess each other's work and offer ideas for improvement. They respond well to lessons, work hard and make clear progress in body control and skills. The very good teaching seen in some lessons was characterised by very good planning, teachers' practical demonstrations, organisation, pace, challenge and appropriate support for all pupils. Skilful questioning was used to consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding. Overall, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils, make good progress in physical education lessons. In the best lessons they make very good progress. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language do so fluently, have no special problems and make similar progress.

137. The planned curriculum covers all aspects of the national physical education programme. All pupils have swimming lessons for a period of time each year. The extra-curricular provision for physical education is very good. The school runs a variety of after school activities, for example, netball, football and tag rugby. Parents make a significant contribution to these clubs. The school takes part in a range of competitive games both with neighbouring schools and in area-wide competitions.

138. ICT is well used in physical education. For example, pupils are given the opportunity to use the schools' digital camera for recording examples of defending, attacking, safety and teamwork skills in hockey. The hall provides a very good resource for indoor activities and the playground and large field provides for a wide range of outdoor games. The subject is well managed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

139. In religious education, standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 meet the expectations of the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus and improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. By the age of seven pupils are aware of different faiths and understand that each has festivals and important artefacts that are special to them. Through reflection on matters that concern them they gain an understanding of what makes people special and the significance of important events. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 study religions in greater depth. They are aware of how rules, such as the Ten Commandments, guide believers' daily lives.

140. In a Year 1 and 2 lesson pupils discussed authority figures and how they influence people's lives. On being asked if there was anyone else who guided us, one pupil suggested, 'God, who tells us in our head what to do'. Carefully planned lessons provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on what they have discussed. In a Year 5 lesson pupils examined the meanings of Christian symbols as well as the main events of Holy Week. Although tasks

were related to pupils' differing abilities, those for the higher attaining pupils were not sufficiently challenging. In the same lesson, pupils' literacy skills were well reinforced through speaking, listening and writing. Year 6 pupils considered the significance of Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday for Christians. Pupils reflected on how they might go about making themselves better people and provided thoughtful contributions to the class discussion.

141. The co-ordinator has been undertaking the role for six months. She has sampled pupils' work and has a clear understanding of current standards in the subject. She competently offers guidance and support to class teachers. Teachers keep notes about pupils' learning on plans following each lesson, although formal procedures to measure what pupils know, understand and can do are at an early stage of development. There is a wide and attractive collection of resources and artefacts to support teaching in religious education and some visitors to the school representing other world faiths have shared experiences with pupils. The school plans to further develop these links in order to enhance pupils' understanding of other world faiths.

142. Religious education makes an important contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. Assemblies also contribute to pupils' spiritual understanding.