

INSPECTION REPORT

BEECH HYDE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY

Wheathampstead

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117301

Headteacher: Mrs D M Bonner

Lead inspector: Mr D Shepherd

Dates of inspection: 7th – 9th March 2005

Inspection number: 266397

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: 3 – 11 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 210

School address: Nurseries Road
Wheathampstead
St Albans
Hertfordshire
Postcode: AL4 8TP

Telephone number: 01582 832661
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Ms Ros Pomeroy

Date of previous inspection: 28th June – 1st July 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Beech Hyde is about the same size as other primary schools with 184 full-time pupils on roll. A further 52 part-time pupils attend the nursery. Nearly all pupils are of white United Kingdom heritage, eight pupils are from mixed backgrounds and two from Asian backgrounds. One pupil speaks English as an additional language. About eighteen per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals which is about average. Twenty-six pupils are on the school's register for special educational needs, one of whom has a statement. This is below most schools. The main needs are speech and communication difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The socio-economic circumstances of the school are average. Pupils' attainment on entry is average overall. Four teachers have left the school and three have joined during the past two years. The rate at which pupils join and leave the school during the year is low.

In 2003, the school gained the award of Investors in People. In 2004, the school gained the Healthy Schools Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--|
| 2905 | David Shepherd | Lead inspector | Mathematics, information and communication technology, geography, history, English as an additional language |
| 32675 | Margaret Cain | Lay inspector | |
| 10226 | Susan Senior | Team inspector | Science, design and technology, Foundation Stage |
| 32645 | Sandra Horley | Team inspector | English, art and design, music, physical education, religious education, special educational needs |

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REPORT CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-----------|
| PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT | 6 |
| PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS | |
| STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS | 8 |
| Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses | |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | |
| QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL | 11 |
| Teaching and learning | |
| The curriculum | |
| Care, guidance and support | |
| Partnership with parents, other schools and the community | |
| LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT | 15 |
| PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS | 17 |
| AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE | |
| SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2 | |
| PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS | 27 |

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Beech Hyde provides a good education for its pupils and gives good value for money. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve well and standards are above average in a number of subjects. Teaching and learning are good. The school is well led and managed.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils, achieve well in English, mathematics and science overall. However, standards in writing, especially in Years 1 and 2, are not high enough
- Overall, pupils receive good support from their teachers and teaching assistants and this helps them learn well, especially in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6. However, the marking of work does not always indicate to pupils how they might improve
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and this helps to create a positive learning environment
- Pupils are provided with a good curriculum that is enriched very effectively by a wide range of additional activities, including visits to places of interest and visitors to the school
- The school carries out much good work in checking how well pupils are achieving. The outcomes of this work are used effectively, especially in Years 3 to 6, to raise standards overall
- Links with parents, the community and other schools are very good and these help to create a positive learning environment in school

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. The key issues identified at that time about curriculum planning, assessment and the role of subject co-ordinators have been corrected. Standards are higher than they were then. Teaching and learning are better than they were at the previous inspection. The good standards of leadership and management have been maintained.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievements are good. Children start school with standards that are average overall. However, standards in speaking and listening and the children's personal development are below average. Children achieve well in the nursery and reception classes and reach standards that are similar to those expected for their age in most areas of learning. Many reach above average standards in speaking and listening, in their knowledge of letter sounds, in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their physical development by the time they start in Year 1. During Years 1 and 2, pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and, by the end of Year 2, most reach standards that are average in writing and mathematics. Standards in reading are above average. This was the case in the 2004 National Curriculum tests and these standards were confirmed by evidence from the inspection. The trend of improvement in writing and mathematics is below that of other schools. This is because standards in writing are not as high as those in other areas of English. Standards in science in 2004 were in the top five per cent of schools at the expected level and pupils achieved well in this subject. Pupils achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT) and in religious education and standards are above expected levels.

In the 2004 National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 6, pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science were well above average. The school has maintained its high standards over the past few years. Standards have improved in mathematics and science, and the overall trend of improvement is above the national trend. Inspection findings

suggest that pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is good in English, mathematics, ICT and religious education, and very good in science. However, standards in writing are not as high as they should be because pupils are not given enough opportunities to practise these skills across the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and higher-attaining pupils achieve well.

| Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with: | all schools | | | similar schools |
|---|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2004 |
| English | A | A | A | C |
| Mathematics | A | C | A | A |
| Science | A | A | A | 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.*

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Teaching and learning are good, especially in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6. Teachers build upon pupils' previous knowledge systematically and, along with teaching assistants, guide pupils well in their work during lessons. However, the school is aware that marking does not consistently help pupils understand how they could improve and is working to correct this. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they encourage pupils well to use the correct vocabulary in their work. Overall, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to write, especially in other subjects. Assessment procedures are good. The curriculum is good and is enhanced by a very wide range of additional activities. The care, welfare and health and safety of pupils are good. Links with the parents, community and other schools are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a clear direction for the work of the school as indicated by the improvements in standards and teaching. Subject co-ordinators carry out their tasks diligently and provide good leadership in their subjects. The school monitors its performance well and devises sound plans to improve on a continual basis. As a result of monitoring, the school has devised plans to improve reading and writing. Governors are supportive of the school and governance is good. Statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' and pupils' views of the school are very positive. Parents are extremely supportive of the school. Pupils speak very enthusiastically about school and enjoy what it provides.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Improve standards in writing, especially in Years 1 and 2
- Ensure pupils consistently know what is good about their work and what they need to do to improve
- Improve the proportion of good teaching in Years 1 and 2

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

By the end of Year 6, standards achieved in English, mathematics and science are above average. Pupils' achievement is good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. Standards are higher than they were at the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in the Foundation Stage and in English, mathematics, science and ICT
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. Higher-attaining pupils also achieve well
- Standards in writing are not as high as they should be, especially in Years 1 and 2

Commentary

Foundation Stage

1. Children start school with standards that are at the levels expected for this age in most areas of learning. However, standards in speaking and listening and aspects of the children's personal development are below average. Through skilful teaching by teachers and teaching assistants, most children achieve well and start Year 1 with standards that are average in many respects. Some children achieve above average standards, especially in speaking and listening, their knowledge of the sounds letters make, in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their physical development. However, standards in writing are below average.

Key Stage 1

2. In the 2004 National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 2, standards in reading were above average when compared with similar schools. Standards in writing and mathematics were average. Standards achieved by higher-attaining pupils in all three subjects were average. Over the past five years, standards in reading and mathematics have fallen slightly, but those in writing have fallen faster than those nationally. Standards in science were well above average. In fact, they were in the top five per cent of schools nationally at the expected level with all pupils achieving that standard.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| reading | 16.6 (16.3) | 15.8 (15.7) |
| writing | 14.6 (14.9) | 14.6 (14.6) |
| mathematics | 16.6 (16.4) | 16.2 (16.3) |

There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Standards seen during the inspection support these results in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 2, pupils achieve satisfactorily and reach standards in reading that are above those expected. Standards in writing and mathematics are at expected levels. Standards in science are at expected levels. This is because the teaching pupils receive in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall. The teaching in Year 2 has been variable this year because of changes of staff, but, nonetheless, these pupils are making steady progress. However, pupils do not achieve as well in writing because they do not have enough opportunities to practise this skill. Pupils' achievement in ICT and religious education is good and standards are above expected levels.

Key Stage 2

4. In the 2004 National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science were well above average when compared with other schools nationally. This represents achievement since Year 2 that is well above average in these subjects overall. The school exceeded the targets overall that it set in English and mathematics for these pupils. Improvement in these subjects during the past five years is above the national trend.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 28.5 (29.2) | 26.9 (26.8) |
| mathematics | 29.5 (27.0) | 27.0 (26.8) |
| science | 30.3 (30.5) | 28.6 (28.6) |

There were 24 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Inspection findings confirm the results of the national tests overall. Standards in English and mathematics are above expected levels and pupils achieve well. Standards in writing are satisfactory, but should be higher than this. This is because pupils are not encouraged enough to write in different styles in other subjects. Standards in science are above expected levels and pupils achieve very well. Standards in ICT and religious education are above expected levels and pupils' achievement is good.

Whole-school issues

6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well throughout the school. They receive good help from their teachers and teaching assistants who set work for them at their levels and monitor very closely the progress they make. Many of these pupils reach the nationally expected standards by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6. Higher-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented, achieve well and make good progress. Only occasionally do they not make enough progress and this is when teachers do not give them enough opportunities to use their initiative and work independently. Pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress in learning English. Boys achieve higher levels than girls. One of the reasons for this is that they are keen to respond and 'put themselves forward' assertively, sometimes at the expense of girls. Pupils from different ethnic groups achieve equally well as each other.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Attendance and punctuality are very good. Pupils' personal development is very good. Provision for their moral and social development is very good and for their spiritual and cultural development good.

Main strengths

- Pupils are highly motivated with very positive attitudes to learning
- A whole-school approach to behaviour, with clearly defined values and rules, means that pupils behave consistently well in the classroom and around the school
- Pupils enjoy very good relations with one another; they cooperate very well in lessons and at play

Commentary

7. Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities, judged as good at the last inspection, have improved and are now very good overall. In Years 3 to 6, they are very good. In the nursery and reception classes, they are good and in Years 1 and 2, they are satisfactory. Pupils are very keen to come to school and take advantage of the many opportunities provided for them to learn. They enjoy their lessons and are quick to settle down to work.

They take great pride in their school and have high regard for what it offers. Pupils' achievements are regularly noted and this helps raise pupils' self-esteem. For example, during the inspection, one boy proudly explained the award he had received from his teacher for being especially helpful.

8. Behaviour, judged as good at the last inspection, is now very good. This is because all staff follow the same procedures for rewards and sanctions. Where staff identify that particular groups of pupils are at risk of lowering their high standards of behaviour, they are quick to bring them back 'on track' with specific behavioural targets and other support. Pupils confirm that relationships are very good and the school deals swiftly and effectively with any instances of bullying.
9. Provision for pupils' spiritual development, previously judged as satisfactory, has been improved and is now good. Assemblies provide pupils with good opportunities to reflect on thought-provoking themes such as truth, while the 'Tree of Hope' in the hall effectively captures pupils' aspirations for themselves and the world around them. Pupils' spiritual development is encouraged well during lessons. For example, in religious education, pupils reflect on what it means to belong to a religion. In history, they consider what it would be like to live under different circumstances, such as during the evacuation in World War II.
10. The school has maintained its very good provision for pupils' moral development. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and fair play. They understand the consequences of their actions and are pleased that the majority of their classmates share the school's values. Older pupils understand the need to provide a good role model for younger pupils. They are keen fund-raisers for charity.
11. Pupils' social development has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. Pupils cooperate very well in lessons and mix amicably in the playground. Older pupils are encouraged to become independent and take their additional responsibilities and privileges seriously. Pupils tolerate one another's differences and help others in many small ways, for example, by chatting to those on the recently introduced 'friendship bench'. They report that the impressive range of extra-curricular activities and clubs helps them to cooperate well and develop their teamwork.
12. The school recognises the importance of preparing pupils to live a multicultural society. It has maintained its good efforts to teach them about different beliefs and cultures with visits to a local church, a Hindu temple, a Sikh Gurdwara and a Jewish synagogue. Pupils welcome visitors from different faiths and Japanese students into their classes. At the time of the inspection, masks on display vividly depicted characters from a Buddhist story.

Attendance

13. The school promotes the attendance of pupils very well and monitors absences closely. Attendance is well above the national average. Pupils' punctuality is also very good. Pupils are very keen to come to school and the majority of parents are very supportive of the school's efforts to maintain these very high levels of attendance and punctuality.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data: | 3.5 | School data: | 0.1 |
| National data: | 5.1 | National data: | 0.4 |

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

Exclusions

14. One boy was excluded seven times during the last reporting year, for which the school followed the correct procedures. This reason for the exclusion was aggressive behaviour towards his teachers and fellow pupils. This boy has since left the school to receive more specialist provision.

Ethnic background of pupils

| Categories used in the Annual School Census |
|--|
| White – British |
| White – Irish |
| White – any other White background |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean |
| Mixed – any other mixed background |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian |

Exclusions in the last school year

| No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 140 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | 7 | 1 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is good. The school provides a good curriculum for its pupils. Provision for additional activities, including visits to places of interest, is very good. The school looks after its pupils well and provides them with good support and guidance. Links with parents, the community and other schools are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. The assessment of pupils' work is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan lessons well that build systematically on pupils' previous learning. Most activities are planned well at the correct level for pupils
- Teachers have good subject expertise and teach pupils well using the correct vocabulary for the subject being taught
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide pupils with good help and this helps them learn effectively
- Teachers ask pupils challenging questions that identify what they do and do not know. This guides teachers in the levels at which to pitch their teaching
- Overall, not enough opportunities are provided to help pupils develop their skills in writing
- In some classes, pupils do not know well enough what is good about their work or what they have to do to improve

Commentary

15. During the inspection, nearly six out of ten lessons were judged to be at least good. Two lessons were judged very good and one was outstanding. One lesson was judged unsatisfactory. All the teaching and learning in the nursery and in Years 3 and 5 were judged at least good. Teaching and learning are consistently good in most areas of learning in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6. The teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory overall. They are satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Teaching assistants are used well throughout the school and this is a significant factor contributing to the consistently good teaching. Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|

| | | | | | | |
|--------|--------|----------|----------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1 (3%) | 2 (6%) | 16 (50%) | 12 (38%) | 1 (3%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
|--------|--------|----------|----------|--------|--------|--------|

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.

16. Teachers prepare activities that build upon pupils' prior learning. This is especially the case in English, mathematics and science where teachers plan work for pupils of high, average and low ability during the same lesson. They do this by setting pupils targets for learning that indicate what all pupils must achieve, what some pupils should achieve and what a few pupils, in other words the high-attaining pupils, could achieve. This is a key factor in pupils at each of the three levels of ability achieving well. Occasionally, higher-attaining pupils do not achieve what they are capable of. When this happens, it is often because not enough is expected from them and they are not provided with enough opportunities to think hard, use their initiative and work independently. This is especially the case in history and geography where some of the work is copied from books or from the Internet and pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their writing skills.
17. Teachers and teaching assistants have good subject expertise in a number of subjects and other areas. These include literacy, numeracy, science, ICT, assessment and special educational needs. Through flexible deployment of teachers, the expertise in special educational needs is used to teach target groups of pupils in a number of classes. Good use is made of the expertise of teaching assistants during ICT lessons. While teachers are teaching the class, teaching assistants are sorting out any problems with computers that may have just arisen, such as when computers do not respond as expected and 'hibernate'. This enables these lessons to proceed smoothly. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively as a team. They share ideas with each other and this helps raise standards achieved by pupils.
18. Pupils receive good help and guidance in their work from their teachers and teaching assistants. During whole-class teaching, teachers make sure that all pupils know what it is they are to learn and understand what they have to do. Pupils, especially in Years 3 to 6, receive very good help when they are working. This means that if pupils are stuck with their work, they do not remain so for long. This help is provided in a positive way by teachers and teaching assistants so that pupils are not afraid to ask for further help should they need to do so.
19. Teachers' skills in posing questions of pupils are good. Behaviour is managed well and this helps to create a positive climate in which whole-class discussions and questioning can take place. Pupils respond very positively and eagerly to the questions being asked and these responses help teachers to emphasise aspects of lessons that need further teaching to enable learning to take place.
20. However, within this positive picture of teaching and learning, two general weaknesses in the teaching were noted. Teachers do not always provide pupils with enough opportunities to develop their skills in writing. For example, pupils' work in science, history and geography does not include enough opportunities for pupils to consolidate their writing skills within different contexts and styles of writing. Some work in these subjects is copied from books or from other sources. This does not encourage pupils to think about what they are writing and improve their skills in this important area. This is a pity and explains why standards in writing at the school are not higher than they are, especially in Years 1 and 2.
21. Pupils' progress is checked at the end of each unit of work in English, mathematics, science and ICT to ensure pupils are making the progress expected of them. The work of any pupils who are underachieving is checked more closely to ensure this does not continue. In two classes, pupils' work is marked well. In these classes, teachers spend valuable time writing comments that encourage pupils, but also give them clues about how to improve. However, this does not occur regularly in all classes. All work is marked, but often in a brief way with

ticks and crosses. Sometimes a general word of encouragement is included, but overall, this does provide pupils with enough guidance about what they need to do to reach higher standards. The school is aware of this and plans to include such a priority in its next school improvement plan.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. The school provides a very good range of additional activities for pupils. Staffing and resources are good. Accommodation is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for higher-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs is good overall, especially in Years 3 to 6
- A very good range of visits to places of interest is provided and these help pupils learn effectively
- Provision of staff is good overall, but there are not enough midday staff to supervise during lunch-times
- The accommodation provided for Year 1 pupils is too small, especially for practical activities

Commentary

22. The school makes good provision for the interests of its pupils by providing a broad and balanced curriculum in which there is a good emphasis upon the development of literacy and numeracy skills. This has led to the maintenance of consistently high standards in these subjects in Years 3 to 6. Sufficient time is allocated to each subject and the school follows national planning guidance in the teaching of most subjects, including for children in the nursery and reception classes. However, planning in geography and history does not promote progression in learning well enough because these subjects are not taught consistently enough throughout the year. Good provision is made for pupils' personal development through subjects such as art and design, music, physical education and personal and social education. The planning of lessons takes good account of pupils' differing needs. This is particularly evident in Years 3 to 6 where provision for higher-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Higher-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented, are often set challenging problems to solve and they have good opportunities to attend `master` classes in other schools in mathematics and science. Throughout the school there is good support for pupils with special educational needs and for those for whom English is an additional language.. Their work and achievements are acknowledged and shared with parents and other pupils in displays of work, assemblies and presentations to their classmates. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good. The curriculum effectively prepares pupils in Year 6 to move onto their next school with confidence.
23. The school provides very good opportunities to extend the curriculum. Most parents and pupils agree that there is a very wide range of lunch-time and after-school activities, such as sport, ICT, jazzercise and chess. Some clubs, such as country dancing, book club and choir, are also open to younger pupils. The employment of specialist teachers for art and design and music, combined with visits to art galleries and visits by musicians and drama groups, provide pupils with stimulating and enjoyable creative experiences. The extensive range of visitors to the school and visits to places of interest, especially in geography, history and religious education, make good connections between information learned in class and the world outside. The annual residential visit makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development. The high standards of the curriculum have been maintained since the last inspection.
24. Staffing is good overall. Teachers are well qualified and have good expertise in the subjects they teach. However, the number of changes of teachers in Year 2 has had a negative impact on the learning of these pupils this year which is satisfactory rather than good.

Provision of teaching assistants is good. However, there are not enough midday staff to supervise fully all areas of the large site. The school is well resourced and this helps teachers when they plan lessons. The accommodation has been improved since the last inspection through the addition of extra walls between classrooms so that the space can be used more flexibly and to better effect. Staff in these rooms now teach without the risk of interrupting other classes, especially during practical activities. The additional teaching spaces, such as the building of a room for small group lessons, is proving useful for teaching pupils with special educational needs in particular. However, the inadequate size of the Year 1 classroom and the lack of a covered outside area for the reception class restrict the range of practical activities that can be planned for these pupils. The reception class compensates by making effective use of the good quality outside area for the nursery, when nursery sessions are finished.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides well for the care, welfare, guidance, advice and support of pupils. The school seeks and acts well on pupils' views.

Main strengths

- Pupils' work in English, mathematics, science and ICT is assessed well and pupils know how much they have achieved
- All staff are alert to potential risks to pupils in and around the school and in the community
- Pupils confidently report having trusting relationships with adults
- Working towards the Healthy Schools Award has led to better diet and exercise

Commentary

25. The school takes good steps to safeguard its pupils' physical and emotional well-being and successfully creates a caring and secure environment in which pupils concentrate on their studies. Pupils form very trusting relationships with adults. They confide in their teachers and note more general concerns they might have through the anonymous 'worry box'.
26. The school's procedures for handling accidents, illnesses and the administration of medicines are well documented and implemented carefully, with good liaison with pupils' families. All staff have received first-aid training. Risk assessments for on-site and off-site activities are conscientiously carried out and fire drills take place regularly. There is good separation of pedestrians and vehicles at the school gate. Play areas for younger pupils are well fenced off. Pupils are reminded of safety issues in lessons, for example, in a science lesson on evaporation that involved hot water.
27. Child protection arrangements are secure. As the designated teacher for child protection, the headteacher has received up-to-date training, and ensures that all adults at the school are trained to recognise and refer to her any potential problems. The school has formed good working relationships with outside agencies, who praise its readiness to draw on as necessary additional resources and support for pupils and their families.
28. Working towards the Healthy Schools Award has helped the school and parents to focus on improving the lunch-time diet of pupils and facilities for outdoor exercise. Midday staff are constantly on the alert for any risks as pupils play their playground games. However, the site is large and there are not enough midday staff to cover the extensive school site during the lunch break.
29. Carefully-planned induction arrangements for younger pupils help them to settle happily when they start school. Well-considered personal support for late-joiners ensures they also integrate quickly into the school community. Good transfer arrangements ensure that older pupils are well prepared to face the next stage of their education with confidence, although

many say they will be sad to leave a school which has served them well and where they have made firm friendships.

30. Pupils are provided with good guidance and support in their work. Annual targets are set for them in writing and mathematics and these are sub-divided into more specific targets during the year. The school records pupils' progress well in all subjects using a computer program on an annual basis. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is monitored well. Individual programmes of work for these pupils are closely matched to their needs and they are taught by class teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers and teaching assistants are provided with good training in order to teach these pupils well. The progress of pupils with English as an additional language is also monitored well.
31. Pupils are very happy with the school council they have elected. They recognise that this is a good mechanism for suggesting improvements to school life, and feel that the views of even the youngest members of the school are taken seriously. They are especially proud of their contribution in recommending the newly installed adventure play equipment, the 'friendship bench' and the 'bully brigade', which all help to foster happy relations at break-times. The school is now taking steps to act on pupils' views in developing the curriculum further. Provision in this area has improved since the last inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, the local community and other schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has gained the very good support of parents for their children's education although a small number of them occasionally challenge the authority of the school
- Very good links with other schools increase the resources available at the school and support a smooth transition to secondary education

Commentary

32. Since the last inspection, the school has significantly improved its links with parents, the community and other schools to build very good partnerships that support teaching and learning.
33. Parents are extremely satisfied with the school and feel a very strong spirit of partnership with teaching and support staff. There were no significant criticisms of the school and its work mentioned in the pre-inspection questionnaire. The school involves parents very well in their children's education. Carefully-planned induction procedures mean that parents of children about to join the school know what to expect and understand how they can help their children to learn. Parent-teacher consultations take place twice yearly and these provide parents with good information about how well their children are achieving.
34. There are well-established mechanisms for home-school communication, such as the Infants' 'talking book', and teachers are quick to respond to any concerns or suggestions parents express. The school takes complaints seriously, and parents confirm that teaching staff work very well with them to resolve any problems. A few parents occasionally challenge the authority of the school. The headteacher and governors follow the correct procedures in these instances.
35. The headteacher's open and approachable style of leadership is widely praised by parents. She consults them on specific issues, such as uniform and sex education, through questionnaires and through the thriving parent-teacher association. Parents also value the monthly newsletters that portray a vibrant picture of school life.
36. The school makes very good use of both the local and the wider environment as a resource for learning. Pupils benefit from a very extensive range of visits that bring the curriculum to life and they enjoy the fresh perspective which visitors bring to their studies. Pupils excitedly recall educational trips such as a visit to Hatfield House when studying the Tudors, performances at local theatres and visits from writers and illustrators during Book Week. Pupils feel very much part of the village community. Their social skills are developed through visiting and performing for the housebound and acting as caring hosts for senior citizens and young children at school events. Children in the

nursery have visited the village café as part of their role-playing activities and pupils have learnt about preparing healthy meals through the Waitrose Cooking Bus.

37. Partnerships with local schools contribute very well to provision for pupils. Staff and governors have benefited from joint training with other schools and sharing good practices. The school is part of the Harpenden Heads Association and is a primary partner with the Beausandver Consortium of schools. Pupils have benefited directly from additional opportunities with other schools, such as mathematics for gifted and talented pupils, Whizz Pop science and teaching from a secondary school teacher in design and technology. Links with other schools provide pupils with many opportunities for sporting fixtures against them. Close liaison with the local pre-schools and with the main destination schools ensure that pupils progress confidently and receive effective support during their transition between schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is good. The leadership and management by subject co-ordinators are good. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has established a clear vision and direction for the school
- Subject co-ordinators lead and manage their subjects well overall
- The school checks its work well and this helps to maintain high standards. However, this has not led to standards in writing improving markedly in Years 1 and 2 for a number of years
- All staff are committed to including all pupils in everything the school has to offer and ensuring they achieve well
- Governors provide good support to the school
- There are good induction procedures for new staff

Commentary

38. The headteacher makes a significant contribution to the school. She leads staff and governors well into improving standards of attainment and personal development for all pupils. She has built an effective team of staff that share this vision and direction and provide her with good support. This ensures that pupils `receive a good deal` from the school. The staff have a firm commitment to including all pupils whatever their ability in all that the school has to offer. As a result all pupils, including the gifted and talented those with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, are keen to learn.
39. Systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning have ensured that teaching continues to improve and that pupils make good progress. Subject co-ordinators work alongside their colleagues in monitoring lesson planning, observing each other teaching and analysing pupils' work. In this way, the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and learning of subjects are identified and plans drawn up for improvement. These procedures represent an improvement since the last inspection and have been successful in maintaining high standards in English, mathematics and science over recent years and for improvements in standards in ICT. The school has currently identified a decline in standards in writing as an issue for improvement. As a result, a programme of speaking and listening has been introduced to try and improve pupils' verbal responses and, from this, their writing skills. At the time of the inspection, this programme had not made an impact on the pupils' writing skills in Years 1 and 2 where they are weakest. However, in Years 3 to 6, where teachers make explicit links between speaking, listening and writing, the standards of writing are higher.

40. Subject co-ordinators provide good advice, support and ideas for their colleagues as and when necessary. New staff benefit from this guidance as they settle in well to their new roles. The leadership and management of subjects have improved since the last inspection.
41. Governors support the school well and are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are involved in the strategic planning for improvement and visit the school regularly to see for themselves what is happening in lessons. They discuss test results with key staff and give good support to the school in all that it does. Governors fulfil all their statutory duties and make sure that parents are kept fully informed of the work of the school.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Total income | 606,206 | Balance from previous year | 50,508 |
| Total expenditure | 642,626 | Balance carried forward to the next | 14,088 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,806 | | |

42. Budgets are set well with school priorities in mind. Finances are well managed by governors. The budget is spent wisely with a focus of improving standards and provision at the school. Staffing and other resources are used efficiently for the benefit of pupils. The day-to-day management of the budget is carried out efficiently by the office staff. Staff and governors constantly make sure they are getting best value for money through such procedures as obtaining quotations for work and linking this appropriately to the quality of the goods and services being purchased. Given that pupils achieve above average at the end of Year 6 and that they start school with standards that are average overall, the school provides good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for learning in the nursery and reception classes is good overall. Good teaching leads to good achievement in most areas, except writing and in recording number. Attainment on entry is average overall with speaking and listening and aspects of personal and social development being below average. Most children, except those with special educational needs, are on course to meet the standards expected in all areas, except in writing and recording number work, by the time they join Year 1. Many exceed these standards, particularly in speaking and listening, in their knowledge of letter sounds, in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their physical development. The improved consistency in the quality and style of teaching since the last inspection means that children transfer smoothly from the nursery to the reception class. Teachers check systematically how well children are learning. These assessments are used effectively to identify additional support for children with special educational needs and help teachers plan future learning. Children with special educational needs achieve well. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good because the whole of the Foundation Stage now works as a coherent unit and children achieve well overall. Teachers and teaching assistants work as an effective team and they work well with parents for the benefit of the children.

Personal, social and emotional development

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is good.

Main strengths

- Good organisation and routines ensure that children feel safe and secure
- Children form good, trusting relationships with adults
- The emphasis given to personal and social development is successful in developing confidence and independence in children

Commentary

43. Achievement in personal, social and emotional development is good and standards are average on entry into Year 1. Many children enter school with below average social skills. In the nursery, staff help them to settle quickly into their new environment and form good, trusting relationships with adults. Through good teaching, children learn to work and play together well. They develop good skills in cooperation such as when they work together in building an obstacle course or developing a `building site` in the sand pit. They achieve well in this area because teachers have high expectations of the children's abilities to work independently. Good classroom organisation and consistent routines, reinforced by a visual timetable, teach children to understand what they should do and provide them with the security they need to be adventurous in their learning. Children behave well and become increasingly confident in choosing resources, completing tasks and tidying away. Children sit and listen well. Adults provide good role models by showing consideration and appreciation of each other as members of the school community. Standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection.

Communication, language and literacy

Provision in communication, language and literacy is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Because of good teaching, children learn effectively the sounds letters make
- Teaching assistants successfully help children well to develop their speaking, listening and reading skills
- Children do not have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills

Commentary

44. Achievement is satisfactory overall but good in speaking and listening and in the acquisition of early reading skills. When children enter the nursery they lack confidence and are reluctant to speak with others. Teachers provide children with good opportunities to work in groups so that they can practise and successfully develop their speaking and listening skills. Teachers and teaching assistants emphasise the teaching of the sounds letters make and this helps children in their early stages of reading. In the nursery, the sounds letters make are taught by associating a sound with an action and identifying objects that begin with that initial sound. Parents support this learning well by encouraging children to bring into school objects beginning with the chosen initial letter sound to add to the display of objects each beginning with the selected letter. This approach is successfully built upon in the reception class where most children identify all the letter shapes and sounds and orally begin to spell out simple words. Reading skills are satisfactorily developed through the use of big books at story time. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the development of reading skills by encouraging children to re-tell stories in sequence or through practising the recognition of key words. However, children have below average handwriting skills when they move to the reception class. As a result, children have sufficient phonic knowledge but they lack the writing stamina to achieve the early learning goal for writing on entry to Year 1. By the end of the reception class, standards in speaking and listening are above average, those in reading average and in writing below average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Standards in writing are not as high as reported at the last inspection.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have a good knowledge and understanding of words used in shape and space topics
- Children do not have enough opportunities to record counting and other calculations
- Incidental opportunities for counting to reinforce learning are used well to help consolidate learning

Commentary

45. Overall, children achieve satisfactorily in mathematics and standards are average by the end of reception. They achieve well in their understanding of shape and space because teachers and teaching assistants emphasise these aspects well. Children in the nursery recognise simple shapes, such as a square, rectangle, triangle and circle. They remember their names and are beginning to learn about the number of sides and angles they have. Incidental opportunities, such as during register and `fruit time`, are well used in both the nursery and reception classes to reinforce counting and mathematical vocabulary such as `more` and `less`. However, teachers do not provide children with sufficient opportunities to write down what they have counted. In spite of this, teaching and learning in this aspect are satisfactory overall. Standards are similar to those noted at the last inspection.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is good.

Main strengths

- Good questioning stimulates children's curiosity and scientific enquiry and this helps children learn well
- Visits in the locality enhance learning

- There are good opportunities in the nursery for children to build structures and experiment in their play

Commentary

46. Children achieve well and standards are above average. They make good progress in learning about the world around them because they are given excellent first-hand experiences in visiting places within the locality such as Devil's Dyke and local shops including the café and the library. Reception children develop a good understanding of maps and plans by planning their own garden during role-play in the gardening shop. Curiosity about the living world is stimulated well through outside play activities, including the 'Finding Out' table. Good questioning by teachers helps children develop their observational skills and encourages them to consider why things happen. For example, some children in the nursery who had found a worm were encouraged to use magnifying glasses to look closely at it to notice the rings, the bristles and the head and then consider why it would be best to put the worm back in the garden. Children from both the nursery and the reception classes learn well because they have good access to the nursery outside area where they can explore how to build and balance large-scale equipment. Computers, tape recorders and robotic toys are used well to help children learn in ICT. Teaching and learning in this area are good. Standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection.

Physical development

Provision in physical development is good.

Main strengths

- Good outside provision in the nursery helps children develop their balancing skills
- Children in reception learn about the care of their bodies and a healthy life-style through well-planned snack times
- Children are given good opportunities to develop their hand-eye coordination

Commentary

47. Children's achievement is good because there are good, planned opportunities, such as hammering, aiming bean bags at an object and playing hop scotch, for helping children to develop their hand-eye coordination as well as their body control. Reception children make good use of the secure area outside the nursery class and the hall for lessons in physical education to climb and use larger apparatus and develop good control of their movements. 'Fruit time' is used effectively to emphasise to children the benefits of exercise, healthy bodies and healthy eating. Physical activities make a good contribution to children's personal and social development because children learn to cooperate, to take turns and be aware of the safety of others when using large equipment. Children's finer muscle control is developed well because teachers provide good opportunities to handle small apparatus such as interlocking shapes, pencils, crayons, paint brushes, scissors and small containers. Standards in this area are above average. Teaching and learning in this area are good. Standards are similar to the last inspection.

Creative development

Provision in creative development is satisfactory.

Main strength

- There are good opportunities for developing imaginative and role play

Commentary

48. Achievement in creative development is satisfactory and standards are average on entry into Year 1. Children enjoy developing their creativity and imagination through imaginative play and listening to well-told stories. In the nursery, children express themselves through

music, dance, painting and building imaginary objects. They sometimes leave partially completed models and paintings out so that they can come back to them later. There is not as much opportunity to promote children's creative development in the reception class because there is not enough space for children to build larger models, leave out painting and carry out imaginative play. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve well and standards are above average
- Higher-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs achieve well
- Procedures for measuring pupils' progress are good
- Good opportunities are provided for improving speaking and listening skills and these help pupils to extend their thinking effectively. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop writing skills, especially in Years 1 and 2

Commentary

49. In the 2004 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, standards were well above average when compared with all schools but average when compared with similar schools. This was because standards in writing were not as high as those in reading. At the end of Year 2, standards in reading were above average and those in writing average when compared with all and similar schools. However, standards in writing have declined significantly during the past few years. The school recognises that standards in writing in Years 1 and 2 need improvement. Strengths and weaknesses in writing from last year's results have been analysed and teachers in these year groups have taken steps to correct weaknesses. It is a little too early to indicate if these steps have been successful.
50. Inspection evidence indicates that the achievement of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and standards are at expected levels. However, standards in reading are above expected levels. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is good and standards are above expected levels. This is not as high as the 2004 National Curriculum results because the inspection took into account a wider range of evidence than the tests. As the majority of these pupils started school with average literacy skills this represents good achievement overall. Higher-attaining pupils achieve well because they are provided with good opportunities to develop their writing skills in literacy lessons. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 3 composed descriptive paragraphs about dragons. After discussions with a partner, one higher-attaining pupil wrote *It had unbearably sharp spikes on its back*. This created the mood and a vivid picture of this particular dragon. Overall, standards by the end of Year 6 have improved since the last inspection, although standards in writing in Year 2 have declined.
51. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs and they make good progress. Their work is matched closely to their levels of attainment and is planned in small steps so that they achieve the learning targets that have been set for them. Pupils with special educational needs are included well in lessons. The effective contributions made by teaching assistants are a key factor in the success of the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. They help these pupils concentrate and listen when teachers talk to the class as a whole and they support them well in the tasks that have been set for them.
52. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. Teachers plan carefully using national guidance and include good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. In Year 5, pupils discuss key points effectively in pairs to help develop their ideas. This encourages these pupils to extend their own ideas and develop their listening skills as well as different ways of expressing their ideas. In the best examples during the inspection, teachers demonstrate how to write well to pupils so that they may replicate the techniques they have been shown in their writing. This helps pupils write well and reach higher standards. However, this is not the case in all lessons. At the beginning of one lesson in Year 2, the pace was too slow and

pupils did not have enough time to develop their writing skills for the teacher to assess the learning at the end of the lesson. Overall, in Years 1 and 2, pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills and standards in this aspect of English are lower than in other aspects of the subject. In a number of classes, marking does not always indicate to pupils how they might improve their work.

53. Procedures for measuring pupils' progress in reading and writing are rigorous and indicate the next steps needed in the pupils' learning. Pupils' progress in reading is recorded effectively. Teachers write down how well pupils are reading and give them targets for improvement. In addition, individual writing targets are set and are known by pupils. These are displayed clearly in the classrooms and this provides pupils with an effective reminder of what they are working towards. For example, in a lesson in Year 5, pupils knew what they needed to do to improve their writing and, after they had completed their work, checked their work against their writing targets.
54. Leadership and management are good overall. The subject is led by an enthusiastic subject co-ordinator who provides staff with good opportunities for training. Teachers have recently received training in speaking and listening and the benefits of this are clearly reflected in the lessons seen during the inspection. Speaking and listening are priorities for the school and these aspects have been monitored well by the headteacher and literacy co-ordinator through observing lessons. Strengths and weaknesses in these areas have been pointed out to the teachers that have been observed. However, standards in writing are not as high as in other aspects of English. Although writing has been a priority for improvement in previous years, standards are still lower than they should be, especially by the end of Year 2. The school maintains that the development of speaking and listening will help raise standards in writing. However, the links between speaking, listening and writing are not always clear and standards in writing are not rising fast enough, especially in Years 1 and 2. In addition, this year changes in teachers in Year 2 have been a further barrier to improvement in writing.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Overall, language and literacy across the curriculum are satisfactory. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to respond at length to teachers' questions. Pupils receive good opportunities to read information from books and the Internet in their work. Pupils write in a variety of contexts. For example, they label diagrams and describe investigations in science. In religious education, they describe events and stories. For example, pupils in Year 6 wrote lively play scripts for a Buddhist story of the Monkey King. However, overall, there are insufficient opportunities for developing writing skills in other subjects. For example, in science, history and geography, too much work is copied from books or from the Internet and opportunities for pupils to improve their writing are missed.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

Main strengths

- Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is good because the teaching is consistently good in these classes
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 receive very good help from their teachers and teaching assistants and, as a result, they learn well
- The school monitors standards and teaching very well and takes effective action to maintain high standards

Commentary

56. Inspection findings indicate that, by the end of Year 6, standards in all aspects of mathematics are above expectations. Pupils start school with average standards in mathematics. They achieve well

in Years 3 to 6 and leave with standards that are above average. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is not as high as elsewhere in the school. In these classes, achievement is satisfactory and standards are at expected levels for the pupils' ages. The results of the 2004 National Curriculum tests broadly confirm these findings. Standards in Year 2 were average when compared with all schools and similar schools. In Year 6, standards were well above average compared with all and similar schools. Inspection findings are above average because they include a wider range of topics than do the National Curriculum tests when standards last year were well above average. Standards are above average by the end of Year 6 because the school monitors pupils' progress at the end of each unit of work, analyses their results very systematically and is successful in continually seeking ways of raising standards where they are not high enough. For example, additional teaching is provided for pupils who have not achieved as well as expected in the last unit of work to ensure they improve during their next mathematics topic. As a result of analysing test data, the school has recently emphasised the need to raise standards in problem-solving and investigative mathematics. These aspects of mathematics are now strengths.

57. Teaching and learning are good overall. Most teachers have high levels of expertise and teach the subject effectively. They pitch activities at challenging levels for pupils of different levels of ability. For example, in lessons in Years 3 to 6, teachers suggest levels that all pupils should reach including those with special educational needs, levels that some pupils should reach and levels that higher-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented, could reach. In this way, pupils are set a challenge to reach the highest level possible for their abilities. At the end of each lesson, teachers ask pupils to judge how well they have achieved compared with the targets set for the lesson. Teachers plan lessons very well building systematically on what has been learnt previously. They ask pupils probing questions that help identify what pupils already know and what they need to know next. In these ways, teachers, especially in Years 3 to 6, skilfully succeed in inspiring pupils to learn and, in their turn, pupils are keen to respond and eager to complete the tasks that have been set.
58. Teachers assess pupils' progress very well. End-of-unit assessments are set and this helps teachers monitor how much pupils have learnt before going on to a new mathematics topic. Extra provision is provided for pupils who have not made as much progress as expected. This is given by teachers monitoring pupils' work more closely, or, if needed, the pupils would attend one of the extra 'booster' lessons that are held in each class in Years 3 to 6. From the end-of-year assessments, annual learning targets are set for pupils. These are sub-divided into shorter learning targets that are reviewed on a regular basis. These motivate pupils because they know what they need to do to improve and reach higher standards. Teaching is closely linked to the targets that have been set and pupils achieve well, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Standards rise as a result.
59. Three weaknesses in the teaching were noted. On a few occasions, pupils are not given enough opportunities to use their initiative and work independently using practical apparatus when they were capable of doing so. This is especially the case with the younger pupils who are asked to complete too many workbook exercises. The marking of pupils' work does not always indicate to pupils how they might improve. A few whole-class teaching sessions lasted too long and some pupils lost their concentration. On these occasions, pupils did not achieve as much as they could.
60. Leadership and management are good. The subject co-ordinator is keen and enthusiastic and acts as a good role model in teaching. The school knows the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and standards in mathematics because regular monitoring and evaluation of lessons, pupils' work and teachers' plans take place. Following this monitoring, good plans are put into place to improve provision and raise standards. These have been particularly successful. For example, problem-solving was identified as a weakness through monitoring and it is now a strength because the plans put in place to improve this aspect have been successful in raising standards in this area. The school is aware that achievement, teaching and learning are not as high in Years 1 and 2 as elsewhere in the school and that this is an issue to be tackled. In Year 2, unavoidable changes in staffing have disrupted pupils' learning and some of these pupils are not making the progress they should. However, overall, provision has improved since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. Mathematics is used well across the curriculum to help pupils learn. The data projector and laptop computers are used effectively to teach aspects of mathematics. For example, pupils

produce computerised picture and block graphs when organising and interpreting data in mathematics and science. They follow computer programs to help them solve addition and subtraction problems. In history, they learn about the chronology of dates from Henry VIII to the present day to help them understand how long ago events took place. They measure accurately when making slippers in design and technology. They weigh ingredients in food technology. In music, pupils count beats as they learn to play instruments.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is good.

Main strengths

- The good teaching of investigation skills and recording and interpreting their findings enable pupils to achieve very well in these aspects of the subject
- Pupils achieve very well in Years 3 to 6 because they are encouraged to think carefully about their work
- Leadership is good and focused well on achieving high standards

Commentary

62. Results in the 2004 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 indicated that standards were well above average in comparison to all schools. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher level in these tests was well above average. Inspection evidence confirms these results and indicates that standards in Years 3 to 6 are above expected levels and pupils achieve very well. Higher-attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6 are achieving very well and the standards of their work are well above average. This is because these pupils are encouraged to think carefully about the challenges that have been set for them. Pupils carry out investigations well and this helps them deepen their knowledge and understanding of the subject. This was reported as a weakness at the last inspection but it is now a strength and has helped to raise standards by the end of Year 6. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils were learning about condensation and evaporation. They added ice cubes to hot water and explained carefully what was happening as they developed their understanding of these concepts. Overall, standards are higher than they were at the last inspection.
63. Results in the 2004 teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 indicated that standards overall were well above average in comparison with all schools. In fact, they were in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The proportion of these pupils reaching the higher level was average in comparison with other schools. Standards in the work seen during the inspection indicate that standards are at expected levels in Year 2. Pupils in Year 2 achieve well at the nationally expected level. However, they do not achieve as well at the higher level because they are not encouraged to think about their work in enough depth. The difference in Year 2 results in 2004 and current standards can be explained by the different teaching approaches adopted by the different teachers in Year 2 this year. This has led to pupils' learning not progressing smoothly. Pupils' achievement in their current work and lessons seen is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2.
64. Pupils show enthusiasm for science and work well in groups. They are introduced to new knowledge very effectively through practical investigations and discussion. Boys often dominate class conversations and this leads to them developing their thinking more quickly and making faster progress than the girls. Teachers are aware of this and are trying out different groupings of pupils to help the girls make faster progress. However, these have not been successful to date. Pupils in younger classes achieve well in finding out through practical activities. However, they often do not develop their scientific enquiry skills further by thinking about why things happen. Teaching assistants help pupils with special educational needs achieve well by explaining carefully what they are learning to ensure they understand what they are doing.
65. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. Overall, this represents an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers make pupils aware of what they are intended to learn in each session and make good connections between this and previous learning. This helps pupils build their knowledge and understanding of science systematically and is a strength of teaching and learning particularly in the older classes. The recording, analysing and interpreting of data is taught well in Years 3 to 6 so that pupils are able to draw conclusions from their results and identify areas for further investigation. Pupils use scientific vocabulary well in their

discussions because it is re-enforced in teachers' explanations and used well in classroom displays. Topics are planned effectively to give a balanced mixture of oral, practical and recording activities. However, overall, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to consolidate their writing skills in science because too many worksheets that do not encourage pupils to think are used in some classes.

66. There has been a good improvement in the leadership and management of the subject since the last inspection. Monitoring the work in science has proved very effective. By identifying areas for further development, monitoring of the teaching has led to improvements in planning and in the assessment of pupils' achievements. These have raised the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is good.

Main strengths

- Throughout the school, pupils achieve well in ICT and reach standards that are above expected levels
- Teachers plan lessons that build systematically on pupils' prior learning and teach ICT skills well
- Any weaknesses identified as a result of monitoring teachers' plans, pupils' work and lessons are corrected
- ICT is being used well in other subjects

Commentary

67. At the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are above nationally expected levels and pupils achieve well throughout the school. From Year 1, pupils are taught well how to switch on computers and find their way to their own folders that are stored in the computer. They follow computer programs well and this helps them learn effectively as they follow the instructions on screen. In Year 6, pupils produce interesting PowerPoint presentations on a range of subjects using a range of graphic techniques. They use the Internet well to help them research historical and geographical topics.
68. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers and teaching assistants provide very good help for pupils, including those with special educational needs. They have good expertise and help pupils well when they are stuck. This enables them learn well and prevents them from worrying about what to do when their computer 'freezes' and does not work as it should. Teachers and teaching assistants work calmly through problems and this encourages pupils to think carefully about what to do when they are using computers. This helps pupils use computers successfully to help them learn.
69. One weakness was noted in the teaching during the inspection. In one lesson, higher-attaining pupils were not set work that challenged them enough. They spent some time helping others with their work instead of working at harder tasks for themselves. This though was an exception as higher-attaining pupils are consistently set work that is pitched at their ability levels.
70. ICT is well led and managed. Pupils' progress is checked after each unit of work. Pupils who are not making the progress of which they are capable are monitored more closely to ensure they achieve higher levels the next time. There are good procedures for monitoring and evaluating standards and teaching in ICT. Pupils' work is analysed, teachers' plans are checked and lessons are observed. As a result of this, the school identifies the strengths and weaknesses in standards and teaching. Plans are then drawn up to correct any weaknesses that have been identified and, in this way, the quality of provision in ICT is

improved. This is being successful because provision has improved since the last inspection and standards are higher than they were at that time.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

71. ICT is being used well in other subjects. Inspection evidence indicates that ICT is being used in mathematics, science, literacy, geography and history. Pupils record and interpret data on graphs and charts. They use digital microscopes in science to help them observe small plants and creatures. They place pictures into text in literacy and use the Internet for research in geography and history. The school has sound plans to extend the use of computers across the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

72. Not enough evidence was available to judge overall provision in **geography** and **history**. Pupils' work and teachers' plans were inspected and a discussion was held with the subject co-ordinators. The school teaches the National Curriculum as required by law in these subjects. However, throughout the school, not enough work in either subject was available to judge standards. There are two reasons for this. In history, some work completed by pupils indicates that it has been copied from books or off the Internet. This is a pity as opportunities to consolidate and develop pupils' writing skills in these subjects are not taken. Teachers do not indicate to pupils well enough how they might improve their work. Because of school timetabling arrangements little work was available in geography at the time of the inspection. The school's pattern for teaching history and geography is that one subject is taught during the first half of the school year, the other subject during the second half of the year. This form of organisation is unsatisfactory overall because it is very difficult for pupils to remember what they had been taught during the previous teaching of the subject and this slows down the progress they make overall in each of the subjects. A strength in the teaching of each of these subjects is the use that is made of the locality of the school and visits to places of interest further afield. This helps to bring the subject to life for the pupils. In history, pupils enjoy the local visit to Devil's Dyke as well as to the British Museum. The residential visit for pupils in Years 5 and 6 is also appreciated by pupils as this gives them an opportunity to study life on a beach.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is good.

Main strengths

- Pupils are given good opportunities to develop their views and learn what it means to be a follower of a religion
- Pupils learn about religious topics through a variety of interesting, practical approaches, including visits to places of worship and listening to visitors in school

Commentary

73. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in religious education are above the levels set in the local education authority's agreed syllabus. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in the subject. This is better than the last inspection.
74. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are planned well and allow pupils to express their views thoughtfully. For example, in a Year 3 lesson about Jesus being tempted in the wilderness, the teaching was good and the pupils made good progress. This was because the teacher encouraged pupils throughout the lesson and gave them frequent opportunities to develop their ideas through paired discussions. Good use is made of visitors to the school to help pupils understand what it means to be a member of a religious group. Year 6 pupils have developed their understanding of different faiths through reporting about their visits to a local church, Hindu temple and synagogue. They have also

developed their understanding of Buddhism through composing play scripts and creating masks based on the story of the Monkey King. On occasions, though, the pace of learning is too slow and pupils find it difficult to maintain their concentration.

75. Leadership and management are good. Good guidance is provided to help teachers plan lessons. Pupils learn about different faiths including Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism. This work is supported well by useful resources that help pupils understand more easily what is being taught.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

76. No lessons were observed in **art and design** so no judgement can be made about overall provision in this subject. Teachers' plans indicate that all aspects of the subject are taught throughout the school. Art has a high focus in the school and this is evident in the vibrant displays of pupils' work in classrooms and around the school. Many of these are of a good standard. An example of this is the display of masks depicting characters from Buddhist stories made from a range of materials, including papier mache, feathers, fabric, tissue and net. Pupils enjoy art and speak with enthusiasm about how they design their paintings and models. The art co-ordinator provides good guidance and leadership in the subject and is justifiably proud of the pupils' high standard of work.
77. One lesson in **design and technology** was seen during the inspection. It is evident from the work available that pupils handle a good range of tools, equipment and materials. They enjoy their design and technology lessons. They are learning design and technology techniques through the context of practical tasks. For example, in Year 2, they learn about different ways of joining materials when making a coat for Joseph. In Year 3, pupils test and evaluate different types of bread for texture and purpose in preparation for making sandwiches. Pupils are taught a range of skills that enable them to understand the benefits of designing and making and then evaluating their products. In Years 3 to 6, pupils examine products by taking them apart to see how they are made. They make patterns to help them design more accurate products. Step-by-step instructions for making are carefully produced. Pupils evaluate their work by deciding how successful the product has been and how it might be improved. There are some examples of work, such as purses, bread and designs for slippers, which demonstrate a good standard of work. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There are good links with local secondary schools that result in some specialist teaching for older pupils and the loan of good quality resources.
78. No teaching in **music** was observed during the inspection. However, it is clear that music is an important part of the curriculum and that all aspects of the subject are taught. In addition, a number of pupils have opportunities to learn to play a range of brass, woodwind and stringed instruments. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their musical skills through performing in assemblies at harvest, Christmas and during `sharing` assemblies when pupils show some of the work they have been doing in class. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and promotes the subject well across the school.
79. Only one lesson was observed in **physical education** and so no judgement can be made about overall provision in this subject. The school provides pupils with good opportunities to learn a range of sports and, in the one lesson seen, pupils worked enthusiastically when practising a variety of skills in football, netball and hockey. There are also good opportunities for pupils to take part in inter-school events such as football, netball, athletics, rounders and cricket in order to develop their confidence, team work and good attitudes to winning or losing. The co-ordinator provides effective leadership throughout the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

80. There is too little evidence to make a judgement about provision in **personal, social and health education and citizenship**. Inspectors looked at teachers' plans, pupils' work and talked to pupils and their teachers. One lesson in personal, social and health education was observed. Overall, the school provides a good programme to develop pupils' personal, social and health education. This is enriched through visits and visitors who add specific expertise and contribute well to raising pupils' awareness of social issues including drugs, smoking and sex and relationships education. These topics are dealt with sensitively and help pupils to become mature young people by the time they leave at the end of Year 6.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

| <i>Inspection judgement</i> | <i>Grade</i> |
|--|--------------|
| The overall effectiveness of the school | 3 |
| How inclusive the school is | 3 |
| How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection | 3 |
| Value for money provided by the school | 3 |
| Overall standards achieved | 3 |
| Pupils' achievement | 3 |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | 2 |
| Attendance | 2 |
| Attitudes | 2 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 2 |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The quality of education provided by the school | 3 |
| 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 | 4 |
| 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 |
| The leadership and management of the school | 3 |
| The governance of the school | 3 |
| The leadership of the headteacher | 3 |
| The leadership of other key staff | 3 |
| The effectiveness of management | 3 |

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).