

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SOUTHCOTT LOWER SCHOOL**

Leighton Buzzard

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109523

Headteacher: Mrs G Ellyard

Lead inspector: Mr N Sherman

Dates of inspection: 15th – 18th March 2004

Inspection number: 257518

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	265
School address:	Bideford Green Linslade Leighton Buzzard
Postcode:	LU7 2UA
Telephone number:	01525 375753
Fax number:	01525 371642
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Boardman
Date of previous inspection:	27 <sup>th</sup> April 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Southcott Lower School is situated close to the centre of Leighton Buzzard in Bedfordshire. It provides education for pupils aged from four to nine, with the children in the nursery being taught on a part-time basis in the afternoons only. Although most pupils live in the neighbourhood, around 50 per cent travel from further afield. This is a significant change since the last inspection. The number of pupils who claim their entitlement to free school meals is below average, although this is not a true reflection of the social background of the pupils, which is average. Pupils from UK heritage comprise the largest ethnic group and no pupils need support to learn English as an additional language. As a result of the changing population of the school, 24 per cent of the pupils have special educational needs, a figure that is average. A small number of pupils with a high level of special educational need (autism) are taught in the school, although officially they are on the register of another school. As a result, the number of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need is above average. Attainment on entry is average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16493	Mr N Sherman	Lead inspector	English, art and design, design and technology, information and communication technology, personal, social and health education, English as an additional language.
19335	Mrs S Dixon	Lay inspector	
20326	Mr P Clark	Team inspector	Foundation Stage curriculum, science, music, physical education and special educational needs.
25577	Mr W Jefferson	Team inspector	Mathematics, history, geography and religious education.

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides pupils with a **good** quality education. From an average starting point, the pupils achieve well. Teaching is good overall, ensuring pupils very much enjoy what the school provides for them. The leadership and management of the school are good overall and the school has devised innovative ways of getting the fullest use possible out of the school budget. The school provides good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children achieve well in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- There is good teaching in many subjects.
- The head provides a very firm steer to the school's educational development.
- Exemplary use is made of the school budget to fund school development.
- Pupils in the special unit for those who have autism are very much included in the day-to-day life of the school.
- The role of the co-ordinator in monitoring teaching directly is under-developed.
- The senior management team is too few in number for it to be fully effective.
- There is very good provision for the pupils' personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Links with parents have a very positive influence on the quality of education pupils receive.
- Marking does not give sufficient guidance to pupils on how they might improve their work.

The improvement since the last inspection has been good. The strengths identified in the school's last report have been maintained well, and the strong drive by the leadership of the school to take responsibility for many aspects of the school budget has brought about considerable improvements. Pupils continue to reach standards higher than expectations by the time they leave the school and the part that the governors now play in the school is highly effective.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 compared with:	All schools			Similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
Reading	A	B	B	B
Writing	A	A	B	B
Mathematics	C	B	B	C

*Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average  
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

The pupils achieve **well** overall. Children commence full-time education with average levels of attainment. By the time they leave the Foundation Stage, they have achieved well and standards are in line with the expectations of the early learning goals<sup>1</sup> in all areas of their learning. Pupils achieve well in Year 1 and Year 2, and by the end of Year 2, pupils reach

<sup>1</sup> The goals that children are expected to reach by the time they enter Year 1.

standards that are average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The difference between inspection findings and the results in National Curriculum tests is due to the difference in attainment between groups of pupils. In the current Year 2 group, for example, there is a high percentage of pupils with special educational needs. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4, and are on course to reach standards that are above national expectations in English, mathematics and science. Achievement in history, ICT and religious education is good and pupils reach standards above national expectations in these subjects by the time they leave the school.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they achieve well. The pupils in the special educational needs unit that is attached at the school are very much seen as an integral part of the school and they achieve well.

Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is **very good**. Very good use is made of different subjects to promote pupils' understanding of the beauty of the world around them. Attendance is very good and well above the national average. Punctuality is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good** and pupils achieve well. Basic skills are taught well and teachers carefully plan how to promote pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills through different subjects of the curriculum. Pupils with a high level of special educational need are very well supported, enabling them to achieve to the best of their abilities. The curriculum is good and enriched very well by a full and varied range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are well cared for, and the very strong links the school has established with parents have a strong impact on the quality of education pupils receive.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

There is **effective** leadership and management of the school overall. The headteacher provides very good leadership. All who work at the school support her very well, and the school's aims are met well. The leadership of key staff is satisfactory. The part co-ordinators play in monitoring teaching is under-developed. Management is good, but there are not enough members of the senior management team for it to be fully effective. Governance is very good. A key feature of how the school is managed is the inventive way in which the budget is used. This has led to a number of significant improvements in the quality of education that the pupils receive.

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

Parents rightly hold the school in high regard. They value the regular and full information they receive from the school, both about their children's progress and day-to-day life at the school. They believe that their children are well cared for and receive a good quality of education. Pupils talk very positively about what the school provides for them, and the take-up rate of the extra-curricular activities is very high.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team are distributed more evenly.
- Provide the co-ordinators with more direct opportunities to monitor and evaluate the impact of teaching on learning.

- Ensure that the marking of pupils' work gives sufficient guidance on how they might improve their work.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects**

**Pupils achieve well** in the core subjects, in information and communication technology and in religious education. By the time that pupils leave school they attain **higher than expected standards** in English, mathematics and science. Children achieve well in the reception classes and satisfactorily in the nursery.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Although standards are not as high as they were in the 2003 National Curriculum tests, pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well.
- Pupils make good progress in information and communication technology, religious education and history.
- Pupils with special educational needs are given well-focused support and achieve well.
- The achievement of higher-attaining pupils is good.
- Pupils do not make sufficient progress in writing with a pen.

#### **Commentary**

1. The changing nature of the school population makes it difficult to compare directly the standards reached by current pupils with those attained at the time of the last inspection. Currently, nearly half of the pupils live beyond the school's catchment area and there is also a higher number of pupils with special educational needs now attending the school. This reflects the school's increasing reputation, as part of its strong commitment to inclusion, for admitting pupils with a particular level of need. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the good standard of education pupils receive and the careful monitoring of their progress enable them to achieve well in many areas of their learning.

#### **Foundation Stage**

2. The children's attainment when they start full time in the nursery class is average. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is good overall, although the pace of the children's progress is greater in the reception classes where teaching is good. Children achieve satisfactorily in the part-time nursery class. By the time they enter Year 1, the children have attained the Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning. Those with special educational needs make equally good progress. The children are assessed at an early stage in the reception class, and careful attention is paid to ensuring that they receive appropriate support.

#### **YEARS 1 AND 2**

3. The results of the National Curriculum tests in 2003 for pupils in Year 2 were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared to similar schools, attainment was above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. Teacher assessments in science showed attainment to be above average. Results have kept pace with the national trend. There is no difference between the results of boys and girls in the National Curriculum tests.

4. Inspection findings paint a different picture. Evidence indicates that pupils reach standards that are in line with the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. This does not indicate, however, a fall in standards. The current Year 2 group has a far higher number of pupils with special educational needs than in previous years. All pupils are achieving well and make good gains in their learning in both Years 1 and 2. Pupils achieve well in ICT, religious education, history and physical education, where standards are in line with expectations.

#### Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average points score in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	16.9 (16.9)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	15.4 (15.7)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	16.9 (17.3)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 33 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets refer to the previous year.

#### Years 3 and 4

5. Pupils make good progress in many subjects in Years 3 and 4. In English, they continue to develop positive attitudes to reading, are clear and articulate speakers and write with increasing confidence and accuracy. Pupils produce all their work with a pencil, however, and too few opportunities are provided for them to use ink to present their work. Pupils are given good opportunities to undertake investigative work in mathematics and science and this enables them to successfully solve problems of an open-ended nature.
6. Pupils achieve well and confidently use a wide range of software to support their learning in ICT. They use the skills they have acquired well to enhance their learning in other subjects. Pupils are on course to reach higher than expected standards by the time they leave the school. Pupils also achieve well in religious education and history. Their good subject knowledge and understanding indicate that standards are higher than expected by the age of nine.
7. The school has made good progress in tackling the issue of the progress of higher-attaining pupils identified in the previous report. These pupils now make good progress and are challenged to produce work in many subjects that befits their ability. Those few pupils at the school with English as an additional language demonstrate good skills in using English and none is at an early stage of learning English. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The few pupils at the school who are taught in the small unit that addresses the needs of children with different levels of autism make very good progress – not only academically but, in terms of their social interaction with other children and adults.

#### Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are consistently very good. The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very effective**. Attendance is **very good** and punctuality is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very good attitudes to school have a very positive effect upon their learning.
- Pupils' behave very well.
- Pupils' relationships with each other and with adults are very good.

- Well above average levels of attendance reflect the pupils' enthusiasm for learning and their parents' support for the school's work.

## Commentary

8. The enthusiasm shown by pupils for their work and for the school community is very good. They are very happy at school and usually arrive on time. Good attendance is encouraged and pupils respond very well.
9. Pupils make maximum use of their time in school and work very hard throughout the day. They listen very well to their teachers and work well alone or in groups as required. Pupils' interest in their work is very good and they approach opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning in an equally positive way. There are very good opportunities for pupils to play a part in the whole-school community, for example through the school council or by acting as a 'playground friend'. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development.
10. Very good behaviour and attitudes combine to create a friendly and mutually supportive environment. The school has high expectations and an effective and consistent system of rewards and sanctions to support them. As a result, pupils' self-discipline is very good and their moral judgements are also very sound. Pupils understand right from wrong and know how to make amends for their errors. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Lunchtimes are very orderly and sociable and pupils present themselves as friendly and caring. Pupils feel that 'playground friends' help them to overcome any problems well and that adults are always on hand if needed. The very rare incidents of conflict or bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. There have been no exclusions during the past academic year.
11. The very good social development of pupils is well supported by the substantial number of lunchtime and after-school clubs. Pupils benefit from and enjoy the richness of these opportunities. In lessons, social development is promoted very well with group and paired work and discussions. Pupils learn about the world around them and have a good understanding of their place in society. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is very good. They learn to value and respect themselves and others. A sense of delight and self-worth is present in the school environment and in many lessons. Pupils are offered a rich experience of their own culture and those of others.

## Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.5	School data	0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **good** quality of education. Teaching and learning are good. The curriculum is good and the school provides a very good range of activities for pupils to participate in after school. The care and welfare of pupils is good and parents make a very good contribution to the day-to-day life of the school and their children's learning.

## Teaching and learning

**The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.** Assessment procedures are **effective** in Years 1 to 4 and satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. Good use is made of the information gained to plan pupils' subsequent learning.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are taught effectively.
- Teachers make good use of artefacts in religious education and history to bring the subject alive for pupils.
- Teaching in the reception classes is good.
- Teachers plan carefully for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy through other subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and are encouraged to work to the best of their ability.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work carries too few suggestions about how they might improve their efforts.
- Opportunities are missed to use computers in the classroom on a daily basis.

### Commentary

12. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, as it was at the time of the last inspection. In many subjects, teaching is effective, resulting in pupils making gains in both their knowledge and in their confidence to tackle new learning. The basic skills in literacy and numeracy are well taught. In all classrooms, literature is used well to promote learning. In Years 3 and 4, for example, teachers make good use of poetry to stimulate the pupils' imaginations as well as promoting their understanding of the need to draft and redraft their work in order to improve its overall quality. In addition, the teachers make good use of the school library, which is used extensively during the course of the week. Pupils make good progress in developing their skills in using both fiction and non-fiction to support their learning as a result.
13. Pupils make good progress in numeracy. Teachers carefully draw out the potential in other subjects to develop the pupils' understanding of how mathematics can help pupils make sense of the world around them. In the main, effective use is made of computers to reinforce learning. The school is making ever-increasing use of the Internet to give the pupils scope to explore how information can be gathered from sources such as web pages. In some lessons, however, there is insufficient planning for the incorporation of the use of class-based computers into the pupils' wider learning.
14. Teaching in the nursery is satisfactory and good in the reception classes. In the nursery, teaching is largely undertaken by nursery nurses under the guidance of the Foundation Stage co-ordinator. The children are managed well and learning is suitably organised in order to ensure that children are interested and motivated by what they are asked to do. However, some of the planning in the creative and physical areas of their learning lacks focus and the time of the nursery nurses in these sessions is not always used effectively. In the reception classes, the management of arrangements to enable the children to be taught by two part-time teachers is undertaken well. Pupils are provided with a suitably balanced range of activities that are effective in promoting their learning and in ensuring that they settle well into full-time education. Teachers and support staff quickly develop a positive and purposeful rapport with the children.

This ensures the children develop the confidence to approach and seek the support of the adults when posed with challenges they feel uncertain of solving.

15. In Years 1 to 4, the pupils are managed very well. Teachers are highly successful in ensuring that introductions to lessons capture the pupils' interest, and foster high levels of enthusiasm for what they are to learn. Artefacts are used well to stir the pupils' curiosity, and explanations of what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson are clear. In English and mathematics, pupils are provided with clear targets for their learning that are often negotiated at the start of a half-term. This allows them to judge their own progress as the term progresses. Teachers make good use of the assessment information that is gathered by testing pupils through the academic year in order to plan the subsequent steps in their learning. While the marking of pupils' work follows the school's agreed format, which is consistently followed from class to class, pupils are provided with too little guidance on how they might improve the overall quality of their work.
16. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. The expertise and interest of the learning support assistants are used well in this respect. They work well with the teachers when planning and delivering the pupils' learning. The rapport they establish with the pupils they work alongside is good. This has a very favourable impact on the success of these pupils in meeting their individual targets. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and the information is used effectively to provide targeted support in group and individual work. As a result, these lower-attaining pupils learn as well as others in the class. Very strong links have been forged with a specialist class attached to the school that caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties. A major strength of its inclusion strategy is the total commitment of Southcott School to including pupils with severe learning difficulties in mainstream lessons.

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 41 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
	4 (10%)	25 (61%)	12 (29%)			

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

#### The curriculum

The curriculum that is planned for pupils is **good** for children in the Foundation Stage and for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. The enrichment of the curriculum is **very good**. **Very good** use is made of the school's accommodation, and the quality of learning resources is **very good** overall.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Interesting learning opportunities are provided for pupils.
- The school has been effective in developing the curriculum since the previous inspection.
- A very good range of learning opportunities is provided for pupils outside the school day.
- Very good equality of access and opportunity for learning is afforded to all pupils.
- The pupils are very well prepared for their entry into the next phase of education.

## Commentary

17. The school provides an interesting curriculum for all pupils regardless of their background or educational ability. It meets statutory National Curriculum requirements relating to all core and foundation subjects, and includes provision for religious education and collective worship in line with the locally agreed syllabus.
18. Every pupil, including the few pupils at the school with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, is valued equally and included in all aspects of the curriculum. When pupils are withdrawn from class for additional support, great care is taken to ensure that they do not miss important teaching and learning. A small group of pupils attend an additional learning unit within the school. They take a full part in all the activities that the school offers and their welcome involvement successfully demonstrates the school's very strong commitment to inclusion.
19. Very good provision is made for easing pupils' transfer to middle school education. All pupils can move on to this next level of education confident in their overall personal and academic achievement. They take part in a programme of transition meetings and activities that are designed primarily to allay pupils' concerns about 'moving on'.
20. The school's curriculum provision is regularly re-visited, assessed and further developed. Consequently, the school has developed the curriculum well since the previous inspection. New ways of promoting the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through different subjects of the curriculum have been very successful. Planning clearly identifies how mixed-age teaching is managed with a year-on-year rolling programme of relevant topics. A very good, recent innovation is a trial of 'Brain Gym' activities within selected classes. Pupils undertake short, sharp physical activities that create a 'look alive' call to pupils as the teacher prepares to change from one curriculum area to another. Theme days add significant quality by providing pupils with insight into chosen subject and topic areas. For example, teachers and pupils dressed in period costume were involved in feasting and battles during their 'Roman Day' in Years 3 and 4. Subjects such as art and design, design technology and 'Hazard Alley' through PSHE (personal, social and health education and citizenship) work, provide very valuable additions that bring learning alive for pupils of all ages. Innovative curriculum development is very good and has supported the school's achievement of both 'Active School' and 'School Curriculum' national awards.
21. A very good range of extra-curricular opportunities is available to all pupils. The activities are provided in great part by their dedicated teachers, very well supported by a number of outside agencies. The richness, variety and quality of the support for learning in the arts and in sport beyond the school day is rewarded by very high levels of involvement by pupils. The curriculum is much enriched by a variety of educational visits and visitors that strongly support pupils' learning in a range of subject areas.
22. The quality of accommodation and overall level of resources are very good. The school is highly attractive and good use is made of classroom display to enhance and stimulate learning. The school's grounds, which are equally very attractive, provide rich stimulus for different subjects.

## Care, guidance and support

The arrangements for the health, safety, care and welfare of pupils across the school is **very good**. The personal and academic support, advice and guidance offered to pupils are **good**. The arrangements for seeking and acting upon pupils' views are **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The arrangements for the pastoral care of pupils are very good.
- Pupils are highly involved in making decisions about matters that concern them.
- Pupils new to the school benefit from the care and attention all staff pay to ensuring that they settle in well.
- Pupils with special educational needs are provided for well.

## Commentary

23. The school is a very happy and well-ordered community. Pupils are treated with great respect and sensitivity. The health and safety arrangements are very good as are those relating to child protection. The very good relationships that exist in this school community and the very good provision for pupils' social and moral development create a caring, safe and supportive environment. This has a very positive effect upon pupils' learning.
24. The personal and academic support, advice and guidance offered to pupils are good. Pupils are very well motivated and success is recognised and rewarded. The involvement of pupils in their own learning is good. They learn to appreciate and evaluate their work and understand the purpose of their lessons. Each individual is very well known, cared for and nurtured and this is very evident from the enthusiastic and happy pupils seen in this school.
25. The school has very good arrangements for seeking pupils' views. All the staff in school listen carefully to the views and concerns of pupils. The school council offers very good opportunities for pupils to offer their ideas and use their initiative, for example by identifying problems and being actively involved in addressing them. The school operates very much as one community and the views of all parties are equally valued. Pupils feel that there is always someone there to listen to them and to help them when needed.
26. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in both their day-to-day learning and the manner in which their personal progress is monitored. Teachers and support assistants are careful to ensure that their learning plans highlight success and show what steps are still needed in order for further learning to take place. Of note is the way in which the pupils themselves are involved in the process, which helps to give them a good insight into how well they are achieving.
27. Pupils new to the school benefit from the good induction procedures. These include meetings and information packs for parents and good links with pre-school providers prior to the children in the Foundation Stage commencing school. There are very good opportunities for children to visit the school and make a settled start to their education. Arrangements for pupils to transfer to middle school education are equally effective.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents, the community and other schools is **very good** and plays an important part in enriching pupils' lives and learning.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents make a very effective contribution to their children's learning at school and at home.
- Relationships with parents are very good and the information provided for them is of a high quality.

### Commentary

28. The school has very effective links with parents. They are kept very well informed about the life of the school, and have very good opportunities to be involved in all that it does. Parents are welcomed into school and their views are sought and acted upon well. The quality of documentation that parents receive about the life of the school is very good. Well-written information about all aspects of the school's work and the curriculum is readily available. Parents can gain good insight into their children's learning through assemblies and special events. The arrangements for reporting pupils' progress are good. There are good opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress with the teachers and written reports to identify strengths and areas for development.
29. The contribution that parents make to the school is very good and has a very beneficial effect upon the environment in which the pupils learn. Parents offer to help in school and with extra-curricular clubs and there is an active and successful Parents Association. Homework and school activities are very well supported.
30. The school's links with the community are very good. Pupils are taken on trips to places of interest and visiting specialists broaden pupils' experiences, for example with dance and music from other cultures. Community visitors to school bring with them rich experiences to share with the pupils and, in return, pupils entertain the community at local fêtes and at homes for the elderly.
31. The partnership with other schools is very good and has a very positive effect upon the quality of the experiences and opportunities offered to pupils and their teachers. Pupils benefit greatly from links with schools locally and in other countries. The arrangements for transferring pupils to middle school are good. Links with other schools provide very good support for the headteacher and staff through regular meetings and shared training opportunities.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

There is good leadership of the school and the headteacher provides very clear educational direction. The management of the school is **good**. While key staff provide satisfactory leadership and management, the role of the co-ordinator is under-developed. The governing body makes a **very good** contribution to the school's leadership and management, and is very effective in undertaking its legal responsibilities.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very strong, purposeful leadership.

- The number and role of the senior management team requires widening to ensure a fairer distribution of staff management responsibilities.
- Co-ordinators have too few opportunities to monitor teaching directly.
- There is a well-constructed school improvement plan detailing clear strategies for improving standards.
- Governors are very good at fulfilling their roles and responsibilities, and give high levels of well-directed support and challenge.
- The school's approach to financial management is excellent.

## Commentary

32. The school clearly benefits from the strong and purposeful leadership of the headteacher, who is deeply committed to the school and its community. She has very high expectations of the work and behaviour of the pupils, and those expectations are reflected in the clear educational purpose and direction in the school. This has a very beneficial effect on pupils' behaviour and their very positive attitudes to study. A strong work ethic has been established, the success of which can be measured by the good standards of teaching and pupils' achievement. All those who lead and manage the school are very strongly committed to inclusion. The pupils within the specialist unit that caters for children with severe learning difficulties are fully included in all aspects of school life. The headteacher has very firm ideas about the sort of school she wants. At present, the role of acting deputy headteacher is ably undertaken by the co-ordinator for the Foundation Stage. However, the senior management team is too small to be fully effective and results in an unequal distribution of key tasks.
33. The governing body gives very good support to the school and is ably led by the chair of governors. The governing body works very well with the headteacher and a suitable range of committees is in place. The committees carry out their responsibilities very efficiently and meetings are very well attended. Individual governors use their expertise very well for the benefit of the school. Governors visit the school during the day and give good encouragement to staff about their work. Governors are extremely knowledgeable about a whole range of data material available in school. Regular updates, well prepared by the headteacher and teaching staff, on curriculum development and innovations also provide a wealth of additional information. The governors' role in checking the work of the school is rigorous and their involvement in identifying its strategic direction is very thorough and highly effective.
34. The principles of best value are very well applied with regard to placing controls and purchasing goods. Governors manage the school finances in a highly effective manner. With the headteacher, they have devised very successful ways of deploying the budget and maximizing the skills and expertise of staff. The decisions to retain and manage the funds for school meals and to employ staff on a part-time basis to decorate the school in conjunction with targeted fund-raising have brought considerable improvements to the quality of pupils' learning experiences. Governors are increasingly asking questions to challenge the effectiveness of provision. Consequently, all funds available to the school, including monies for special needs and additional grants, are used very well. Very good use is made of benchmarking data to compare costs with other schools. Supported positively by the headteacher, governors' involvement in the management of the school since the previous inspection is clearly a success story at all levels.
35. The school improvement plan includes relevant priorities over the medium term. The school's arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its own performance are good. Clear systems are in place for English and mathematics. Where data is analysed,

pupils' progress is systematically tracked. However, subject co-ordinators are not sufficiently involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning through the observation of lessons, and they therefore do not have the information to assess fully the impact that teaching has on learning.

### Financial information

#### Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	647 971	Balance brought forward from the previous year	44 670
Total expenditure	676 208	Balance carried forward to the next	16 433
Expenditure per pupil	2 450		

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS**

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

The overall provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

36. Children's attainment when they start at the school covers the full range but is average overall. Children are admitted termly to the nursery on a part-time basis in preparation for full-time schooling. The reception class children are taught in two groups, split by ability in the mornings and in one class in the afternoon. The manager of the Foundation Stage teaches the afternoon reception class and also has a teaching commitment most mornings in a Year 2 class. This has made it more difficult for her to oversee arrangements in the nursery, and the overall quality of leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory with some good features. The issues from the last inspection have been tackled well. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator ensures that parents are effectively involved in their children's education from the outset and parents have a close and visible partnership with the staff, which ensures that their children's start to both full- and part-time education is smooth. Many parents support their children at home, particularly in relation to their literacy development, and this contributes well to their overall achievement. Communication between the school and the parents of nursery and reception children is very good.
37. When children enter the school, the teacher and assistant check the level of their attainment and in most aspects of their learning they use the information to plan work that is a good match with the children's needs. However, not enough use is made of ongoing assessment in some areas of learning to plan the next steps in the children's learning. The procedures to identify, track and monitor the progress of the children with special educational needs are good. All children are managed well and relationships between the adults and the children are warm and purposeful. This enables the children to work in an atmosphere that is conducive to learning.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children come happily to school, behave very well and are eager to learn.
- Children have limited opportunities to plan their own learning.
- Good teaching establishes good routines for behaviour.

### **Commentary**

38. There is a warm, friendly, calm atmosphere in the nursery and reception classes, which helps the children to settle very quickly into the routines and rules of the school. There is a wide range of activities available to them. However, opportunities for children to plan and initiate their own learning in both nursery and reception are sometimes limited, with many of the activities already in position on tabletops and this limits the scope that the children have to determine the course and direction of their learning. In the reception classes, children are expected to take part in formal learning which sometimes goes on for too long, and which also reduces the time they have for choosing and planning their own learning. Most children learn to work and play well

together. Every encouragement is given for children to do things for themselves, for example changing clothes for physical education. Most children do this confidently, knowing that there is a helping hand ready should they get stuck. This in turn leads to good levels of self esteem.

39. Due to good teaching in this area, particularly in how children are encouraged to relate with one another, most children achieve well and most are on track to reach the expected goals by the end of the reception year.

### **Communication, language and literacy development**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children are provided with good opportunities to develop their early skills in literacy.
- Speaking skills are good in the reception classes because children are given every encouragement to talk with one another and with other adults.
- The children have the right skills to build on their reading and writing as soon as they start in Year 1.

#### **Commentary**

40. Teaching is good and the children achieve well. Most children enter the school with the expected skills in speech and communication. However, a growing proportion of children are entering school with below average language skills due to the changing nature of the school's population. The regular planned visit by a speech therapist to support children's individual needs reflects this position. Adults in the nursery and reception tell stories in an exciting way. Good opportunities are provided to widen the children's vocabulary. In the reception classes, children are encouraged to use language for a variety of purposes, both in directed activities and at play. In a movement lesson children were positively encouraged to move 'like a robot' and they experimented with language as they danced like an old tin can.
41. In the reception class, children's early reading skills are developing well. Children are keen readers, and share books with obvious enjoyment, handling them with care and respect. Adults work well alongside the children, encouraging them to recall dialogue and action from the stories, which helps them in the more formal lesson when children and adults look at written stories together. Most children make good progress in their early reading skills and many attempt the reading of individual words. In most activities children are encouraged to talk about what they are doing and what they have found out through their play. This enables children to develop their speaking skills. The wide range of relevant writing activities for children ensures they are also making good progress with their early writing skills. In the nursery, children are taught to make marks on paper as they work independently in writing corners, although direct support from adults is less focused. In the higher-attaining literacy group in reception, many children use recognisable letters and some are beginning to write simple stories. Most write their name correctly. By the end of the reception year, most children will reach the goals expected of them.

### **Mathematical development**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most children in the reception class count to ten and beyond with confidence.
- Nursery rhymes and songs are used well to reinforce learning.

## **Commentary**

42. Children's achievement is good in this area of learning. The quality of teaching in the nursery is satisfactory and it is good and sometimes very good in the reception class. In the reception classes, learning is well planned by an enthusiastic teacher. Children are encouraged to count, add and subtract in a range of real life situations. As a result, the children are becoming competent at counting to ten and beyond and are displaying a real understanding of numbers. The needs of all children are supported by a good range of well-planned practical activities. Because there is a very clear focus to these, all adults ask questions which prompt the children to use correct vocabulary. Elements of the National Numeracy Strategy are well embedded in the reception class and the children respond very well to the mental mathematics and oral parts of lessons. As a result of the consistently good teaching, most children will reach the expected goals by the end of the reception year. A significant number of children will exceed them in basic number recognition and counting.

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

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well in their learning about the world around them.
- Children have a well-balanced and broad range of experiences in the reception class.
- In the nursery, children do not have sufficient access to using the computer in day-to-day lessons, and planning generally in this area of learning is sometimes too vague.

## **Commentary**

43. Children achieve satisfactorily in the nursery and achieve well in the reception class. In the nursery, where teaching is satisfactory, children develop confidence in controlling the mouse when assembling the features needed to draw a robot. Although nursery children have a weekly time slot for working in the computer suite, opportunities for hands-on activities during other sessions are restricted. The children are given good first-hand experiences, suitably supported by good teaching, which extend their knowledge and understanding beyond the classroom environment. Children develop well their early understanding that other living creatures share the world in which the children live and that they need food, water and shelter in order to grow and thrive. The children are given sufficient opportunities to learn about their immediate environment and know, for example, of the sorts of people in the local community who provide a service for others. In the nursery, although teaching is satisfactory overall, opportunities are missed for children to explore, experiment and ask questions about why things happen. Planning often identifies the activity, but not what children are expected to learn from such an experience. Most children are in line to achieve the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. Religious education is regularly taught to the children and they know that a church is 'special place' for people and by exploring the Chinese New Year they gain an early understanding that other children in other parts of the world have different beliefs.

## **Creative development**

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children enjoy making and drawing pictures using a range of different media.
- Early cutting skills are developing well.
- Children are given good opportunities to participate in singing simple songs and learning to play a range of musical instruments.
- The planning of some aspects of the children's learning does not allow them to follow their own lines of enquiry.

### **Commentary**

44. The quality of teaching in the reception class and nursery is satisfactory and children achieve satisfactorily.
45. In both the nursery and reception classes, a good range of activities is provided, but the skills the children learn are not always effectively extended across other areas of learning. Creative activities in the nursery and reception are sometimes too closely directed and supervised by the adults and do not always give the children the opportunity to experiment or use their own imagination. This is balanced by the children having good opportunities to use a wide range of media including paint, clay, play-doh and recyclable materials in making their models and simple pictures. Good opportunities are provided for the children to pick up and explore a suitable range of untuned instruments that they play with interest and curiosity. Equally good scope is provided for them to sing simple songs and rhymes and they respond in a positive manner when doing so.

## **Physical development**

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The acquisition of high quality outdoor play equipment has been a major improvement since the previous inspection.
- Reception children use space confidently during physical education sessions in the hall.
- The planning of children's learning in the nursery class is not always sufficiently clear.

### **Commentary**

46. By the end of the reception year, most children will achieve the goals they are expected to reach. In the reception class, imaginative role-play is organised well and this means that children have lots of opportunities to use their imagination to develop their language when acting out different situations. Well-planned opportunities in other activities support this well. For example, the children dressing up as animals re-enacted the behaviour of 'the fearless lion'. Opportunities for children to respond to music in dance activities and to make their own movements to represent 'Metal Monty' also make a good contribution to the development of their early musical skills. The good teaching in the reception class in this area of learning ensures that children achieve well. However, by contrast, the school is aware that to make full use of the

excellent outdoor facilities, nursery children require more direction during their role-play and outside play activities. Planning is unclear and does not identify what children are likely to achieve by undertaking outdoor activities.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Basic skills are taught well and good use is made of other subjects to promote pupils' literacy skills.
- Parents are keen for their children to succeed and give good support to them at home.
- A very good range of additional learning opportunities enriches pupils' learning.
- Very good use is made of the school library to promote pupils' learning.
- Pupils get too few opportunities to use a pen when writing.
- Marking gives too little guidance on how pupils might improve their work.
- The co-ordinator has too few opportunities to monitor the impact that teaching has on pupils' learning.

#### **Commentary**

47. In the 2003 National Curriculum tests in English, standards at the end of Year 2 were above the national average for all schools in reading and writing. Compared with similar schools, results were also above average. Inspection findings indicate that the attainment of the current group of pupils in Year 2 is average in reading and writing. This group has a far higher number of pupils with special educational needs, reflecting the changing nature of the school population since the previous inspection. Given this fact, all pupils in Years 1 and 2, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, achieve well and make good progress. All pupils in Years 3 and 4 achieve well, and by the time the pupils leave the school they reach standards that are above national expectations.
48. Good attention is paid to the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills as well as developing their confidence in writing and reading as they move through the school. By the end of Year 4, children appreciate and demonstrate good skills in listening to the viewpoint of others, and many of them speak clearly and fluently. Across the school, pupils are taught well both to read accurately and to take great pleasure in what they read. Many parents give their children good support at home and this boosts the status and enjoyment reading has for many of the pupils. All pupils, whatever their age, make full use of the school library to support their learning. This is bright and attractive and very well resourced.
49. Pupils make good progress in the development of their writing skills. Pupils write suitably complex pieces of work for their age and are strongly encouraged by teachers to make their work interesting by adding, where appropriate, interesting and more varied vocabulary. In Years 3 and 4, pupils understand well the purpose of drafting work and that writing is varied according to the audience for whom it is intended. Pupils use word-processors effectively to draft their poetry work and this successfully develops their understanding of how such tools can be used to improve the overall

quality of what they produce. Pupils are given too few opportunities to use a pen to produce their work. All written work in all subjects is in pencil and higher-attaining pupils in all parts of the school could handle more challenge in this aspect of their work.

50. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all parts of the school. Teachers make effective use of different subjects of the curriculum to support pupils' literacy development. Pupils are given regular opportunities to talk to the rest of the class about their weekend activities or to give short presentations about their pastimes. Such opportunities allow the pupils to develop their confidence in speaking aloud to a wider audience. Relationships with the pupils are warm and supportive and they are given good encouragement in lessons to strive to achieve their best. A shortcoming in teaching lies in the quality of marking. While supportive comments are offered, limited guidance is given to pupils on how they might improve their overall efforts.
51. There is satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. Good improvement in assessment procedures has been made since the last inspection and effective use is made of the data to plan school-based developments. Pupils' work is regularly reviewed and their progress is carefully monitored as they move through the school. The co-ordinator has too few opportunities to gauge for herself the impact that teaching has on learning and this limits the perspective she has on provision across the school. Resources are very good.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

Pupils' language and literacy skills are effectively developed through different subjects. When planning pupils' literacy work, teachers are careful to draw on the scope that subjects such as science, design and technology, art and design, history or geography have to promote pupils' learning. Pupils have researched information on famous artists, for example, and then presented this in the form of short biographies.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Overall achievement is good and pupils reach high standards in mathematics by the time they leave the school.
- Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop and refine their numeracy skills.
- Teachers make good use of assessment information to plan pupils' learning.
- The role of the co-ordinator in monitoring teaching is insufficiently developed.
- The marking of pupils' work is not always effective.

### **Commentary**

52. In the 2003 national tests, standards were above average at the end Year 2. When compared with similar schools, standards were average. Inspection evidence indicates that currently they are average. This does not reflect a dip in standards, but is because of the higher proportion of pupils in the year group with special educational needs. Standards are above expectations in Year 4. The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good.

53. Year 2 pupils are taught in ability groups. This good organisation enables a clearer teaching focus to be achieved. Additional support staff in lower ability groups provides targeted help for individual pupils and small groups. This enables these pupils to achieve well.
54. Across the school, pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of their investigation skills. Year 1 and 2 pupils have satisfactory numeracy skills and recall a good range of number facts. Pupils are developing a secure understanding of shape and measures and an early awareness of data-handling. By the time that pupils leave the school the teaching has ensured that all are confident enough to tackle more challenging investigative work. Pupils demonstrate good levels of confidence in approaching open-ended problems involving number, space, and shape, and in solving problems that require constructing or answering problems involving interpreting tables and charts.
55. From the inspection of lessons and analysis of pupils' recorded work, the overall quality of teaching and learning is good. In two very good lessons seen during the inspection to older pupils in the school, teachers had high expectations of concentration and behaviour. The lessons developed with good pace and pupils responded with high levels of enthusiasm. Realistic levels of challenge resulted in pupils becoming excited when they gained a greater understanding of the mathematics they were being taught. Good teaching effectively challenges higher-attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4 with tasks pitched at a very challenging level that extends their learning well. For example, they use and apply their knowledge of number well to develop strategies that enable them to predict problem outcomes using algebraic formulae. In most lessons, teachers are successful in ensuring that pupils work hard and strive well to solve the problems they are set. Consequently, pupils co-operate very well and nearly all of them show clear eagerness to succeed. Relationships are very good and most pupils are sufficiently confident to demonstrate their mathematical understanding when invited to write on the board.
56. The school uses a good variety of tests, the results of which enable teachers to have a good knowledge of what pupils have learned and what they can do. This information enables the school to set challenging targets, track individual pupils' progress and to place them into appropriate ability groups. Marking is undertaken systematically, but in a manner that gives pupils insufficient direction as to how they might improve. This does not support the progressive development of skills in setting out work independently. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 work consistently on plain paper that does not help them to accurately position digits to support further improvements in standards.
57. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The school has maintained the good provision for mathematics noted at the time of the last inspection. The co-ordinator has been in post for some time, but the role in terms of monitoring teaching and its impact on learning is under-developed. The school has put this on its agenda for improvement in order to drive standards higher.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

58. Pupils make good use of their numeracy skills in other subjects. Teachers identify a good range of planned opportunities to develop pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding, and to enable pupils to appreciate the importance of mathematics in many aspects of life. For example, when conducting a litter survey in geography, pupils in years 3 and 4 made very good use of ICT when representing and interrogating graphed data.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Year 4.
- Teachers make good use of investigation work to promote pupils' scientific enquiry skills.
- There is a good curriculum in place based on experimental and investigational activities.
- The monitoring of teaching quality requires greater precision and regularity.
- Pupils are not clear about what they need to do to reach higher standards.
- Lower-attaining pupils are well supported by adults during practical activities.

### Commentary

59. By Year 4 pupils' standards are above national expectations. Teacher assessments judged standards achieved at the end of Year 2 in 2003 to be above average. However, in the present Year 2, with its high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, standards are broadly average. This represents good achievement over time considering the lower levels of attainment of this cohort of pupils on entry into full-time education. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with severe learning difficulties, are well supported by additional adults and consequently achieve as well as their peers. The school has set suitably challenging targets for pupils in Year 2 and Year 4. These standards reflect well on the school's growing ambition to drive forward improvements in its provision for science.
60. Achievement in lessons throughout the school is consistently good. The school is aware of, and has identified within the school improvement plan, the need to use the collected data more rigorously in order to more consistently and successfully track pupils' achievements as they move through the school.
61. The quality of teaching and the pace of learning by all pupils are consistently good. Pupils in all year groups talk with great enthusiasm and interest about their most recent learning because lessons are practical and, therefore, memorable. All pupils enjoy working in groups to carry out investigations. Teachers are skilful in asking probing questions to extend pupils' thinking and successfully draw most pupils into class discussions. Effective questioning and regular class discussions enable all pupils to demonstrate what they have learnt. Relationships are very good and all pupils contribute confidently in lessons. Scientific vocabulary is effectively used by teachers to help pupils use the correct scientific terms when talking about their recorded work. However, scrutiny of pupils' work clearly indicates some inconsistent use of recording sheets in some classes. While some teachers use these well to structure scientific investigation and organise learning in books, others use identical worksheets that require pupils to carry out tasks, regardless of previous achievement. The use of assessment information to build upon pupils' prior learning levels is satisfactory. The school is aware of the need to develop more rigorous strategies for individual and group target setting, which will help to ensure work is matched to the individual needs of pupils. Work in books is regularly marked for correctness, but it often fails to suggest to pupils how they can improve.
62. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Recent improvements, including the use of the local authority subject specialist to lead staff training events, have given the

school a more accurate picture of the subject's strengths and weaknesses. Improvements since the previous inspection have been good, including the introduction of recently issued government subject guidelines and the regular scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning. The regular monitoring of teaching quality is, however, a weakness in the present management of the subject.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well and have a good understanding of how information and communication technology can be used to support their learning.
- ICT skills are taught well in the computer suite, but not always developed in the classroom.
- Resources are good and the computer suite is effectively used.
- Good encouragement is given to those pupils who have computers at home to use them in their studies.
- Effective leadership and management have ensured good progress since the previous inspection.

### **Commentary**

63. By the end of Year 2, standards are in line with national expectations. By the time pupils leave the school at the age of nine, standards are higher than national expectations. Achievement, by all groups of pupils, is good overall and the school has maintained the good provision noted at the time of the last inspection.
64. By the age of seven, pupils know how to give instructions in order to use a programmable toy and they are given good scope to use a word-processor to type up their stories and accounts. When taught in the computer suite, they understand what 'logging on' means and they use a mouse competently to load and close programs. In Years 3 and 4, they ably use the Internet to support their studies and understand well how to use search engines and to send and receive e-mails. Many pupils use word-processing software ably to construct simple newspaper accounts or to redraft their poetry work in order to make it more visually pleasing and of a higher quality. Pupils have a good understanding of how ICT is a regular feature of their daily lives. The good scope they are given to use digital cameras in and around the school successfully develops their understanding of how such equipment can be connected to a computer and the images downloaded and then printed out.
65. Teaching and learning are good overall and good progress has been made since the previous inspection in raising staff confidence in viewing computers as a tool to enhance pupils' learning. Teachers carefully consider the potential of other subjects to extend the pupils' learning. Various websites are used in history to reinforce the pupils' learning about the Great Fire of London in Years 1 and 2 or Sutton Hoo in Years 3 and 4. Such work has a positive impact on pupils' literacy development as they learn that information can be gathered from sources other than books. Occasionally, there are missed opportunities to use computers more fully in day-to-day lessons, and this restricts the scope of pupils to develop the skills they have acquired when being taught in the computer suite.

66. Leadership and management are good. Since the previous inspection, good progress has been made in ensuring that the school keeps pace with national developments in the subject. Although the co-ordinator has only just been appointed, she has a good idea of the potential within the school to raise standards to a higher level. Careful discussions take place with the governors to ensure that impending decisions to replace the current stock of computers in the computer suite marry with the head's and co-ordinator's vision for the future of ICT in the school.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

67. The school is making increasing and overall, satisfactory use of information and communication technology to extend pupils' learning in other subjects. Each class is provided with regular opportunities to use the school's computer suite. Teachers successfully plan pupils' learning to reinforce their knowledge in other subjects and to increase their skills in the use of a variety of software.

### **HUMANITIES**

History and geography are taught separately in half-term blocks. Insufficient work was seen in geography to make judgements on standards and provision. At the time of the inspection, history was the focus of humanities teaching in most classes. In **geography**, however, evidence gained from the scrutiny of pupils' work, and discussions with them indicates that pupils are introduced to a range of different themes and topics during the course of an academic year. By exploring the travels of 'Barnaby Bear', pupils in Years 1 and 2 sufficiently develop their understanding of the climate and pastimes of people in other countries. Older pupils have also explored life in a number of European countries and know what the major cities of Europe are.

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils make good progress in understanding the main features of the beliefs of different religions.
- Teachers make good use of artefacts to extend pupils' understanding of different religions.
- The subject makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The co-ordinator has too few opportunities to gauge the impact that teaching has on learning.

### **Commentary**

68. Pupils achieve well and standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by the end of Year 2. As children move through into Years 3 and 4, they continue to make good progress in their understanding and appreciation of different religions. By the time they leave the school, pupils are on course to reach standards that are higher than the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. The school has maintained the good provision in religious education as noted at the time of the previous inspection.

69. Pupils experience sufficient opportunities to explore the customs and traditions of other faiths. All pupils are familiar with Christian celebrations such as Christmas, Easter and harvest and have sound recall of important stories from the Bible and a good understanding that this is an important book to Christians. Infant pupils compare Christian and Hindu wedding ceremonies. Older pupils learn about family life in Jewish homes and are subsequently introduced to a detailed journey through the life and times of Jesus before discussing how their own lives revolve around making 'choices'.
70. The overall quality of teaching and learning in both key stages is good. The highlight of the two good lessons seen during the inspection in the junior classes was the way in which most pupils researched The Old and New Testaments. After pupils recalled their good knowledge of the Jewish festival of Passover, clear links were made to the events of Holy Week in relation to the Christian calendar. Pupils knew that information relating to the Passover would not be found in The New Testament and moved from Exodus through John and Zachariah to Mark as the lesson proceeded. The consequence of good teaching was that pupils lost no time in finding specific chapters and verses in order to read the Bible and follow the life of Jesus against the background of his times. Teachers give good opportunities for pupils to discuss the impact that religion has on their day-to-day lives and equally good use is made of different artefacts to enrich and promote pupils' curiosity in their day-to-day learning.
71. The leadership of the religious education is good. The subject leader supports her colleagues well, aided by a personal interest and commitment to the importance of religion in support of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, although satisfactory, there are some weaknesses in how the subject is managed. This is due to the lack of opportunities that the co-ordinator has to monitor teaching, although this is very much seen by the senior managers of the school as an area for development. Resources are very good and are used well to extend pupils' learning.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils greatly enjoy their learning.
- Teaching is characterized by good incorporation of information and communication technology to extend pupils' learning.
- The curriculum is effectively enriched by 'theme days'.
- The role of the co-ordinator in monitoring teaching and learning is insufficiently developed.

## Commentary

72. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well throughout the school. They reach the nationally expected standards for their age in Year 2 and are on course to reach above average standards by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4. The school has maintained the good provision in history noted at the time of the last inspection.
73. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of some of the main historical events and famous people from the past. They know, for example, that the Great Fire of London started in a bakery and spread rapidly due to the wooden construction of the houses and their proximity to one another. By the end of Year 4,

pupils have a good understanding of the Romans and Saxons and of the day-to-day ways that people from these times spent their lives.

74. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge that is presented in such a way that motivates pupils. Teachers make good use of good quality photographic and pictorial evidence, which helps to sustain the interest and concentration of the pupils. The development of pupils' investigative skills and their understanding of the importance of sources of evidence when studying history are well supported by the use of ICT in finding out about the Great Fire of London and, for example, the work of archaeologists in excavating Sutton Hoo.
75. The school has successfully adapted a nationally approved scheme of work to cater for mixed-age classes and to provide good support for teachers' planning. The curriculum is enriched by a very good variety of visits and visitors. For example, pupils in Year 1 visit Luton Museum to gain hands-on experience of 'Washday Blues' in Victorian times. The grandparents of infant pupils visit school to talk about their own childhood toys to help pupils' evaluate changes over time. Older pupils experience a visit from a 'Roman soldier' who involves them in re-enacting a variety of experiences from his era. In this way, history is brought alive.
76. Leadership of the subject is good and management is satisfactory. The co-ordinator gives a clear lead in the subject and the manner in which pupils' work is presented in the form of displays further adds to the high status the subject holds. However, the subject leader's role is at present under-developed because she is not given time to monitor and support teaching and learning. The quality and range of resources, including compact disc software, are very good.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

The inspection focused on the teaching of **physical education**. Too few lessons were seen in art and design, design and technology or music during the inspection to make overall judgements on standards, the level of pupils' achievement or the quality of the teaching. However, during the inspection, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of work in the subjects concerned were undertaken. In **design and technology** by the end of Year 4, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the main elements of the design and technology process. Pupils are given sufficient opportunities to look at and explore various everyday objects from a design point of view. Pupils are provided with adequate opportunities to construct initial designs and sketches in order to explore how their practical work may possibly unfold. They appreciate the importance of thinking through their initial ideas and the materials and tools that are needed to make and build a range of artefacts. Pupils have made moving objects using simple pneumatic equipment and, by doing so, they successfully developed their understanding of the need to construct and modify their initial designs in order to improve the overall quality of their work.

In **music**, pupils are given sufficient opportunities to learn about different musical styles and the sorts of instruments, both modern and classical, that have been used by the composer. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including a small choir, and pupils have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument. In **art and design**, teachers make effective use of other subjects to extend pupils' skills and understanding of the processes in constructing simple, yet effective and pleasing pieces of art. In the upper part of the school, for example, pupils, as part of a topic on the Romans, had produced some good work in constructing images using pieces of tiles to make mosaics and developed a good understanding of the importance that the Romans placed on this form of art in making their own images. As they move through the school, pupils are given good opportunities to use

sketchbooks as a means of preparatory work and they are introduced to a suitable range of different artists. This enables them to make at least satisfactory progress in their understanding of how different artists use a range of different media, styles and techniques when constructing works of art.

## **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards achieved in gymnastics are above age-related levels by the end of Year 4.
- The quality and range of extra-curricular activities are very good and pupils achieve well in them.
- At present, the co-ordinator has too few opportunities to directly monitor teaching and learning.

### **Commentary**

77. In the gymnastics lesson observed, pupils thoroughly enjoyed their work, reaching standards that are higher than expectations in this aspect of the physical education curriculum. Achievement is good. Most pupils demonstrate an ability to control movements on a large variety of equipment with increasing accuracy. Pupils understand the need to warm up before exercise and the value of health and fitness. However, opportunities to comment on each other's work to improve their own performance are limited. The closing sessions of lessons are well organized, with good attention to health and safety procedures. In the lessons observed, learning was good for most pupils, including the lower-attaining pupils. Higher-attaining pupils were also suitably challenged and their levels of skill extended.
78. During extra-curricular sessions, very good use is made of spacious hard playing surfaces and the school hall. In the extra-curricular session observed in the school hall, pupils enjoyed a simple version of tag rugby. Pupils made good progress in their running and dodging skills to evade capture by their opponents. These well-organised activities contribute very well to pupils' personal, social and moral development because of the emphasis on taking part and being part of a team that pervades most of the work of the school. From discussions with teachers and scrutiny of planning, it is evident that all strands of the subject are taught, including swimming. Pupils benefit from regular swimming sessions, and by the end of Year 4, most are confident in the water and swim using a recognisable stroke.
79. There is good leadership of the subject and support from fellow staff has provided good opportunities for competitive sport, for example the mixed boys' and girls' football team, organised by parents and staff that runs on Saturday mornings. However, an overview of strengths and areas for development across the school is limited by a lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation. Present systems for assessing pupils' skills and development linked to a commercial scheme are satisfactory.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers effectively interweave elements of personal, social and health education through other subjects.
- The school council provides a valuable forum for pupils to develop their understanding of how decisions are made.

### **Commentary**

80. During the inspection, few lessons were seen in personal, social and health education and citizenship. Evaluation of the teachers' plans indicates there is good coverage of a number of themes during the year and they make a valuable contribution to the pupils' personal, social and health development. Teachers plan learning that is successfully interwoven with other subjects, enabling the pupils to explore, at a suitable level, sex education and issues relating to drugs awareness. Some of the themes are also intertwined with religious education and the assemblies that are planned, thereby offering scope to explore the moral issues raised. Older pupils, for example, have explored the impact that litter has on the environment if it is not disposed of correctly. The work of the school council also makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' personal and social development. It comprises members from most classes and meets regularly, allowing the pupils to discuss issues that pertain to their day-to-day life in the school and, where appropriate, influence decisions.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement	Grade
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the number of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	3
<i>Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).</i>	