

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ICKNIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Luton, Bedfordshire

LEA area: Luton

Unique reference number: 109579

Headteacher: Mrs L Crick

Lead inspector: Mr P B McAlpine

Dates of inspection: 1-4 November 2004

Inspection number: 267094

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
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	647
School address:	Birdsfoot Lane Luton Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU3 2JB
Telephone number:	01582 619800/534000
Fax number:	01582 534009
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Chris Perrott
Date of previous inspection:	No applicable

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

This is a new school formed from the merger in 2003 of an infant and a junior school that occupied the same site. This is the new school's first inspection. The headteacher was formerly the headteacher of the infant school. The new school has 647 pupils on roll and is one of the very largest of this type in the country. The pupils are organised into 21 classes, three per year. The school has a designated special educational needs provision for 30 pupils with hearing impairment, with Nursery provision for the seven youngest of these pupils. The school does not have Nursery provision for the other children. The pupils in Years 1 to 6 are taught in ability sets for mathematics, and in ability sets in Years 5 and 6 for English. The majority of pupils, 55 per cent, are from minority ethnic family backgrounds and this proportion is very high. A quarter of the school population are from Asian backgrounds, mainly Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi. A further 15 per cent are from Black Caribbean, Black African, and Black British backgrounds. About a quarter of the pupils speak English as an additional language, with about 10 per cent of them in the early stages of learning English. These pupils speak Urdu, Bengali, and Panjabi. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is high. The social and economic circumstances of families vary widely but are broadly average overall. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for a free school meal, about 16 per cent, is average. Attainment on entry covers a wide range, with the overall level varying annually. It is below average overall in most years and in some years it is well below average. About 14 per cent of the pupils have special educational needs, which is close to the national average. However, six per cent have statements and this is very high compared to most other schools. The pupils with significant special educational needs have hearing impairment; dyslexia; moderate learning difficulties; autism; downs syndrome; and physical difficulties. Pupil mobility is broadly

consistent with the picture nationally. The school is involved in the *Flying Start* scheme and this funds family support and outreach services. A family learning programme also operates.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21552	Mr P B McAlpine	Lead inspector	English English as an additional language Special educational needs
11414	Mrs A Bennett	Lay inspector	
23453	Mrs C Cressey	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Mathematics
14732	Mrs E Korn	Team inspector	Science Religious education Art and design Personal, social and health education
33564	Mrs J Pemberton Bennetts	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Music
33393	Mrs P Luker	Team inspector	Geography History Physical education
28197	Mrs H Ward	Team inspector	The hearing-impaired provision
32332	Mrs D Willis	Team inspector	Design and technology

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This newly formed school has had a successful first year. **Its current effectiveness is typical of the majority of schools nationally and its capacity for further improvement is good.** The attainment of children on entry to the Reception year is very variable and standards overall are below average. Progress and achievement in Years 1 to 6 are satisfactory but standards in English and mathematics by Year 6 remain below average. Teaching is satisfactory. Provision for the large number of pupils with hearing-impairment is good. Provision for the many pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher has united the staff and established a positive ethos within the school. Management is satisfactory. The school receives substantially more money than other primary schools because of the provision for pupils with hearing impairment. **Value for money is satisfactory.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- the provision for pupils with hearing impairment and others with special educational needs is a significant strength;
- standards in English and mathematics are below average and could be higher if teaching were consistently effective throughout the school;
- the methods used by teachers vary in effectiveness and not enough use is made of assessment to match the teaching to the ability of the pupils;
- there are good levels of general care and teachers have quickly established a positive ethos and climate for learning;
- provision for personal, social, health education and citizenship is good;

This is the school's first inspection since its merger and change of name. The infant section of the new school was previously inspected in November 1998 and the junior school in July 2000. Both inspections were successful but the changes since then have been so fundamental that the previous inspections do not provide appropriate benchmarks against which to measure progress. For this reason, no reference is made to them and improvement is not evaluated.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	B	C	E	D
mathematics	D	D	E	D
science	B	C	C	B

*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.*

**Achievement is satisfactory.** Nearly all pupils are doing as well as can reasonably be expected in reading, mathematics and science. Some of them could do better in writing. Educational value added is average. The overall performance is not as good as similar schools because, in the main, these similar schools have considerably fewer pupils with English as an additional language. Such pupils generally need more time to become fully fluent in English before they can achieve to their true potential. Standards in the Foundation Stage are below average overall and well below average in speaking, literacy

and numeracy. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are average in science but below average in English and mathematics. Standards in writing are very variable and there is underachievement among some of the average ability pupils. This is being tackled by the school. The average standards in science reflect good achievement overall in this subject. In information and communication technology, standards are average in Year 2 but below average in Year 6, where the more able pupils are not consistently challenged to achieve highly. Standards in religious education are above average in Year 2 and average in Year 6. The hearing impaired children achieve very well in the Nursery and throughout the rest of the school and mostly attain the nationally expected standards for their age. Other pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to the difficulties they face. Pupils with English as an additional language are well supported in the early stages of learning English but less effectively so as they enter the intermediate stages of fluency; their achievement overall is satisfactory. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds mainly achieve as well as White British pupils. However, Black British pupils are underachieving compared to the other minority groups. **Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.** Attitudes to school and behaviour are satisfactory overall. Attendance is well below average.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is satisfactory, with aspects for improvement.** Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but inconsistent in quality between classes. There is high quality, effective teaching in all year groups. However, not enough of the teaching inspires the pupils to excel consistently, particularly in writing. The arrangements to teach pupils in ability sets are more successful in mathematics than in English because the provision in the latter does not differentiate the learning needs sharply enough between each group. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory in English and mathematics but are underdeveloped in other subjects, reflecting the newness of the school. Assessment is not used enough to diagnose different learning needs among the various ability and minority ethnic groups or to guide the choice of learning objectives. The curriculum is satisfactory and the provision for special educational needs is good. All relevant statutory requirements are met and suitable extra-curricular opportunities are offered. Termly and weekly planning, however, is variable in quality and not always sufficiently well tuned to different learning needs. Care, guidance and support for pupils are good overall. The partnership with parents, other schools and the community is satisfactory.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are satisfactory with good features.** The charismatic leadership of the headteacher has successfully united the school and filled it with enthusiasm for the future. The general educational direction is clear. Much remains to be done to weld seamlessly the two previous schools together into one efficient and effective unit and strategically plan the next few years. School self-evaluation is at an early stage of development and senior managers and governors have not yet created a system to monitor the full range of school performance. Governance is satisfactory and provides the headteacher with good support. The effectiveness of management is satisfactory.

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

Parents and pupils are happy with the school. The school is making sensible efforts to seek the views of parents and to act upon them. A national initiative, *Flying Start*, has just started at the school but it is too early to evaluate its effectiveness.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- raise standards in English and mathematics to at least the national average by effectively promoting consistently good achievement between year groups and classes;
- improve the teaching so that it is consistently good throughout the school;
- use assessment information effectively to guide the teaching;
- make effective the arrangements for school self-evaluation and strategic planning;
- raise the level of attendance to at least the national average.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Achievement is satisfactory overall in the Foundation Stage, Years 1 and 2, and in Years 3 to 6, though there are aspects for improvement in each of these three key stages.

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

- The substantial majority of pupils are achieving to potential.
- Hearing impaired children achieve very well in the Nursery and in the rest of the school.

#### **Commentary**

1. The substantial majority of the pupils are working in line with their capacity for learning, though there are variations between subjects and between year groups, particularly in Years 3 to 6. The least able pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well supported in communication and literacy skills and they often do better than might be predicted by their attainment on entry. Support in mathematics for those with marginally lower attainment than others is less effective and there is underachievement among some of these pupils. Average ability pupils achieve to their potential in most of the core subjects except writing, where they sometimes could do better. This underachievement is because of variations in teaching methods. It is recognised by the senior management and is being tackled. The more able pupils mostly do well in reading, mathematics and science but a few could do better in some year groups, again reflecting variations in teaching.
2. The Nursery unit, although only for hearing impaired children, promotes inclusion<sup>1</sup> well. The intensive support provided for the hearing-impaired children gives them a very good springboard for their future education. Throughout the school, nearly all of the hearing-impaired children are achieving to their potential and most are attaining in line with their hearing peers. A few have additional learning difficulties but are well supported and achieve as well as can be expected given the difficulties they face.
3. In the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, there are no significant variations in the achievements of boys and girls but in Years 3 to 6, as the pupils get older, the girls tend to do better. Pupils with English as an additional language do not receive sufficient support in the Foundation Stage and this slows their progress though it is satisfactory overall. In Years 1 to 6, those in the early stages of learning English as an additional language receive good support when withdrawn and quickly rise to the intermediate stage of learning English. However, although they receive small amounts of specialist teaching each week, the work done in these lessons is not extended sufficiently in the main classes and this slows their progress. This is particularly the case for the most able Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils, who do not always attain as highly as they might in reading and writing. Pupils from minority backgrounds whose first language is English, or who are fluently bilingual, achieve as well as other pupils in the main. However, the standards attained by the 10 per cent of pupils who are of Black British and Black African heritage are particularly low. Almost half of them are in the lower attaining sets in Year 6 and not predicted to attain the nationally expected level by the end of

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<sup>1</sup> Inclusion refers to the arrangements for meeting the needs of all pupils, whatever their gender, ability or background.

the school year. Pupils with hearing impairment are very well supported and their achievement is often very good.

- Attainment on entry to the school varies considerably between children but, overall, is below average and in some years the overall level is well below average. Currently, fewer than half the children in the Reception year are likely to attain or exceed the national goals for early learning in communication language and literacy and in mathematical development by the end of the school year. Standards in these areas of learning are well below average. Standards are higher in personal, social and emotional development and in the other areas of learning. Standards in the other areas are higher but still below average overall. Standards on entry to the current Year 1 were also well below average, indicating that low standards among this age group are a regular feature. Progress in the Reception year is satisfactory for most children except the more able and those with English as an additional language, who both could do better.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.6 (14.7)	16.0 (15.7)
writing	13.6 (13.5)	14.8 (14.6)
mathematics	16.0 (15.1)	16.4 (16.3)

*There were 90 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- In all subjects tested, the proportion attaining or exceeding the nationally expected level was about the same as in the majority of schools but too few exceeded national expectations and this is why standards were below average overall. Current standards are consistent with the 2004 test results in reading and mathematics and show some improvement in writing. Most pupils in Year 2 are on course to attain the expected level in 2005 but the proportion likely to exceed expectations is small compared to other schools and current standards in this year group are below average overall in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.3 (27.3)	27.0 (26.8)
mathematics	25.6 (25.7)	27.2 (26.8)
science	28.6 (29.0)	28.9 (28.6)

*There were 89 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- The overall picture is complex because of the nature of the pupil population and because of inconsistencies in teaching within the school. In English and science in 2004, the proportions attaining the nationally expected level were similar to most schools but the amount of high attainment in English was much lower than is typically found. Performance in reading in 2004 in Year 6 was broadly average but performance in writing was very low. Current standards in writing are better and many more pupils are on course to attain the nationally expected level in this aspect of English in 2005 than did so in 2004, reflecting efforts by the teachers to raise standards. The low attainment in writing is linked mainly to the poorer performance of boys, particularly White British boys and boys with English as an additional language. The curriculum and teaching methods used to develop writing skills are narrow in range, inconsistent between teachers and year groups, and do not always gain the interest of the pupils. Current standards in English are higher than in 2004 and more pupils in Year 6 are on course to exceed expectations in 2005. Current standards in science are consistent with the

2004 results and achievement in this subject is good overall. The targets for English and mathematics for Year 6 in 2005 are below the national average.

7. In mathematics, only 62 per cent of the pupils in Year 6 attained or exceeded the nationally expected level in the tests in 2004, which is very low. However, about a fifth of the pupils exceeded national expectations and this was similar to many schools and much better than in English. Current standards are better in mathematics and more pupils are on course to attain or exceed expectations in 2005 than in 2004. In mathematics, the more able pupils are properly challenged and extended intellectually by the teaching but the provision for the less able in this subject lacks effectiveness.
8. The standards in English, mathematics and science, although below the national average, nevertheless compare satisfactorily with similar schools once account is taken of the pupils' starting points and backgrounds. The various measures of educational value added are positive and broadly average overall. This is consistent with the findings from lessons and the pupils' work. The substantial majority of pupils are making the expected progress in reading, mathematics and science between their entry to the Reception year and transfer to secondary education. In writing, the picture is less positive and here there is underachievement. The school is on course to attain its targets for 2005 in English and mathematics.
9. In information and communication technology, the pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and standards are average but the more able do not always achieve well in Years 3 to 6 and standards here are below average overall. Standards in religious education are above average in Year 2 and average in Year 6. In history, achievement is satisfactory and standards are average throughout. In physical education and in personal, social, and health education and citizenship, achievement is good and standards are above average across the school. Geography, art and design, design and technology, and music were not a focus of the inspection and no judgements about achievement or standards are made except in design and technology, where achievement in Year 2 is satisfactory and standards are average. Parents whose views are known are broadly content with standards at the school and think that their children are doing well. They are particularly pleased with the provision for those with learning difficulties and special educational needs.

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

Pupils are happy in school and willing workers. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. They mature during their time in school particularly when encouraged or allowed to take responsibility. Attendance is not high enough, and the school is not making best use of its computerised registration system. The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils know how to behave on formal occasions including assembly.
- Pupils respond well to the reward schemes and to the responsibilities that they are given.
- Attendance is well below the national average and the school is not monitoring attendance effectively.
- The school cultivates a good ethos of inclusion<sup>2</sup> and promotes an awareness and understanding of the needs of hearing impaired children amongst mainstream staff and hearing pupils.

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<sup>2</sup> See earlier footnote.

## Commentary

10. Pupils enjoy school. Their parents confirm this. The Reception age children settle quickly into school each morning. Pupils pay good attention in most lessons, which are well structured with clearly identified activities. In a few lessons, restlessness leads to increased noise levels and less being achieved. Overall, they show good respect towards their teachers, willingly join in and are keen to speak. They understand the needs of hearing impaired pupils and their social development is good. Older pupils show increasing ability to work independently.
  
11. Pupils behave very well in communal places in the school and on formal occasions such as assembly. Pupils play well together at break and lunch times, mixing well. Pupils from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds say they have no concerns or problems of unkind behaviour. Parents confirm that the school responds quickly and effectively on the few occasions when such incidents do occur. Midday supervisors are making successful efforts to introduce playground games for Reception pupils and those in Years 1 and 2. Relationships between pupils are mostly positive and satisfactory overall. They show respect and understanding towards each other, including respect for different faiths.
  
12. Those pupils given responsibilities, such as prefects and school council members, take their duties seriously and perform them well. Pupils throughout the school value the reward systems, are proud of their achievements and this raises their self-esteem. The number of exclusions has been higher recently and relates to five pupils, all of whom are being supported for behavioural or family reasons. Appropriate support is being given to these pupils through the school's work and a range of external agencies.

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	288	4	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	25	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	14	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	13	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	50	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	69	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	33	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	13	0	0

Black or Black British – Caribbean	56	6	0
Black or Black British – African	16	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	51	0	0

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

13. The school very effectively encourages an awareness and understanding of the needs of hearing impaired children amongst its mainstream staff and hearing pupils. The school has a caring ethos. Sign language classes are offered and hearing children were seen to use British sign language responses at registration, in assembly and to interpret for the hearing impaired children at breaks and lunchtimes; this is very good practice. New members of staff are expected to attend British sign language classes with a hearing-impaired tutor paid for by the school. Deaf children are proud to demonstrate their achievements in class; for example, Year 5 pupil who read aloud his letter giving bad news while other pupils listened attentively. They participate fully in class and are sometimes more articulate and quicker to respond than some of their hearing peers.
14. There is a very strong spiritual element in the religious education provision that is also reflected in some of the assemblies. Class and school rules, the school's aims of caring and consideration for all and the many opportunities to work collaboratively within the lessons, contribute to the good provision for the pupils' moral and social development. The opportunities provided for the pupils to learn about their own cultural traditions and those of other cultures are satisfactory but could be better given the very wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds within the school community.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.6	School data	0.2
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.*

15. Attendance is well below the national figure, and the school believes too many pupils are being taken on holiday during term time. The rate of unauthorised absence is similar to that of most schools nationally, and punctuality is satisfactory, although a few pupils are late too often. The school is contacting a pupil's home on the first day of an absence, and this is good practice. Attendance data is held on computer, but the school is not taking full responsibility for analysing this, to look for patterns and reasons for absence. As a result it cannot verify the assertion about holidays, and the focus has been inappropriately on unauthorised absences, where there is no problem.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education, including teaching and learning, the care support and guidance, and the partnership with parents, other schools and the community, is satisfactory overall but with aspects for improvement.

## Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The assessment arrangements are underdeveloped.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching for hearing impaired pupils and those with special educational needs is effective and a major strength of the school.
- The systems for assessment in English and mathematics are satisfactory but are underdeveloped in the other subjects.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 88 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	9 (10%)	31(35%)	43(49%)	5(6%)	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. Nearly all of the teaching is satisfactory or better though the amount that is good or better is smaller than is typically found nationally. The consistency of the methods used varies and reflects the practice in the infant and junior schools before amalgamation. There is good and very good teaching in all of the year groups, though the proportions vary. The teaching and learning are good in physical education. The evidence in geography, art and design, design and technology, and music is insufficient to make overall judgements about teaching or learning in these subjects. In all other subjects, the teaching and learning are satisfactory. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching is in Years 1, 3 and 6 and reflects off-days rather than a significant pattern of shortcomings.
17. The very good teaching is inspiring. In such lessons, all pupils learn very quickly. Where teaching is of good quality, just under half of all lessons taught, it motivates pupils well and the work is generally completed in the time available. The good teaching is effectively planned. It provides challenging work for pupils with different levels of ability so that by the end of the lesson, almost all pupils have made gains in knowledge and understanding consistent with national expectations and their capacity for learning. Where teaching is satisfactory, the broad majority of pupils make worthwhile gains but a few could have done better. The satisfactory teaching generally relies too much on teacher explanations, with pupils being passive learners, and does not do enough to motivate and engage pupils intellectually so that they become active learners. A small amount of teaching is unsatisfactory. Such teaching is relatively isolated. It reflects the work of different teachers, all of whom teach at a satisfactory or better level in most of their other lessons. When the teaching is unsatisfactory, not enough learning occurs in the time that is available, with the reasons for this being different in each case.
18. Teaching for hearing impaired pupils and the support provided by specialist assistants, is of good quality. In all lessons, the support for hearing impaired pupils helps them

learn effectively. They are included in mainstream classes once they leave the Nursery provision and, inevitably, the quality of teaching depends on the skills of individual class teachers. However, the quality of their learning is never less than good and is usually very good because of the high calibre support given by the specialist support staff. Mainstream teachers throughout the school have acquired a good understanding of the needs of the hearing-impaired children and most ensure they use a range of appropriate strategies such as visual reinforcement, appropriate questioning, and modified language. These strategies not only promote the learning of the hearing impaired but of hearing children too. Where necessary the skilled and experienced communication support workers are able to modify language further and adopt learning strategies which effectively help hearing impaired children to understand the curriculum in all subjects.

19. Teaching and learning for other pupils with special educational needs is mostly good in the core subjects where extra help is usually available. Learning is less effective in some of the non-core subjects when extra help is not available. Even so, most pupils with special educational needs have work that is matched to their learning needs and have their progress monitored appropriately through their individual education plans.
20. Pupils with English as an additional language benefit from skilled support when withdrawn from lessons and often learn quickly in this context. In most lessons, however, specialist support is not available and the skills of individual class teachers to support these pupils are very varied. Although teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, not enough is done to identify and meet the learning needs of those at the intermediate and nearly fluent stages of acquiring English, particularly to help them comprehend the specific vocabulary and meanings attached to words and phrases in each subject of the National Curriculum.
21. The assessment of attainment is satisfactory in English, mathematics and science. This data is being used to monitor individual progress and to set targets in English and mathematics; this is good practice. The arrangements are, however, underdeveloped compared to the majority of other schools. Not enough is being done to explore the progress made by different groups or to use the data to help diagnose the reasons for underachievement. Evaluations of performance between minority ethnic groups are insufficient and the data that is available is not used rigorously enough. Very little assessment is undertaken in the other subjects and this is unsatisfactory.
22. Those with responsibility for leading the teaching have not promoted good practice in teaching and learning within the school to the extent necessary. Senior management recognise this and have identified the creation of a teaching and learning policy as a high priority for the present school year.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory. Opportunities for enrichment and extra-curricular provision are satisfactory. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. The work of very skilled and experienced specialist support assistants and communicators promotes the learning and achievement of the hearing-impaired children and ensures they are able to experience the full range of National Curriculum subjects.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum promotes personal and social skills well and this has a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes to learning.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and those in the hearing-impaired provision is good.
- Planning is not always well matched to individual needs and cross-curricular links are underdeveloped.
- There is insufficient time for some non-core subjects.

## Commentary

23. All subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education, and the nationally agreed curriculum for the Foundation Stage are taught in full and the curriculum is suitably broad. In general, the school is using nationally recommended schemes of work to plan the teaching and learning. Senior members of staff are working well to provide a curriculum which gives continuity and progression to pupils' learning as they get older. However, there are still important areas which as yet have not been tackled since the merger. Insufficient time is allocated to non-core subjects including information and communication technology, history, and art and design. As a result there are gaps in pupils' learning and they do not always achieve as well as they could. Cross-curricular links are underdeveloped and are not effective in deepening pupils' knowledge and understanding or in making learning more interesting and challenging. Long-term plans provide an appropriate framework to help teachers plan for pupils' learning. However, weekly and daily plans often lack sufficient detail in helping teachers support the needs of individual pupils.
24. Arrangements for pupils' personal, health and social education are good and have a positive effect on pupils' self-confidence and attitudes to learning. There are agreed policies for health, sex education and drugs education and time is made available to develop these areas in ways which are appropriate for the ages and needs of the pupils'.
25. The range of learning opportunities in the Reception class is satisfactory but children have insufficient opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in those tasks they choose for themselves. Tasks are not always sufficiently challenging and planning does not provide for the needs of children who learn at different rates.
26. The provision for hearing impaired pupils and other with special educational needs is good. It is well organised and places high priority on developing the skills of teachers and support staff so that they can provide good quality teaching. The provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory overall. The specialist support is good but does not have sufficient resources to meet the curricular needs of all of the bilingual pupils. Although the school makes good provision for two pupils, it has not yet started to identify all its gifted and talented pupils.
27. An appropriate range of out of school clubs and visits extends pupils' knowledge and understanding of what they are being taught in school and promotes their personal and social development well. Clubs are well attended and all members of staff give

generously of their time to extend pupils' interests and skills. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory. The teaching and support staff work well together for the benefit of the pupils' but teaching assistants are not always effectively deployed to support pupils who learn at a slower rate.

28. The hearing-impaired provision is generally well resourced to provide appropriate levels of staffing for hearing impaired pupils who usually require one-to-one communicator support but there is insufficient funding to replace the elderly radio hearing aid systems. The school has used its own resources to purchase advice regarding amplification from outside agencies as a result of which they have invested in a number of Soundfield Systems to improve the acoustic environment in those classrooms where they are fitted. This has been very beneficial for hearing impaired pupils.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school makes good provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. The pastoral and personal needs of individual pupils are well met and staff offer appropriate advice and support. Satisfactory arrangements support pupils when they start school. There is a willingness to allow pupils to contribute to decision making through school and class councils.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The members of staff work well together to care for pupils.
- Health and safety matters are well managed.
- There is insufficient action planning after the pupils are consulted.

### **Commentary**

29. The school takes good care of its pupils. Their varied needs are well met throughout the school day. Pupils who are injured, upset or unwell, those who are fasting or need their hearing aids adjusted receive prompt, appropriate, individual care. The school is still amalgamating practices and venues but pupils know who to turn to and where to go for help. Governors take good care of health and safety matters and the concerns over separating cars and pedestrians in earlier times have been fully resolved. Members of staff are appropriately trained in child protection procedures. Full use is made of a wide range of support agencies and other personnel to help pupils.
30. The pupils are well supported and guided. An advantage of its large size is the number of adults available for pupils to turn to if they need support. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have consistently good provision because they have allocated classroom assistants and midday supervisors. There are a large number of midday supervisors, and the school has rightly identified the need to re-focus and develop their role in encouraging play. Older pupils meet different teachers in their mathematics and English sets, and this helps to prepare them for secondary school. Some classes have introduced "worry boxes" so that pupils can raise their concerns anonymously. These allow teachers to give advice and guidance to individuals and the whole class. Members of the Reception class staff visit pupils in their homes before they start

school, and the arrangements made are similar to those in most schools. Very good care is provided for hearing impaired pupils and there is always someone they can turn to for help or advice.

31. Arrangements to seek the views of pupils are satisfactory. The school is making good efforts to seek and act on pupils' views but does not fully plan ahead and anticipate the implications of actions. School and class councils give pupils good opportunities to make some decisions about their school. However, pupils are elected for a year rather than for shorter periods and this limits the number involved. Although a good democratic forum, the pace of decision-making is slow and the council's impact is limited.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school's actions to involve parents are satisfactory and there is good potential in the *Flying Start* family worker's role. Community involvement is satisfactory and there are appropriate links with the high school. The school has a mutually beneficial working relationship with two providers of teacher training.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a good, informative termly newsletter.
- Partnership with parents of hearing impaired pupils is very good.
- Parents are not given clear enough information about their child's progress.

### **Commentary**

32. Parents are supportive of the school and feel that their children are making good progress and encouraged to become mature and independent. They believe that teaching is good and that staff treat their child fairly. No major concerns were raised in the pre-inspection questionnaire that had not previously been identified in the school's own questionnaire, conducted after the merger. Areas for concern identified were that a fifth of parents did not feel treated as a partner and an eighth did not find reports informative enough.
33. The school has made efforts to deal with the first of these. It is using a family worker, provided through a national initiative, *Flying Start*, to liaise with parents of the youngest pupils. The work has begun this term. No courses have yet taken place and so it is too soon to evaluate. The school is good at tapping into initiatives that will benefit parents, such as family learning, and the current *keeping up with the children* course is over-subscribed. The school is making sensible efforts to get parents' views and is responding to specific areas of concern. However, the way in which relationships with parents are to be developed is not part of the school improvement plan.
34. The termly newsletters give parents good quality information about the curriculum and the expectations relating to homework. Parents are provided with information on their child's progress through progress sheets, with agreed targets, and an end of year report. However, neither the sheets nor the targets make it really clear for

parents how their child is getting on compared with expectations for their age. This probably explains parents' concerns about the information provided.

35. Links with the community and with the local high school are satisfactory. Two teacher-training institutions use the school. This is mutually beneficial because there are teacher shortages in the area. The partnership with parents of hearing impaired pupils is very good. They are encouraged to attend a Friday morning club where they can discuss any concerns or issues with specialist support staff or with other parents of hearing impaired pupils. The tutor of the hearing impaired makes home visits to help parents keep pace with their hearing impaired children's developing signing skills and the school also operates an *open door* policy. The teachers of the hearing impaired send home information about the work classes will be covering in the following week so that parents are always well informed about what their children are doing.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The governance of the school, leadership of the headteacher, leadership of other key staff, and the effectiveness of management are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The governing body has effectively helped to shape the aspirations and directions of the school.
- The headteacher is good at motivating her staff.
- Leadership and management of the hearing-impaired provision by the headteacher and other key members of staff are very good.
- The procedures for school self-evaluation and for long-term strategic planning are underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

36. The headteacher and governors have high and appropriate aspirations for the school. The headteacher's leadership has successfully united the members of staff and created good morale. She has successfully gained their respect and created a positive climate for improvement. The school is now well placed to move forward. Management has been very effective in getting the building modified so that there is an enclosed corridor joining the two sites into one and a single staff room big enough for all members. The broad principles and decisions about the management structure have been established and are appropriate. The senior assistant headteacher and the assistant headteachers give good support. Those with responsibility for middle and subject management have a satisfactory understanding of their immediate roles but have not yet clarified the details sufficiently in the longer term, nor do they always have the time or the means to carry out their duties. This is recognised by senior management but it will take time and resources to remedy. This means that subject leadership in particular is currently limited in its ability to identify and promote good practice across the school.
37. This is a school of considerable variation in practice, reflecting its origins in the joining of two established schools already set in their ways. The managers and governors of

the school have only just embarked on the task of welding the two establishments together into one. They have successfully completed the first stage. Their effectiveness is satisfactory and their capacity for further improvement is good. Staffing levels are generous and there is an appropriate level of stability and experience. The strategies for recruitment and retention are effective and there is a strong emphasis on training new teachers and teaching assistants. The induction<sup>3</sup> of new members of staff is good and fully meets national guidance.

38. The governors had the vision to see the potential of school amalgamation and to carry through the process quickly and efficiently. They have helped shape its management structure and broad direction during and since amalgamation. They are effectively ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory duties and that it endeavours to meet the learning needs of all its pupils, whatever their gender, ability or background. Policies for race equality and disability are implemented successfully. The speed at which the amalgamation took place and the need to concentrate on legal aspects and on building work, have meant that work on policies that reflect the individual character of the new school and on the strategic development of the school over the next few years have taken a back seat. This needs to be remedied as a matter of urgency.
39. The strategic planning is underdeveloped. The governors and headteacher understand the short-term needs of the school and have acted successfully to bring the infant and junior schools together by attending to those needs that are most pressing. They have a high level picture of what they want to achieve but have not yet spelt out the detailed vision of the school they wish to create. This is understandable given the pressures of amalgamation but cannot be left in abeyance any longer. Without this vision of good practice to aim at, credible long-term strategic planning cannot begin. School self-evaluation systems are also underdeveloped. Basic procedures such as analysing test results, checking the progress of pupils, monitoring teaching, and sampling pupils' work are in place. The collation of this information and, more especially, its use to compare performance against a vision of good practice and to identify priorities for action lacks rigour.
40. The management of the hearing-impaired provision is effective, reflecting the good leadership of this aspect of the provision by the headteacher. However, there is currently a lack of strategic planning because self-evaluation is undeveloped and this is a weakness. There is not a clear analysis of improvement actions needed with expenditure prioritised against these. The headteacher has advertised for a primary hearing-impaired provision manager and this appointment will help with self-evaluation. In the current financial year the school budget is subsidising the hearing-impaired provision by approximately £20,000. When the school budget is stretched, this is a substantial amount to contribute.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004*

Income and expenditure (£)	Balances (£)
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<sup>3</sup> Induction refers to the arrangements to support new members of staff and help them become familiar with the policies and practice of the school.

Total income	2,166,344
Total expenditure	2,159,316
Expenditure per pupil (635 pupils)	3,412

Balance from previous year	67,913
Balance carried forward to the next	74,941

41. Financial management is satisfactory but with aspects for improvement. Income and expenditure are much higher than the typical school nationally because of the extra funding for pupils with special educational needs, which amounts to half a million pounds. Value for money for this aspect of expenditure is good. However, more is spent on special educational needs than is received and this reduces the amount in the budget for pupils in the main school. The bulk of the total expenditure is on teaching staff, with costs being higher than in comparable schools, and on educational support staff, with the amount here being more than double that typically found. This level of expenditure reflects the policy of the governing body as well as the large numbers of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Strategic planning beyond the current year, the responsibility of senior management and governors, is still in its infancy. The school is not sufficiently projecting forward likely income and expenditure scenarios and is not planning how money should be spent in the light of changing needs beyond the present financial year and this is unsatisfactory. The budget for the current financial year is very tight and the balance carried forward from the 2003 to 2004 financial year will all be spent. The day-to-day handling of finances by the bursar is good.

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

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

42. The provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. Attainment on entry to the Reception year covers a broad range. Early reading and writing skills are particularly underdeveloped. They are usually below those seen typically in other schools and often well below. The school provides an appropriate range of experiences to promote the nationally agreed early learning goals and teaching overall is satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress towards the goals for early learning but fewer than half are on target to reach these goals in literacy and numeracy before the end of the Reception year. Children achieve well in tasks which are well structured and teacher directed. However, there are insufficient opportunities for children to extend their literacy and numeracy skills in those tasks they choose for themselves. As a result, they do not always achieve as well as they could. Although there is a range of appropriate assessment systems in place, including the nationally agreed Early Years Profile, assessment is not used as effectively as it could be to provide for individual needs.
43. Nursery provision is made for six hearing impaired children. The members of staff in the nursery provision are particularly skilled in providing appropriately for the hearing-impaired children to ensure the development of their social and basic skills to achieve the national goals for early learning. They play games and sing songs with visual content and engage in cooperative activities such as baking to promote their communication development and this is further enhanced by specialist input from one of the teachers of the hearing impaired who is also a qualified speech and language therapist, a scarce resource which the school uses to optimal advantage to ensure language development.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

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

- Teaching is good and children achieve well.
- Children have good levels of independence and behave well.

#### **Commentary**

44. The good teaching results in good achievement and the majority of the children are on course to attain the national goals for early learning by the end of the school year. The good intervention and high level of care and assistance provided by the staff, enables children to settle quickly into class routines and activities. Children enjoy coming to school and confidently choose their own tasks and concentrate for sustained periods of time. They work hard to improve their skills, carefully following their teachers instructions as they learn to form letters accurately. Adults have high expectations of children's behaviour and children respond well to their teacher's sensitive reminders of what is acceptable behaviour.

## COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **satisfactory**. Teaching is satisfactory overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills is generally good.
- There are missed opportunities to develop children's literacy skills in activities they choose for themselves.

### Commentary

45. Fewer than half the children in the Reception year are on course to attain the national goals for early learning by the end of the school year and this is well below that found typically in other schools. This reflects the large number of White British children with limited communication skills and the equally large number with English as an additional language. Where teaching is guided by adults and has clear learning intentions, such as in literacy lessons, achievement is good. Where there is more independence, and less guidance, the learning is slower and less effective. Because of this inconsistency, achievement overall is satisfactory. In teacher led activities, there is generally a clear emphasis on encouraging children to listen carefully and speak clearly. Teachers model patterns of speech well and encourage children to become attentive listeners to stories, comments and instructions. As a result, the majority of them are becoming articulate and confident and readily engage in conversation with each other and adults. Specific support for those with English as an additional language, however, is not sufficiently provided and the general emphasis on speaking and listening is sometimes insufficient for their greater needs. Members of staff systematically introduce letter names and sounds and the more able are becoming confident in recognising initial sounds. On a regular basis, children practise writing their names and copy patterns to develop their confidence and skills in pencil control and they are learning the conventions of reading. Outside of the teacher led activities, children do not have enough opportunities to use their developing literacy skills. These tasks are not always as challenging as they could be, particularly for those who are more able.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**. Teaching is satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teacher directed tasks are satisfactory in developing early mathematical skills.
- A lack of well-planned opportunities to use and develop these skills in other areas limits learning.

### Commentary

46. Fewer than half the children in the Reception year are on course to attain the national goals for early learning by the end of the school year; this is well below average. Progress and achievement are satisfactory. Teacher led activities, number rhymes and games are used appropriately to develop understanding. Children are learning to count, order, and recognise numbers to ten. They identify shapes and patterns and compare sizes through teacher directed tasks, such as making a shape picture. However, there are too few independent tasks available to reinforce and extend children's mathematical knowledge and understanding.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **satisfactory**. Teaching is satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children are encouraged to be inquisitive about their world but do not have sufficient opportunities to record their observations.
- Knowledge of information and communication technology is good.

### **Commentary**

47. About 70 per cent of children in the Reception year are on course to attain the national goals for early learning by the end of the school year; this is below average. Teachers plan a range of interesting activities and experiences to develop children's understanding of the world, its people, places and animals. However they are not encouraged to use their literacy skills to record their findings in order to deepen their understanding and extend their learning. Role-play activities, such as the vets and the arrival of a class fish, led to an understanding of the wider world and the need to care for others. An appropriate range of materials help children develop their skills of cutting, folding and sticking. Children are becoming very competent users of information and communication technology to support their learning. An understanding of the features of different animals was extended well as children confidently used the mouse to 'click and drag' objects across the screen.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**. Teaching is satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory.

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities to promote creative development.

### **Commentary**

48. About 70 per cent of children in the Reception year are on course to attain the national goals for early learning by the end of the school year; this is below average. Adults engage in the children's play effectively, providing new vocabulary and modelling language structures. Some activities are too directed by the adults and

children do not have sufficient opportunities to choose their own materials and create individual designs and pictures.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for physical development is **satisfactory**. Achievement and teaching are satisfactory.

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- There is a wide range of appropriate opportunities to develop all aspects of their physical skills.

### **Commentary**

49. About 70 per cent of children in the Reception year are on course to attain the national goals by the end of the school year; this is below average. There is a satisfactory range of large and small equipment which is available on a daily basis both inside and outdoors to promote children's physical development. Children are given help and encouragement to develop their dexterity when handling pencils, scissors, brushes, modelling tools, construction toys and jigsaws.

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

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average, reflecting low attainment on entry. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Cross-curricular links with other subjects are underdeveloped. The school requested that writing be a main focus of the inspection because standards have been particularly low in that aspect of the subject in most years.

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

- The achievement of the least able pupils is generally good in reading.
- Standards in Year 2 have been rising and more pupils throughout the school are attaining or exceeding the nationally expected level currently than did so a few years ago.
- The planned use of literacy skills in other subjects is limited in scope.

#### **Commentary**

50. The achievement of the pupils is satisfactory overall but is variable, reflecting the complex nature of the school population and variations in curricular effectiveness between year groups. The pupils' achievements in reading are better than in writing. Girls generally do better than boys, with the difference increasing as pupils get older, particularly in reading. The achievement of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is satisfactory overall. Very few of the pupils with English as an additional language are at the early stages of learning English. However, most are not yet fully fluent and need more time before they can achieve to their full potential. Their learning needs specific to English as an additional language are well met when taught in small groups by the specialist teachers but are not always met in literacy lessons. The large numbers of pupils with significant special educational needs invariably achieve well in relation to their difficulties because of the good quality individual support they receive. This is particularly true of hearing impaired pupils.
51. Competency in speaking and listening varies considerably between pupils and standards are below average overall. Some pupils are very articulate and the majority have skills of speaking and listening that are typical for their age. A significant minority, however, are reluctant speakers and have difficulty expressing themselves in lessons. Sometimes this is because they are learning English as an additional language and have not developed either the confidence or the vocabulary to respond fully in class situations. These pupils will often talk readily to their friends in English because they can choose familiar words but the subject-specific vocabulary used in lessons is at times beyond them. More often, the reluctant speakers are White British boys whose skills of self-expression through language are limited. The teaching in lessons, while satisfactory, does not challenge these pupils enough to explain their reasoning in detail or to develop a wider vocabulary. In general, in most subjects, the teaching gives insufficient priority to the development of speaking skills. Although some teachers are beginning to use role play and other strategies to promote speaking skills, in the majority of lessons the teacher does the talking and explaining and the pupils passively listen. This is not always the most efficient form of learning

because it relies on pupils having good language skills, which only some have, because it does not sufficiently engage the pupils as active learners, and is often uninspiring.

52. In reading, almost all pupils manage to attain standards that are close to those expected for their age though fewer exceed the expected level than do so in the majority of schools and standards overall are below average, though not by very much. Where pupils are not yet reading to their full potential, it is mostly because they speak English as an additional language and need more time to develop a broader vocabulary and so enhance their comprehension skills. The methods for teaching reading are effective, particularly for the less able and average ability pupils, but could be more challenging for the most able. In Years 5 and 6, pupils who are generally competent readers are allowed to choose their own reading material and they are insufficiently guided towards the most challenging and demanding texts, or texts which broaden their experiences and tastes as readers. This is another reason why the proportion of pupils exceeding national expectations is lower than in the majority of schools.
53. Competency in writing is improving, albeit slowly, and more pupils are attaining the expected levels for their ages in Year 2 and Year 6 than did so last year. The majority of pupils attain standards that are broadly in line with their capacity for learning but a significant minority could do better. Those who are not achieving to their full potential mainly have average ability and come from both White British and minority ethnic backgrounds, boys and girls. Their underachievement reflects inconsistencies in the teaching. The methods have only partial effectiveness. This is recognised by the senior management and subject leaders, who know that there is a problem but have not had the time to diagnose the cause in detail. The teaching of writing is inconsistent in its effectiveness and does not always motivate pupils to write with enthusiasm or understanding. It makes insufficient use of shared and guided writing methods that engage pupils as active learners, model the writing structures clearly, and use the skills children already have as the starting point for increasing their competencies.
54. The teaching is satisfactory, with aspects for improvement. It is meeting many, but not all, learning needs. The amount of teaching that is good or better is less than typically found. The school has not yet developed a clear vision of good practice in teaching English and so teachers are using different methods, some of which are more successful than others. Overall, the range of methods used is narrow. A few teachers provide inspiring, intellectually demanding lessons that highly motivate pupils and lead to rapid gains in knowledge and understanding in short periods of time. The majority of teachers provide clear explanations and introduce new ideas in a planned and purposeful manner so that by the end of lessons the majority of pupils have made reasonable gains. However, the methods rely too much on explanation. Too little use is made of questioning to check understanding, provoke thinking, or stretch pupils at different levels of ability. Rarely during shared and guided work are pupils asked to explain their thoughts in detail and too little use is made of pupils to model and demonstrate writing composition for others to evaluate and learn from.
55. Leadership and management are shared by the coordinators originally appointed to the separate infant and junior schools. They are both capable of leading effectively

through the example of their own teaching and set high standards. Their collective capacity to improve the subject is good. They are beginning to work together to produce a new subject policy for the amalgamated school but this is very much in the early stages. The subject leaders have not established a clear policy for teaching and learning that reflects the best practice nationally nor is there agreed practice within the school. Newly introduced arrangements to collate assessment information and track the progress of pupils is being used to monitor performance in different aspects of the subject and in different year groups and this is helping to inform management decisions. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching are embryonic and insufficient to help managers diagnose and determine development priorities. Long and medium term curriculum planning is satisfactory. Short term planning is too generalised in its objectives for learning and is not guiding teachers sufficiently in their task of meeting the wide range of learning needs among the pupils they teach. Resources are adequate in Years 1 and 2 but insufficient in Years 3 to 6, particularly the resources necessary to support shared and guided reading and writing methods.

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

56. The planned and coordinated use of language and literacy across the curriculum is undeveloped. The school does not have an effective policy to develop speaking, reading or writing skills in other subjects. In the majority of lessons, the speaking skills of pupils with English as an additional language, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those White British pupils with limited ability, are not being extended purposefully and systematically. Not enough opportunities are provided for them to comment, explain, comprehend and reason verbally. There is little guidance for teachers on the writing skills to develop in other subjects. The curriculum provides few opportunities to write independently and purposefully using different genres relevant to the subjects in questions.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average in Year 2 and Year 6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.

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

- Standards are below average and could be higher.
- Teaching is consistently good in Years 2 and 6.
- There is a good emphasis on mental mathematics and problem solving.

#### **Commentary**

57. The substantial majority of the pupils are achieving to their potential. About 65 per cent of them are on target to attain the nationally expected level by the end of the school year. This proportion is smaller than is found nationally, reflecting a lack of progress made by pupils with marginally lower attainment who receive insufficient support to catch up. Standards across the school are rising slowly because of the effective teaching in some year groups. Consistently good teaching was seen in Years 2 and 6. However, the amount of good teaching across the school is not as high as that seen in most schools and there is a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching

in Year 3. Because of the variance in the quality of teaching, pupils' progress is inconsistent. As a result, although pupils achieve well in Years 2 and 6 this is not good enough to enable all of them to reach the highest standards of which they are capable. The pupils are taught in ability sets throughout the school. This arrangement is working best for the average and more able pupils but is less successful for those with lower attainment or with learning difficulties.

58. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, have clear targets. They are given good support enabling them to participate fully in lessons and achieve the targets set for them. However in some lessons those pupils who learn at a slower rate but who do not have individual education plans do not have sufficient support and their achievement is unsatisfactory. Those pupils with English as an additional language achieve well and many attain similar standards to those whose first language is English. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
59. Where teaching is good or better, members of staff use a variety of effective methods and as a result pupils respond enthusiastically and make significant gains in their learning. Lessons include regular opportunities for mental mathematics, encouraging pupils to become competent in the quick and accurate recall of number facts. Emphasis is placed on helping pupils to apply their mathematics knowledge to solve problems in practical situations. Pupils in Year 2 are confident in recognising odd and even numbers and use their knowledge of their 5 and 10 times tables to make accurate estimates of large groups of objects. In Year 6, less able pupils learn to add and subtract negative numbers and more able pupils use a wide range of mental skills involving all four rules of calculation to work out challenging problems. The provision for pupils who are particularly gifted is very good enabling such pupils to work at a very high level and achieve very well. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, too few of the pupils make worthwhile gains in knowledge and understanding in the time available.
60. Management of the subject is satisfactory. Senior members of staff are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject. They have worked well to amalgamate the two schools and are developing the appropriate strategies to improve the provision and raise standards. Senior members of staff use assessments and records effectively to identify gaps in pupils' learning, to evaluate the rate of progress and to identify weaknesses in teaching.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

61. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to use, consolidate and extend their mathematical skills in other subjects.

### **SCIENCE**

The provision in science is satisfactory. Achievement is good. Standards are average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with good features. Leadership and management are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The practical approach develops the pupils' social and collaborative skills well.

- The subject is well led.
- Scientific investigations are too tightly structured and this restricts the pupils' achievement.

## Commentary

62. From a lower than average starting point, the current pupils in Years 2 and 6 are achieving well and attaining average standards. The higher ability pupils in Year 6 have a good knowledge of life processes and living things; materials and their properties; and physical processes. However, their scientific enquiry skills are underdeveloped. The results of the 2004 national test were that standards were broadly average, although the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels was lower than that typically found. Girls outperform boys in Year 2 but by Year 6 this difference is considerably reduced.
63. There is variation in achievement within the year groups of the school. There are two main aspects to the teaching; an emphasis upon revising former work and a practical approach with structured investigations. Together these consolidate the pupils' learning well. In their practical work, the pupils learn to respect the opinions of others and to work together well. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils' previous work shows that they achieve well, developing a secure understanding of the properties of materials and the recording of their findings. The impact of the coordinator ensures that the pupils in Year 4 achieve well. They learn skills, such as reading a thermometer and then use these in their investigations to draw line graphs. In Year 5, standards are generally above the average and the higher ability pupils are extended well but scientific enquiry skills are not given sufficient emphasis. In Year 6, there is considerable revision of work and although the pupils record in a scientific manner, their enquiry skills are not sufficiently developed. Teachers do not give the pupils the independence to decide on the focus of the investigation or the equipment to use. As a consequence, the higher ability pupils find the subject lacks stimulation and is repetitive.
64. The teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils. At the start of the lesson they thoroughly revise previous work and they explain what is to be learned clearly. Through questions and explanations they extend the pupils' knowledge and understanding. The pupils behave well and they listen quietly. Teachers have insufficient knowledge of the pupils' previous work from the younger classes. Mainly because of this, the work is not planned for the various ability groups within the class or with sufficient challenge. Members of the support staff are used well to help pupils with severe special educational needs access the work and therefore these pupils achieve well. Members of the support staff are underused to help the pupils who do not have English as a first language or to observe and record how the investigative skills of all the pupils are developing.
65. Since the amalgamation, the curriculum has been well planned to achieve cohesion. Investigative skills have been added into the planning and into the assessment system to address the relative underperformance in this area of the curriculum. These new features represent a good start but they are not yet fully established. Targets for pupils, so that they know what they need to learn next, are being developed.

Computer programs are used well to help the pupils with their knowledge and understanding, but not to record data and to plot graphs from investigations.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Cross-curricular use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The provision of equipment and resources is good.
- There is a lack of assessment procedures to promote continuity and progression.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning to instigate improvement is insufficient.

### **Commentary**

66. Standards in information and communication technology are average in Year 2 but they are below average in Year 6. The teaching helps pupils to understand and practise skills on a short-term basis but pupils lack opportunities to develop those skills fast enough, and in a wide enough range of forms or in other subjects, which means they are unable to achieve the expected national levels in Year 6. Secondly, there are insufficient assessment procedures provided for teachers to record progress throughout the school which means they are unable to track pupil's progress and identify those who need intervention or more challenging work.
67. The quality of teaching varies in effectiveness but is satisfactory overall. The best teaching is characterised by a good understanding of the curriculum and the way children learn. In the best lessons, the teachers have relevant objectives; explain new work clearly; link the pupils' learning to past and future work; and challenge the more able pupils to make faster progress. This was seen in a Year 3 lesson where pupils were using a design package to create a repeated pattern. More able pupils were allowed to demonstrate that they had understood and mastered the techniques and moved on to create their own repeat pattern; this was good practice. Learning support workers are available to help those with special educational needs and they are effective in most lessons. Resources such as data projectors and interactive white boards are used effectively by teachers to demonstrate the features of programs and to engage their interest. Good use is made of pupils to demonstrate skills. However, in a few lessons there is insufficient extension work for the most able and this leads to them wasting time and underachieving.
68. The coordinator provides satisfactory leadership overall but has not yet begun to influence the quality of teaching consistently throughout the school. Investment in new computer technology has been extensive and the school now benefits from very good, well-managed resources and good technical support. The coordinator has support from the headteacher who holds overall strategic responsibility for the subject. The coordinator has been given more time during the working day than the other core subject coordinators for management activities, indicating the importance the school places upon developing the subject. However, this time has no action plan

to guide its use and obtain value for money. Nor has it yet been used to monitor teaching or demonstrate good practice and this has potential for inefficiency.

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

69. The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is underdeveloped. A few teachers are using cross-curricular links within their information and communication technology teaching; for example, the Year 6 children were producing PowerPoint slides about their history topic. In most classes, however, not enough use is made of information and communication technology to support learning in other subjects or to develop computer skills by applying them.

### **HUMANITIES**

70. During the inspection only three lessons in **geography** were seen and this is insufficient evidence to enable overall judgements about provision, teaching or learning to be made. Discussions with pupils, teachers' planning, and samples of work were all analysed. These show that a satisfactory range of work is planned and that National Curriculum requirements are met. In the three lessons observed, two were satisfactory and one was good. Discussions with Year 6 pupils show that levels of interest in the subject are limited. The Year 6 pupils are able to outline the main features of settlements and describe how some land formations are created. They know factual information about their immediate locality but have little knowledge or skills relevant to fieldwork. The Year 6 pupils have not studied geography every term and the intervals between their studies are too large. In Year 2, the pupils enjoy the subject and are able to describe in detail facts about their town and a town further afield in Bangladesh. They can locate the countries of the United Kingdom and describe their route to school. They are proud of their work.

71. Geography is taught in blocks of curriculum time rather than taught weekly and some year groups are not studying a geography topic this term. The quantity of written and other work from this and the last school year is less than would be expected. The work that is available shows an overuse of worksheets. The timetables and the planning show that not enough time is spent on this subject throughout the year. No assessment policy is in place and this is unsatisfactory. The two coordinators are aware that an assessment policy for geography is needed and they have identified this in the school improvement plan. They plan to monitor teaching next year.

### **History**

The provision for history is satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils enjoy history.
- The curriculum is well supported by educational visits.
- Written work does not always reflect the pupils' knowledge.
- Assessment procedures are not fully in place.

## **Commentary**

72. The pupils are mostly achieving as well as pupils of similar ability in other schools. Teaching and learning is always satisfactory and sometimes good or very good. The two coordinators work together offering support and they help colleagues with planning. The activities in the planning are good and give priority to practical activity. In a very good history lesson in Year 5, the teacher involved the pupils in independent research. Some children worked on laptops using the Internet. The children were detectives hunting for clues. Good questioning by the teacher, the valuing of contributions made by pupils of all abilities and the fast pace of the lesson kept the children motivated so that they made very good progress. In two good lessons at Year 4, role-play was used to help children understand the mummification process and in a good Year 6 lesson the teacher encouraged the pupils to discuss their work with each other. This maintained motivation because all the pupils were actively involved in the lesson. Pupils in Year 6 were able to describe what they had learned from educational visits in previous years and had an enthusiasm for the subject. They described their visit to Hatfield House, where they learned about the Victorians and a role-play activity.
73. The quantity and quality of written work is less than would be expected and the amount of curriculum time allocated to the subject is less than recommended. Some of the work from some classes and year groups shows an overreliance on worksheets and this often limits the quality of the work produced. Pupils demonstrated good understanding when they discussed their work. There is no assessment policy at present and this is unsatisfactory. The coordinators have identified this as a target for development in the school improvement plan. Teachers evaluate each topic at the end of the term. The coordinators are aware that they need to monitor teaching and learning, and plan to do this next year.

## **Religious education**

The provision is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a strong spiritual and moral emphasis within the subject.
- The pupils learn to respect the views and beliefs of others, due to the good role models that the teachers provide.
- The teaching of Christianity is consistently developed throughout the school.

## **Commentary**

74. The pupils achieve well. In relation to the locally agreed syllabus, standards are above average in Year 2 and average in Year 6. By Year 6, the pupils have a secure knowledge of Christianity but their knowledge of other faith groups is somewhat fragmented and superficial. The attitudes of the pupils to religious education are good. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy learning about the customs and beliefs of others and state that the subject helps them to understand and respect people from the faith groups studied.

75. Throughout the school, a major strength within the teaching is the role model of respect for the views of others that the teachers provide. In the Years 1 and 2 the pupils benefit from the good teaching of the coordinator for this age group, who creates a strong spiritual element within her lessons. Teaching in the Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory. Teachers present the pupils with opportunities to reflect upon their own actions, lives and beliefs. In Year 3, they use the role models of Mother Teresa and St Francis of Assisi to help the pupils understand how Christians make choices in their lives. The pupils then consider how they could help and improve the lives of others. In Year 6, the pupils have studied the creation story from the Christian tradition and from around the world and have the opportunity to consider very challenging questions; for example, about the creation of the world and about good and evil. The higher ability pupils respond well to these questions and respect the views of others.
76. The management of the subject is shared by two coordinators, one for Years 1 and 2, the other for Years 3 to 6. The monitoring of the curriculum and of the teaching remains divided. The teaching of the major world religions lacks visits to places of worship or visitors to enrich the pupils' learning. There are good curriculum links to science and to the personal and social education but opportunities to develop literacy skills are insufficient.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

77. **Art and design** was not a focus during the inspection. The work on display and in the pupils' sketchbooks shows that this subject is taught throughout the school. However, the time allocation is less than that recommended and therefore the pupils have insufficient time to develop their skills and to learn in appropriate depth about the artists that they study.
78. In **design and technology**, due to timetabling constraints, only two lessons were seen in Years 1 and 2, and only one lesson in Years 3 to 6. It is therefore not possible to form an overall judgement about provision. Achievement is satisfactory in Year 2 and standards are average but there is insufficient evidence to form judgements about achievement and standards in Year 6. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with hearing impairment are well supported and their achievement is good. In the two lessons seen in Years 1 and 2, the teaching was good. The teaching was well matched to the needs of these pupils. From discussions with pupils in these classes and with others, it is clear that teachers have good subject knowledge and pupils respond well to this. Pupils use good technical vocabulary such as *joining*, *moving*, *sliding* and *pivot*. The tasks are relevant. In one of the classes, pupils were using their skills to create a display about bonfire night and make a spinning catherine wheel. Unprompted during the main part of the lesson, they safely made holes in card using a pencil and plasticine before inserting a split pin. They had good attitudes to their learning and each other and took great delight in looking at and suggesting ways to improve each other's models. Some links are made with other subjects and this aspect is satisfactory.
79. The evidence available shows that the pupils in Years 1 and 2 experience an appropriate curriculum in **design and technology**, enabling them to develop their skills, techniques, knowledge and understanding satisfactorily. There is a good focus on the three key areas of design, making and evaluation in the teaching and pupils' learning. In Years 3 to 6, the limited evidence points to the subject being underdeveloped. The lesson seen did not sufficiently build on pupils' knowledge of different materials and so the task was not well matched to their learning needs. From talking to pupils in Year 6, there are some inconsistencies in the teaching of the subject in Years 5 and 6. This means that some pupils are being disadvantaged as they not being given the same opportunities of researching, designing, making and evaluating a finished task. Pupils in Year 6 had made puppets but only pupils from one of the three classes in this year group had undertaken the full range of design and technology skills. Teachers had planned for pupils to write plays in literacy for the puppets but this has been put on hold due to the Year 6 residential visit. The timetables throughout the school suggest that the time allocation in some classes is short of the nationally recommended time.
80. Only three lessons in **music** were seen and it is not possible to make a judgement about the provision or the standards achieved. In a Year 2 lesson, where the class teacher had a clear understanding of the subject, she was able to use questions to extend the learning of all pupils of all abilities in the lesson. The pupils began by singing enthusiastically linking a sound with an action. The classteacher then reinforced their reading skills by holding up pictures with words for the pupils who then created a matching sound with percussion instruments to help 'tell' the story. All of the pupils were enthusiastic. They were eager to select and play an instrument and so made progress in the lesson. In Year 6, the pupils were able to create their own

lyrics to a well-known song which they did by working co-operatively in small groups which enabled the classteacher to support those who needed help. Some pupils were able to perform their lyrics to the rest of the class at the end of the lesson. Pupils listen carefully to music as they enter and leave assemblies and have a positive attitude to the subject. There are good resources to give pupils opportunities to play a range of percussion instruments. Opportunity is provided to learn to play a range of musical instruments. Subject leadership is good. The coordinator has overseen the introduction of an effective new scheme of work suited to non-specialist teachers and adapted to suit the needs of this newly amalgamated school.

### **Physical education**

The provision for physical education is good. Achievement is good throughout. Standards are above average in Year 2 and Year 6. Teaching is good overall. Leadership is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is good coverage of all areas of the curriculum.
- Opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities are good for pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- Assessment procedures are underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

81. The substantial majority of the pupils are achieving to potential. In Year 6, about 80 per cent are on course to attain or exceed the nationally expected level by the end of the school year. Almost all of the pupils who transferred from Year 2 at the start of the school year are attaining or exceeding the expected level. Pupils study all elements of the National Curriculum programme including swimming in Year 4. Teaching and learning are always satisfactory and frequently good or very good. The two coordinators work well together as a team offering support, advice and help with planning to colleagues. The coordinator for Years 3 to 6 is currently training with the Schools' Coordinator Partnership Programme. In a very good hockey lesson the learning was broken down into small steps, with clear explanations and opportunities for the pupils to practise. The lively pace of the lesson held the attention of the pupils and they made very good progress.

82. A variety of out of school clubs are offered to pupils in Years 3 to 6 and the extra-curricular provision for sports is good overall. This provision includes football, netball and cricket, promoting competitive team sports adequately. A dance club for Year 4 pupils is funded by the Schools' Coordinator Partnership Programme. Pupils successfully take part in a number of tournaments, including swimming, lacrosse, cross-country and tennis. An example of high achievement is the girls' team winning the Luton Schools' Football Trophy. Assessment procedures are not yet fully in place. The coordinators are aware that this is a development point. They also plan to monitor lessons across the school next year.

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

The provision for the pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is better than that frequently provided and is good overall. The subject incorporates sex and relationships education and attention to the use and harmful effects of drugs. The subject significantly

contributes to the good relationships and respect for the views of others found within the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum is well planned across all the classes of the school.
- The subject significantly contributes to the good relationships and respect for the views of others found within the school.

### **Commentary**

83. This subject is at the heart of the school promoting the school's aims of care, co-operation and consideration, pupils of all ages are developing a good, balanced knowledge of all aspects of the programme of study for this subject. Teaching is through traditional lessons and through *circle time*<sup>4</sup>, which give the pupils an opportunity to express their views about moral, social and personal matters and to develop conflict resolution skills. Additional activities, such as raising money for charities through the house system and the school council, substantially contribute to the citizenship aspect of the provision. The schools reward systems effectively supports the teaching. In Year 6, the pupils are well prepared for the transition to their secondary school.
84. Pupils in Year 2, in a circle time lesson, clearly demonstrated that they understand the need for rules and that they have the self-control to abide by them. They had the self-confidence to consider their own needs and those of others, and the pupils with average or better speaking skills explained how they would resolve conflicts. In Year 4, the pupils contribute well to discussions, showing they understand their responsibility for their own health and have the knowledge necessary to achieve a healthy lifestyle. By Year 6, the pupils' willingness to take responsibility is good. They have a good understanding of right and wrong. The respect the views of others and understand their responsibilities of living as part of a community.
85. The quality of the teaching is considerably varied but is satisfactory overall. Worry boxes are situated in classrooms so that pupils can anonymously express their concerns. These boxes are an innovation that teachers use as a starting point in circle time. This is good practice focusing upon the needs of the pupils. Learning support assistants are used constructively to include the pupils with special educational needs into the discussions, but they are under-used to help the pupils for whom English is not a first language.
86. Since the merger, the two enthusiastic coordinators have reviewed the curriculum to improve continuity and progression. No monitoring of the teaching has taken place and there is a lack of assessment procedures. The two coordinators have suitable objectives for improving the subject but their plans do not include measuring the impact of any developments. The school is working towards healthy school accreditation.

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<sup>4</sup> Circle time refers to short lessons aimed at furthering pupils' personal development. It gets its name from the usual practice of seating everybody in a large circle.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Value for money provided by the school	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	4
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>4</b>
Attendance	6
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7). Not applicable (8).*