

INSPECTION REPORT

POTTEN END CHURCH OF ENGLAND FIRST SCHOOL

Berkhamsted

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117414

Acting Headteacher: Mrs J Senior

Lead inspector: Mr G Bassett

Dates of inspection: 7th - 9th March 2005

Inspection number: 267509

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: Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils: 3 - 9
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 158
School address: Church Road
Potten End
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire
Postcode: HP4 2QY
Telephone number: (01442) 865 022
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mrs M Purdy
governors:
Date of previous March 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Potten End Church of England First School is voluntary controlled and is situated in the village of Potten End near Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. It is smaller than other primary schools. It serves its immediate locality and also an area of the nearby town of Hemel Hempstead. The socio-economic status of the area served by the school is broadly average. There are 158 pupils on roll (61 girls and 72 boys), nearly all of whom are of white British origin. There are five classes plus a part-time Nursery class with 25 children. Since September 2004 there has been an acting headteacher, a part-time, newly qualified teacher in the Nursery and an unqualified teacher in Year 4. No pupils are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Six pupils have joined the school and 13 have left during the past year. The proportion of pupils registered for free school meals is below the national average, but the proportion actually entitled is average. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs (SEN), mainly relates to moderate learning difficulties, and for those with statements is below the national average. The children join the Reception class full time in September and January of the school year in which they become five and most have previously attended the school's Nursery class part time. The school's assessments show that the pupils' attainment on entry into the Reception class covers a wide range of ability but is broadly average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|--------------|----------------|---|
| 21500 | Mr G Bassett | Lead inspector | Mathematics Information and communication technology (ICT) Music |
| 8937 | Mr H Allen | Lay inspector | |
| 22990 | Mr C Furniss | Team inspector | English History Geography Religious education English as an additional language |
| 23055 | Mrs W Lucas | Team inspector | Science Physical education Foundation Stage Special educational needs Art and design Design and technology |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is effective despite a climate of uncertainty caused by the delay in appointing a permanent headteacher. Under the good leadership of the acting headteacher, all the staff are committed to providing a very caring environment for all pupils and the school's ethos is very good. The pupils' standards are above average in mathematics and science and well above average in English. The pupils do as well as they can and they achieve well by the end of Year 4. They are very well behaved and have very good attitudes to their learning. The parents express very positive views about the quality of education provided by the school. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The acting headteacher provides effective leadership.
- The school improvement plan, produced last year, does not provide clear direction.
- Teaching is good overall but some teachers in the younger age groups do not always challenge the higher attaining pupils well enough.
- The pupils' standards are above the expected levels and their achievement is good by the end of Year 4.
- The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and relationships are excellent.
- The roles of the subject leaders are not sufficiently developed because of lack of training opportunities.
- The school cares very well for all pupils.
- Information to parents is excellent and the links with the parents, the community and with other schools are very good.

Improvement since the last inspection in 1999 has been satisfactory considering the two changes in the headship that have occurred since then. The school has dealt well with the issues raised at that time. The quality of the curriculum has remained good and the teaching is good. The pupils' standards on entry to the Reception class have declined since the last inspection but the above expected levels by the end of Year 4 shows that the pupils still achieve well by the time they leave. The pupils are much more aware of other people's cultures and traditions and this aspect is now a strength. The standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are now in line with expected levels. Good improvements have been made to the provision for children in the Foundation Stage.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with: | all schools | | | similar schools |
|---|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2004 |
| reading | C | A | D | E |
| writing | C | A | C | E |
| mathematics | B | C | D | E |

Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average. Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals.

The pupils' achievement by the end of Year 2 and by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4 is good. Standards in Year 4 are well above average in English and

above average in mathematics and science. The pupils currently in Year 2 attain standards that are above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. This is better than the group who took the tests in 2004. In the Nursery class the children gain confidence and achieve satisfactorily. The children enter the Reception class with standards broadly in line with expected levels. Most of the current group of children in the Reception class achieve satisfactorily and are on course to reach the expected learning goals. When test results for 2004 are compared with those in schools having a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, the pupils' performances in reading, writing and mathematics are well below average. However, this does not represent an accurate picture because a significant number of parents fail to register their children's eligibility for free meals. Taking this factor into account, the pupils' performance is closer to that of similar schools. In ICT and religious education, standards are broadly as expected throughout the school and the pupils achieve satisfactorily. The pupils' standards in design and technology, history, geography and physical education are broadly in line with expected levels by the end of Year 2. In Year 4, standards are above expected levels in history and geography. Throughout the school the pupils' standards in art and design and in their singing are above the expected levels for their ages.

The pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development is very good. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good both in and around the school. Attendance is above average and pupils arrive punctually, but too many pupils are absent for holidays during term time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good overall and is sometimes very good, especially in Year 4. Most of the teachers use effective teaching methods and have high expectations for the pupils' achievements, although in some classes the higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. The pupils' presentation of their work and their handwriting style are not always good enough. There are good arrangements at the end of each term to formally assess and track what each pupil can do in English, mathematics and science. The curriculum is broad and well balanced. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory, but there is a lack of space for small group work and storage. There are very good procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. The support and guidance for pupils are also very good. The links with parents, other schools and with the community are very good and the information given to parents is excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The leadership by the acting headteacher is good. Since she took up the post at the start of the school year, she has brought about many much-needed improvements to the school's management in a context of uncertainty caused by the delay in appointing a permanent headteacher. Produced last year, the school improvement plan is not good enough to move the school further forward. Good strategies are being developed to ensure that the pupils' standards and achievements are of the highest priority. The acting headteacher ensures that the school is strongly committed to include all pupils in its life and work. **The management of the school is satisfactory.** The roles of subject leaders are being developed but still have some way to go to be sufficiently effective. The leadership of both the Foundation Stage and of special educational needs is good. The governance of the school is satisfactory but governors have only recently begun to carry out their roles to good effect. The governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The parents give tremendous support. They have very positive views of the school and are especially happy with the quality of the teaching, the way their children develop personally and how staff expect their children to work hard. The pupils enjoy their lessons and have a high level of interest in what they do. The pupils are enthusiastic and interested and respond willingly to answer questions.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Secure the appointment of a permanent headteacher as soon as possible.
- Improve the effectiveness of the teaching methods of some teachers to raise their expectations and level of challenge in the tasks they set, especially for the higher attaining pupils.
- Strengthen the role of the subject leaders with additional training opportunities.
- Ensure that the school improvement plan gives clear guidelines for future developments and targets to show when objectives have been met.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

The children enter the Nursery class with broadly average standards in most areas of learning but are slightly above expected levels in the social skills and in their speaking and listening skills. Most of the children are on course to reach the expected goals in all areas of learning by the end of Reception. At the end of Year 2 the pupils achieve well and their standards are above expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics and science. The pupils in Year 4 achieve well and attain standards in mathematics and science that are above the expected levels for their age. In English, they achieve very well and attain standards that are well above the expected levels for their age.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most of the children in Reception class are on course to exceed the goals set for them in speaking and listening, physical development and social development.
- Throughout Year 1 the pupils progress well to achieve standards above the expected levels for their age.
- Standards in Year 2 are above expected levels in reading, writing, mathematics and science; although the most recent test results show standards are below average.
- The higher attaining pupils in Year 2 are not challenged sufficiently well.
- By the time the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4 they achieve well overall and very well in English.

Commentary

1. The pupils enter the Reception class from the Nursery with standards that are broadly average for their age. The standards on entry to the Reception class have been falling since the last inspection and these standards are lower than at the time of the last inspection when attainment on entry was above average.
2. During their time in the Nursery class the children gain confidence and achieve satisfactorily in developing their skills and knowledge across all the areas of learning. They make good progress and settle to the routines of the class and school very well. They enter the Reception class with above expected levels of attainment in speaking and listening, personal and social skills and physical development. In the other areas of learning, their standards are broadly average.
3. Most of the current group of children in the Reception class achieve satisfactorily and are on course to reach the goals set for them by the time they enter Year 1. In their speaking and listening skills and in their physical and social development they are above the expected levels for their age and are likely to exceed the goals. Throughout Year 1 the pupils achieve well and make good progress to achieve standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science that are above the expected levels.
4. The school took part in the national trial of teacher assessments for the end of Year 2 in 2004. There was a misunderstanding in the school about the management and the requirements needed to carry out these national trial assessment procedures and some missed training opportunities. This caused confusion about the assessment

procedures and consequently the results cannot be relied upon to provide an accurate picture of the performance of these children. The inspection confirmed that the results of these assessments are not an accurate picture of the standards reached by the pupils in that year group.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| reading | 15.3 (17.6) | 15.7 (15.8) |
| writing | 14.5 (16.5) | 14.6 (14.4) |
| mathematics | 15.5 (16.6) | 16.3 (16.5) |

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. The results above show that the school's performance was below average and lower than in the previous year. However, it is clear from the school's records that this particular year group attained above average standards. The school tracking records show that when they were in Year 1 they also attained standards that were above expected levels for their age. During the inspection, the work of all these pupils (now in Year 3) was a focus for thorough scrutiny by the inspection team. This scrutiny shows that the pupils' performance in reading, writing and mathematics is currently above expected levels for their age.
6. Nevertheless, there has been a drop in standards in reading, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2 since the last inspection, when standards were judged to be well above average. The reasons for this decline can be attributed to the fact that the pupils' attainment on entry to the school has fallen to broadly average from above average. Currently, the pupils' standards in Year 2 are above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science and, considering their average attainment on entry to the school, they achieve well. However, the teaching does not challenge all the higher attaining pupils sufficiently well to raise their standards to the higher Level 3. This had a detrimental impact upon the performance of the class overall even though most reach the expected standard for their age. In the current work seen, there is no significant difference between the standards achieved by boys and girls.
7. The long-term trend shows that the school's Year 2 results in reading, writing and mathematics in recent years (2002 to 2004), is above the national performance. When test results are compared with those in schools having a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, the pupils' performance in reading, writing and mathematics is low. However, this does not represent the full picture – a significant number of parents fail to register their children's eligibility for free meals and the proportion actually entitled to free meals is higher than recorded. When this is taken into account, the pupils' performance is closer to that of similar schools.
8. The present Year 4 cohort entered the Reception class with standards in literacy and numeracy that were broadly average. Currently, the standards of work in Year 4 are well above the expected level in English and the pupils achieve very well. In mathematics and science, the pupils' standards are above expected levels and they achieve well because of the good and often very good teaching in Years 3 and 4.
9. There has been a significant improvement in the pupils' work in information and communication technology (ICT) and in religious education and standards are now broadly as expected throughout the school and the pupils achieve satisfactorily. Throughout the school the pupils' standards in art and design and in their singing are

above the expected levels for their ages. By the end of Year 2 the pupils' standards in design and technology, history and geography are broadly in line with expected levels. In Year 4, standards are above expected levels in history and geography and broadly as expected in art and design and design and technology.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are very good and their behaviour is good. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Attendance is above average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils have excellent relationships.
- Attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- The pupils' cultural and multi-cultural awareness is very good.

Commentary

10. The school has maintained the high standards found at the time of the last inspection. The pupils have very good attitudes throughout the school. They are happy; they like the school and enjoy the work they are doing. As a result they behave very well. This was seen in the very good attitudes and behaviour in lessons, the behaviour in and around the school and through discussions with pupils. The pupils are friendly, helpful, polite and keen to talk about what they are doing. Even when the teaching lacks pace and the work is less than challenging, pupils may lose focus but they are well-behaved and they are keen to learn.
11. The school promotes excellent relationships, between staff and pupils and between pupils. The pupils respond excellently. There is a real commitment to making sure that pupils can feel happy and free from bullying and this is something about which staff are very vigilant. Pupils also are very caring of each other and the buddy system, where older pupils look out for and help younger ones, is a good example of this. There is an ethos of respect for and caring for others in this very inclusive school.
12. Pupils are very self-confident and almost all are willing to greet and talk to adults. They are keen to take responsibility, whether it is representing their class on the school council, helping to organise the various activities, such as assemblies, or working independently and cooperatively during lessons. It is an attitude that staff develop very well, through being very good role models and through personal and social education and circle time.
13. The pupils' spiritual development is good and is promoted well by the school, through religious education, through assemblies and through a range of visits and visitors. The pupils' moral and social development is very good and this is very well reflected in the attitudes, behaviour and relationships. During the last inspection in 1999, one of the key issues was the need to raise awareness of life in a culturally diverse society. This is now very good and is a strength of the school. The pupils' understanding of their own cultural heritage and of the benefits of multi-cultural diversity are very well developed. This is done through the wide and varied range of visitors to the school, assemblies and celebrations of festivals such as Chinese New Year and Divali, along with Christian celebrations of Easter and Christmas etc. Different cultures, faiths and traditions are covered well through religious education.

Attendance

14. The attendance is above the national average and pupils are punctual. Some parents still take their children out of school during term time for holidays even though the school has advised them of the difficulties it causes the school and their children.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data | 4.6 | School data | 0.1 |
| National data | 5.4 | National data | 0.4 |

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

Exclusions

15. There were no exclusions last year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good overall. The teaching is good overall, the curriculum is broad and well balanced and lessons are well planned. The school cares for its pupils very well and listens to their views carefully. The accommodation is satisfactory overall but there is a lack space for small group work and storage. The links with parents, the community and other schools are very good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good overall and, as a consequence, the pupils learn well, having a very good capacity to work both independently and with others. The quality of assessment procedures is good and, in Years 3 and 4 especially, the pupils have a very good awareness of how they can improve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching in each classroom has brought about improved standards.
- The pupils are well managed and there is a good balance of whole class and individual activities.
- The work is not always challenging enough for the more able pupils in the younger classes.
- The teaching and support given to the pupils with special educational needs is good.

Commentary

16. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with examples of very good teaching in Years 3 and 4. In over three quarters of the lessons the quality of teaching was good and sometimes better but fewer lessons were very good during this inspection compared with the previous inspection. This is because of the changes in staffing and the recent lack of focus on developing the quality of teaching. The acting headteacher has put a significant emphasis upon monitoring and improving classroom practice and this strategy is proving to be successful. There were no unsatisfactory lessons during the inspection and this is an improvement since the last inspection.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 28 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0 | 4 | 18 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

17. When the teaching is either good or better the teachers prepare lessons well, making them relevant to the pupils' needs and building upon what they already know. The teachers identify what the pupils should learn by the end of each lesson and explain these objectives to the pupils effectively in most lessons. The teachers refer to these objectives at the end of the lesson to assess how well the pupils have achieved. There is a good balance between teacher-directed learning and pupils learning independently so that all the pupils, including those with SEN, have maximum opportunities to produce work of good quality. The teaching in science investigations in Year 4 was particularly very good with pupils given many opportunities to experiment and to form their own direction to their experiments.
18. The pupils are well managed and there is a good balance between individual, group and whole-class activities within the classrooms. Consequently, the pupils are well behaved and are interested in their lessons. They demonstrate a good level of confidence and enthusiasm. However, because of a lack of space, the school finds it difficult to find an area to teach small groups and often pupils with special educational needs are taught in the corridors and in the staff room. This is not satisfactory.
19. In the lessons where the teaching was satisfactory, the work was not always sufficiently challenging for all pupils. Some of the teachers in the younger age groups did not have sufficiently high expectations and the higher attaining pupils were not challenged enough with tasks that stretched their capacity.
20. The teachers mark pupils' work regularly and the quality of marking is good overall because it informs the pupils how they can improve. It is clear from the pupils' books that the quality of marking has improved significantly since the beginning of the school year. However, the pupils' presentation of their work and their handwriting are often untidy and much of the work completed on work sheets is not collected together or dated and this is unsatisfactory.
21. The last inspection judged the assessment procedures to be very good and since then the school has developed very good tracking systems to trace each pupil's progress and achievements by the end of each year. This has been a main focus for development and records effectively the results from end of term tests and assessments carried out at the end of topics to predict what each pupil should achieve at the end of Year 4. This prediction is adjusted as more information is collated about each pupil's progress. Since the beginning of the school year, the assessment procedures in the classrooms for the core subjects have been revised and standardised so that all teachers record what each pupil can do in a way that is easier to interpret. This makes comparison from one class to the next much easier to communicate as the pupils move up through the school. These new records are used to identify which pupils need extra work to extend their above average standards and which pupils need additional support to help them to understand what they have been taught previously. Records are checked and reviewed frequently and changes to the teaching programme are made if necessary. Consequently, the assessment

procedures and the uses that the teachers make of these records are good overall. The assessment records are in the early stages of development for the foundation subjects but are a priority for the subject leaders.

22. The quality of teaching and learning in the Nursery and Reception classes is now good and has improved significantly since the last inspection when it was satisfactory. The quality of teaching and the planning for all areas of learning is monitored across both classes effectively by the teacher in co-operation with the acting headteacher. The planning of lessons and the use of time is good and the activities are appropriately balanced between those that are teacher directed and those that are child initiated.
23. The pupils with special educational needs are well supported by class teachers and support staff. They are taught well and their needs are mostly met well. The work pupils carry out, including those who have a statement of special need, is appropriately guided by their individual educational plans, which clearly set out precise targets for them to meet. The pupils are given opportunities to evaluate their own progress, which develops their confidence and contributes to raising their attainment. Due to the very good support from learning support assistants, class teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), the pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into classroom practice.

The curriculum

24. The school provides a good, broad and well-balanced curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils and the requirements of the National Curriculum and the local agreed syllabus for religious education are met effectively. A well-planned and very broad range of visits and visitors provides very good enrichment of the curriculum and makes it more interesting and relevant to the pupils. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a well balanced and broad curriculum for all pupils.
- The curriculum is enriched very well by a wide range of visits and visitors.
- The school provides very well for pupils' personal and social development.
- There is very good equality of access to all school opportunities for all pupils.
- There is no really suitable place where pupils with special educational needs can be taken for individual or group work.
- The need to rely on old computers in corridors and classrooms is restricting opportunities to improve and develop ICT skills.

Commentary

25. The school provides a good, broad and well balanced curriculum that effectively meets the needs of pupils in all areas of the National Curriculum and religious education. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall.
26. Policies are in place for all subjects and for sex education and drugs awareness. Learning opportunities for children under five are good. The provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is very good and the school now provides for pupils' cultural development very well, including their awareness of living in a multi-cultural society.

27. This is a very inclusive school; there is a really strong commitment to making sure that all pupils have equal opportunities to benefit from all the school has to offer. There is a good match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum and they are well supported by a committed group of classroom assistants, who make a positive contribution to pupils' learning.
28. The pupils have lots of opportunities to go on visits and many people visit the school and have a very positive effect upon the pupils' learning. The visitors enhance a wide range of subjects, making learning more interesting and relevant to the pupils but they also broaden pupils' personal and social horizons. Trips include visits to museums, to the science centre, to mosques and churches, to a model village, concerts and a zoo. The World War II Day includes an enactment of the evacuation of children during the war and pupils trundle down to the local scout hut, complete with gas mask boxes, to be allocated their hosts! Year 4 pupils have two residential visits. Visitors have included an African dance workshop, storytelling from other cultures, a police crime-prevention team, a Japanese exchange student, an Indian dance troupe and a skipping workshop. The workshop on Brazilian samba music observed during the inspection was very good, enriching pupils' musical and cultural understanding considerably. It was also very enjoyable. A few parents felt that the range of after school clubs could be better, but the inspection team feel that, given the size of school and the age range of the pupils, the range of clubs is satisfactory.
29. The pupils with special educational needs have very good access to all areas of the curriculum, including after school clubs. Precise individual plans are written by the teachers, in conjunction with the co-ordinator, to ensure targets are achievable and appropriate. Class teachers carefully include appropriate tasks in their day-to-day planning and effective use of good resources enables pupils to work successfully towards their identified targets.
30. Resources are generally satisfactory but there are too many old computers being used in classrooms and corridors. These are not really adequate and the age of these computers limits opportunities to develop ICT skills further. Although there is not a lot of space and there are some storage problems, accommodation generally is satisfactory. There is, however, no room or suitable area where staff can withdraw groups of pupils who need extra support and this especially limits the support of those with special educational needs. The Nursery facilities used by the school are good, but the limited access and the constant need to put away and take out equipment are somewhat restrictive.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. The support, advice and guidance for pupils are very good. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is also very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff are excellent role models for pupils.
- Pupils are confident they can take any problems to teachers and teaching assistants.
- The extent to which each pupil has a trusting relationship with adults is excellent. Pupils' views are valued by the school and acted upon.
- Effective monitoring and assessment helps develop the whole child.
- Induction arrangements for pupils, including those starting other than at normal entry times, are very good.

- The school is unable to fully utilise the hall because an appropriate risk assessment has not been carried out.

Commentary

31. The school has very successfully maintained the high quality provision of support, guidance and pupil welfare reported at the time of the last inspection. Some aspects are now even stronger.
32. The teamwork and warmth shown between all members of staff creates an atmosphere where pupils feel enabled and encouraged to support each other. The extent of the buddying with older pupils looking after younger ones is very impressive and even continues when pupils leave Potten End and meet up with ex-pupils at middle school who instinctively continue their mentoring role.
33. All pupils are very happy at school, which ensures they can concentrate on their learning. However, when they do have problems they are confident they can talk to teachers and teaching assistants. All pupils who were asked said “the teachers sort things out for us”. The extent to which each pupil has a good and trusting relationship with adults in the school is excellent.
34. The opinions of pupils are valued by the school. The knowledge that they are treated with respect and their opinions matter helps build their confidence and self-esteem. A school council with representatives from each class was introduced this year. It is very significant that the school’s caring ethos has been reflected in the work of the school council, with pupils voluntarily organising events to raise funds for those less fortunate than themselves.
35. The pupils with special educational needs are identified during their first term in school and are given informal support by the teacher and learning support assistant. Their progress is carefully monitored, recorded and adjusted as necessary to ensure teaching matches their needs at an early stage. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept up to date with their progress with regular meetings and with precise, relevant information.
36. Staff maintain comprehensive assessment records that are used well to regularly review progress and set future targets. This helps to ensure all pupils progress at a rate in line with their ability at any point in time. Pupils enjoy doing well and understand what they need to do to improve. This helps them progress well and results in pupils demonstrating a level of confidence above their years. As well as academic achievement, the school also monitors pupils’ personal development and will set appropriate targets for such things as improving behaviour and encouraging the pupils to better engage in lessons. This helps develop every child into someone who is confident and enjoys their learning by the time they move on to their next school.
37. Everyone arriving at Potten End is made to feel welcome. The very good induction arrangements enable all pupils to settle into school life quickly. Pupils who arrive other than the normal starting point of Nursery or Reception class are made to feel welcome by their peers and special buddies are employed to ensure everyone has friends at this very important time. Parents of pupils who transferred to Potten End from other schools were very complimentary about how welcome they and their children were made to feel.
38. The school’s desire to ensure the good welfare of its pupils is reflected in the good health and safety procedures, including first aid and child protection. Appropriate risk assessments are conducted, including for individual pupils who have medical or behaviour problems. As a result, all pupils are able to take part in nearly all activities organised by the school. However, the school has not carried out appropriate risk

assessments to ensure the limited resources of the school can be fully utilised. For example, the school has not overcome the problems of the storage and clutter in the hall that currently prevent activities such as ball games being played.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The links with parents are very good and the information provided for them is excellent. The links with the community and other schools are also very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The tremendous support the school receives from parents and the local community.
- Parents are very satisfied with all aspects of the school.
- The amount and quality of information parents receive about their children's progress is excellent.
- The genuine "open door" policy giving parents access to teachers when needed.
- The school deals very effectively with any concerns of parents.

Commentary

39. The school has improved on the good links with the parents and the community reported at the last inspection.
40. The parents are confident the school is well run and that it provides the best possible education for their children. The school consults with parents on a regular basis to ensure they are happy with what is happening.
41. The parents are confident they can talk to teachers to discuss any concerns when they take their children to, or collect them from school. Good use is also made of the telephone and home/school books to exchange information with the school. In partnership, teachers and parents are able to ensure children are happy at school and therefore as receptive as possible to learning new things.
42. The parents are aware of the work their children are doing in school because of the curriculum information they receive from class teachers on a regular basis. The quality of the reports produced for parents on a termly basis is excellent and gives parents a good understanding of how well their children are doing. The regular setting and review of targets enables parents to support their children's learning. Parents of children who at times struggle with their work also receive Individual Education Plans that provide even more detailed information of how their child is progressing and any special support he or she is receiving. The regular updates parents receive about their children enable them to help them at home. However, the school accepts it needs to ensure parents are provided with more information in certain areas as to how best to support their child with homework, for example in numeracy.
43. The parents are confident they can discuss any problems with staff at the school and they confirm that the school responds very positively to any issues they raise. As a result of the good relationships teachers have with parents they are usually able to deal with problems speedily and informally. This helps greatly for a happy school.
44. The very good relationships seen between staff and pupils extend to parents and the local community. Potten End is truly a community school. The school has an active "Parent Teacher and Friends Association" that organises social and fundraising

activities. The recent addition of the Millennium walkway is a very good example of how pupils have benefited from the hard work of the PTA, the governors and the generosity of the local community. Much larger schools would be very envious of the thousands of pounds the school was able to raise in order to provide such a significant upgrade to the school building. As well as supporting the school financially, the local community also is actively involved in the education of its pupils. The manner in which the local residents take part in Potten End wartime evacuee project is an impressive example of how the community values and supports the school. The children also enjoy the wonderful experience of stepping back in time when visiting the village shop just over the road from the school.

45. The school benefits from very good links with other schools. Many children are well known to staff when they begin at Potten End because they have attended the pre-school group that is on site. Pupils do not find the transition to the middle school stressful because of the good links between the school cluster and the involvement of former Potten End pupils in the induction process. Staff too benefit from sharing expertise with other schools and support units; for example regarding special educational needs.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The acting headteacher has a clear sense of purpose and provides good leadership. The effectiveness of the management is satisfactory but is hampered by the uncertainty about the appointment of a new headteacher. The governance of the school is satisfactory. The subject leaders are now providing a satisfactory direction to the development of their subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting headteacher, with the full support of all the staff and governors, is committed to securing a better quality of education in the school.
- The subject leaders, without previous training and opportunities to take full responsibility for their subjects, are now beginning to develop their management roles but much remains to be done.
- The improvement plan, produced last year, is not good enough to allow the school to fulfil its vision of the future developments for the school.
- The school has a very good commitment to include all pupils in all that it does.
- The chair of governors and the governing body give the headteacher and the school good support.
- The quality of management of the school is satisfactory but there is some uncertainty caused by the difficult position in appointing a permanent headteacher.
- The management of the Foundation Stage is good.
- The management of special educational needs is good.
- The school has a good monitoring procedure to ensure that funds are allocated sensibly and carefully.

Commentary

46. The quality of leadership of the acting headteacher is good and she has set a good role model for improvement by her own unceasing efforts to improve the school. She is fully committed to improving the quality of education and to developing a school where every child is totally included in all that is done. She is limited in what she can do by the fact that there is uncertainty about the time of appointment of a new

headteacher. This is a significant barrier because it is holding back the leadership and management of the school. In her temporary post, the acting headteacher is well organised and she has made significant changes and improvements to the quality of education throughout the school. She has the full support of the staff, the governors and parents.

47. The acting headteacher has tried to adapt the main objectives in the school improvement plan, which was written before she took up post, and to fulfil some of its targets, however its aims are not precise and tasks for completion, costs of development and success criteria are not explicit. The school's priorities are now usefully highlighted on a short-term action plan prepared with the involvement of all staff and shared with the governing body. The priorities focus appropriately upon improving the quality of teaching throughout the school to raise standards and pupils' achievement. There has already been a marked, beneficial impact of this initiative, particularly so in Years 2 and 4 where additional support by an advanced skills teacher and a supporting headteacher has been provided by the local education authority.
48. The management of the school at this stage is no better than satisfactory because of the limited time that the acting headteacher has had to pay attention to the many areas in need of improvement. Through training and performance management, the quality of teaching is improving and good, and sometimes very good, teaching is developing successfully. The acting headteacher and the subject leaders have devised good strategies to monitor and evaluate the teaching and learning in each classroom and these are having a very good impact upon raising the quality of teaching throughout all classes. However, there is still some way to go to make the subject leaders fully effective.
49. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good and its curriculum is imaginative and very stimulating. The planning routines and the assessment procedures are good. The daily routines are very well organised to ensure that all children experience the six areas of learning appropriately.
50. The leadership and management of special educational needs by the co-ordinator are good. Up-to-date policies and procedures are in place and detailed, individual education programmes for each pupil are regularly monitored by the co-ordinator to ensure consistency across the school. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is knowledgeable and has worked very hard to ensure that teachers are well informed of procedures to support their teaching. Regular meetings between teachers and the co-ordinator ensure records precisely reflect the needs of individual pupils. The co-ordinator has no designated teaching space in the school. This prevents the school maximising the specialist teaching skills which are available. Good relationships have been built up over time with various agencies including a much appreciated local education authority help -line and this, together with well organised procedures, ensure that pupils make good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans.
51. The governing body is led by a committed and very knowledgeable chair of governors. However, the governing body has only recently been brought up to full strength and for some time there were many vacancies. The governors have successfully re-established committees and have agreed upon procedures to ensure that their meetings are organised well with minutes from committees being made available well before full governors' meetings. There is now full compliance with statutory

requirements and many governors visit the school frequently and work closely with the acting headteacher and staff. All governors have followed training sessions and they now have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|---------|--|--------|
| Total income | 438,254 | Balance from previous year | 36,139 |
| Total expenditure | 451,295 | Balance carried forward to the next year | 23,098 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,949 | | |

52. The school has good systems for monitoring the income and expenditure and the governors have good and reliable procedures for ensuring prudent use of the money made available. The finance committee assists the acting headteacher effectively to maintain precise records and also helps to set the annual budget. Good principles are used to ensure that the school gets best value for money, when purchasing equipment such as the laptop computers or when carrying out school maintenance.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

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

The school has a Nursery and a Reception class for the education of children in the Foundation Stage. Nursery children attend in the afternoons only, while the Reception children begin school in two intakes, one at the beginning of the school year and one in January. There are two teachers and three support assistants who work with all the children. Teaching and learning have a number of good features and in particular, the good quality of planning and organisation, which contributes to the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Plans follow the recommended Foundation Stage curriculum and regular note taking, often by the classroom assistant, on the nature of individual children's responses to learning activities regularly takes place. This ensures that day-to-day and longer-term planning takes account of the progress individual children make. Teachers are knowledgeable about the way in which young children learn and have provided a well-planned and resourced curriculum which takes children's learning forward. The progress of all children, however, would accelerate if teaching methods provided more challenge, especially for the more able children.

Since the last inspection, the provision has improved in the Reception class and has been maintained in the Nursery, with an improvement in the balance between teacher led and child initiated activities. The children's physical, personal, social and emotional development is well supported by the use of the dedicated and enclosed areas for the children in the Nursery and Reception class.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school fosters very good relationships which make children eager to learn.
- Adults support them well in their learning resulting in a calm, purposeful atmosphere, which enables children to concentrate on activities for appropriate lengths of time.
- Children in the Nursery and the Reception class are given the responsibility to plan their own activities on a regular basis.

Commentary

53. Children in the Nursery and the Reception class enjoy school and are forming very good relationships with their peers and adults. As a result of good teaching, learning is good and children achieve well. From an early stage, children are given responsibility to plan their own activities, which ensure they are interested and sustain concentration. The good range of interesting, practical activities provided by staff stimulates children, encourages them to co-operate and supports their learning. The good interaction of adults provides very good role models who rapidly help children learn social skills. This, together with the very good support they receive, creates a calm, purposeful atmosphere, which develops their confidence. These

factors foster the children's eagerness to learn and results in almost all children being likely to exceed the expected goals by the end of the Reception Year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and all staff provide many opportunities for children to develop language skills through all areas of the curriculum.
- An interesting environment, which stimulates conversation, negotiation and discussion, helps to develop speaking and listening skills.
- A very good range of opportunities and good adult support encourage children to practise their writing skills throughout the day.
- Opportunities for higher attaining pupils to accelerate their writing skills are not always given.
- There is no analysis of school records to help teachers to predict more accurately the children's end of year standards and establish their rates of progress.

Commentary

54. Children enter school with average attainment. As a result of the very good opportunities provided, they are on course to exceed the early learning goals in speaking and listening skills and reach expected levels in reading and writing by the time they complete their Reception Year. The good variety of interesting activities and the good models of interaction provided by adults ensure that the children converse in pairs, in groups and with adults. For example, children playing in the sand use their negotiating skills when deciding where holes should be dug.
55. As a result of the variety of opportunities provided for children to present work, children are confident and choose to express themselves in writing throughout the day. With appropriate help and encouragement, most children use writing as a means of recording and read a range of familiar and common words. The oldest children use their phonic knowledge to write complete sentences and are beginning to write in sequence. However, opportunities for higher attaining pupils to accelerate their writing skills are not always given.
56. Children in the Reception class and Nursery class are given the opportunity to talk and play together on a regular basis, which makes a significant contribution to development of their speaking and listening skills in addition to contributing to their emotional and social development. Opportunities to show and explain their projects to the older pupils in the school develop their confidence to speak in different situations. Teaching is supported by good assessment procedures although there is not enough analysis of records to help the teachers predict the end of year standards and the rate of progress each child makes during the year. The children make good progress, and consequently standards remain at the same level as the last inspection despite the children's attainment on entry being currently lower.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A brisk start to lessons helps children to focus quickly on the tasks they need to do.
- A good range of practical and incidental opportunities supports learning well.
- The lack of challenge for the higher attaining children and under use of appropriate resources hinders progress.

Commentary

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The interesting range of practical activities available provides children with many opportunities to use mathematical language and incidental opportunities are also used well to reinforce learning. For example, when taking the register, children are required to work out how many children are absent from school when given the number who are in school. Imaginative tasks, such as when children are asked to indicate on a chart whether or not they have been on a train, put mathematics in context and encourage the children to take part in lessons. Computer programs are used to good effect to promote children's understanding, for example, of the comparative length of lines when drawing shapes. The children achieve satisfactorily and most are on course to reach the early learning goals by the end of Reception but the higher attaining children are not always challenged sufficiently and relevant resources are underused.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good first-hand experiences encourage children to be curious and they enjoy finding things out for themselves.
- Good use is made of the very accessible natural environment in the Nursery and Reception areas.

Commentary

57. Most children are on course to reach the goals expected by the end of the Reception Year. Teaching is good overall, and good management and organisation of the classes enable the children to take much opportunity to explore their environment and find things out for themselves. Structured activities in the Nursery, such as when children cleared a flower bed of weeds before planting pansies, enable them to ask questions and safely discover the wonder of nature. Children construct houses out of different materials following the story of the three little pigs and they use simple tools and techniques appropriately. They show interest in the computer and perform simple functions with help. They are beginning to discover the properties of sand when playing and they learn basic rules of the Highway Code when involved in riding their bikes outside. They talk about their families and higher attainers know their ages and where they come in relation to other members of the family. The very good support from adults ensures that children feel safe and confident and consequently willing to try anything new.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are given very good opportunities to make decisions, grow in independence and develop confidence through a good range of equipment and activities.
- The very good support and guidance of the adults enable children to develop well.
- Good balance between child initiated and teacher lead activities.
- Good outdoor facilities in the Nursery and Reception, which are accessible and well used.
- Activities cater very well for the personal, social and emotional development of all pupils.

Commentary

58. The children in both the Nursery and Reception classes have very good opportunities for physical development, through physical education lessons in the hall, during outside activities and during class lessons. Teaching and learning are good. Children achieve well and most are on course to exceed the goals expected for them by the end of the Reception Year. There is a very good balance between child initiated and teacher directed activities. Numerous opportunities to use the good range of equipment and take part in the interesting activities enable children to make decisions, grow in independence and develop confidence. Good outdoor facilities in both the Nursery and Reception class are accessible and well used and activities now cater well for the personal, social and emotional development of all pupils. The children hold their pencils correctly, thread beads with developing skill and show increasing control over clothing and fastenings. They are beginning to recognise the importance of keeping themselves safe. They thoroughly enjoy being active.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good appropriate support from adults enables children to attempt new tasks with confidence.
- Children are given the opportunity to experience a wide range of creative activities, which enables them to use their imaginations and develop their skills well.

Commentary

59. Children's standards in creative development are satisfactory. Work on display covers a wide range of media such as painting, collage, weaving, cutting and sticking. Staff plan a good range of stimulating activities, which are supported appropriately by adults. As a result of the very good support they receive, for example, the children's contributions to the whole school tapestry currently being undertaken are of a high standard and they carry out new activities with confidence. During self-initiated sessions, they co-operate well, painting and drawing in pairs and discussing what they are doing as they progress. In the Nursery they use their imaginations well as they run a hospital, pretending to be patients or doctors, while in the Reception class they run a

village shop taking it in turns to be in charge. The very good relationships and the range of interesting activities make their learning relevant while additionally enhancing their development in other areas of the curriculum.

60. Children in the Reception and Nursery class are building up a repertoire of songs and can be heard singing spontaneously as they carry out their chosen tasks. They find it fun to join in action songs during mathematics sessions such as singing “Ten fat sausages fry in a pan”, making appropriate actions and anticipating the next verse. As a result of a good balance between self-initiated and teacher lead activities, children are able to express their ideas and thoughts in a variety of ways while building up the appropriate skills they need. This results in children achieving satisfactorily and most are on course to reach the early learning goals by the end of the Reception Year.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- All pupils are achieving well.
- Attainment is well above the expected level in Year 4.
- Teaching is good and enables pupils to learn well.
- Some teachers do not always challenge the more able pupils enough.
- Presentation and handwriting are not good.
- Pupils behave very well and have very positive attitudes to English.
- The subject co-ordinator is monitoring the subject well.
- There is an action plan to improve the subject and further raise standards but it is too generalised and lacks focus.

COMMENTARY

61. The results of the national tests for pupils in Year 2 in 2004 show that the pupils' performance was broadly in line with expected levels in writing but below in reading. There were problems with the administration of these assessments and consequently, the results are not truly reflective of the pupils' standards. When comparisons are made with similar schools, then the performance was low. However, this does not represent the full picture – a significant number of parents fail to register their children's eligibility for free meals and the proportion actually entitled to free meals is higher than recorded. When this is taken into account, the pupils' performance is comparable to that of similar schools. Nevertheless, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in reading was broadly average but below the average in writing.

62. Lesson observations, reviews of pupils' work and discussions with pupils during the inspection show that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well in English. By the end of Year 2, standards are above the expected level and by the time pupils leave in Year 4 standards are well above the expected level. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.
63. Most pupils enter the school with a well-developed vocabulary. They listen well and are confident speakers. These skills are built on effectively through regular class discussions, frequent use of 'talking partners' and varied use of role play. The pupils in Year 2, for example, were seen talking about traditional tales and in partners and as a class they used 'hot seating' to imagine and talk about how Red Riding Hood and the Wolf behaved and felt. There were some perceptive and thoughtful questions being asked of the characters, such as, 'Were you disappointed in yourself when you tried to eat Red Riding Hood?' By Year 4 it is a real pleasure to engage pupils in conversation; they are confident and can express themselves very clearly and most have a very well-developed vocabulary.
64. Reading skills are at about the expected level when pupils enter the Reception class. By Year 2 they are above average and by Year 4 they are well above the expected level. Pupils enjoy reading and regularly read at school and at home. The home/school reading records are good and provide a valuable source of information for parents and carers to effectively support their children's learning. Many pupils read fluently and with feeling, understanding and expression. All pupils spoken to in Years 2, 3 and 4 were able to explain how to use contents pages and indices to help them find information.
65. Writing skills are not as well developed as reading, as has already been recognised by the school. However, standards at Year 2 are still a little above the expected level and by Year 4 they are well above the expected level. Pupils are given good opportunities to extend their writing skills in a variety of ways. During the inspection, Year 4 were seen developing 'scary' stories in a castle setting. Earlier in the week they were identifying key nouns and linking them with suitable adjectives to create (as they put it) 'an atmosphere', 'a mood' and 'a feeling' of 'scariness' without using the word scary. The pupils were clearly stimulated and challenged and the quality of work being produced by Wednesday was very high.
66. The quality of English teaching in the school is good and enables all pupils to learn well. No teaching is less than satisfactory and some teaching is very good. Teachers have very good relationships with the pupils and stimulate and encourage them so that they want to do well. In the better lessons, the pace is brisk and teachers use a variety of well-thought-out activities that focus pupils well. Teachers use question and answer sessions, with teachers asking questions of individual pupils well and extending and motivating them. Teachers manage pupils very well and have very high expectations of behaviour. However, sometimes the pace is rather slow and some teachers are not always challenging and extending the more able pupils sufficiently. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and classroom assistants work well with teachers. Assessment is good and teachers monitor pupils' progress well. Targets are given to all pupils and these and the learning objectives of lessons are referred to regularly in lessons and in marking so that pupils are given a clear idea of what and how to improve. These targets and the improved marking are recent innovations but pupils are already finding the benefits and are able to say how they are helped by them. Pupils enjoy the lessons; they behave very well and have a

very positive attitude to the subject. They work very well independently and co-operate very well – relationships being a strength of the school.

67. The role of subject leaders has only recently begun to be re-developed and the English leader has had the responsibility less than two terms. However, she has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. She monitors the subject well and has a clear picture of standards. She has developed an action plan for the future but although this does identify appropriate areas for improvement and strategies for development, it is too generalised and needs a sharper focus.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

68. Language and literacy are well supported across the curriculum, with pupils being given opportunities for independent and extended writing across a range of subjects, such as religious education, history and geography. Although pupils are regularly taught handwriting, the quality of presentation is not good and this applies to writing in different subjects. In some cases, the quality of writing has actually deteriorated over time, without teachers apparently picking this up. Pupils are taught cursive script, but quite commonly revert to non-cursive – especially in pieces of written work in other subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Currently, the standards in Years 2 and Year 4 are above average and the pupils achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The management strategies used by the subject leader are improving and are currently satisfactory.
- The presentation of the pupils' work is unsatisfactory.
- The ICT projectors are used well to promote enthusiasm for mathematics in some classes but are not used in others.

Commentary

69. The results of the national tests for pupils in Year 2 in 2004 show that the pupils' performance was below expected levels. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 was well below the national, average. There were problems with the administration of these assessments. When comparisons are made with similar schools then the performance was well below average. However, this does not represent the full picture – a significant number of parents fail to register their children's eligibility for free meals. When this is taken into account, the pupils' performance is comparable to that of similar schools with a higher proportion of free school meals.
70. Currently, the overall standards of the pupils in Year 2 are above average and they have achieved well to reach these standards in numeracy, and in their knowledge of space, shape and measure. The pupils' standards in number work are above average and the pupils are beginning to explore the relationships in number patterns

very well. The pupils in the current Year 4 attain standards that are above expected levels for their age and they achieve well. They can already use subtraction and addition of large numbers correctly and know how to calculate a perimeter and identify a diameter and radius. Although these standards appear to have declined since the last inspection, there is good evidence to show that many more pupils come into the school with standards in numeracy that are broadly in line with expected levels rather than above. This shows that the pupils have achieved well and that standards improve as they move up the school. In Year 4, the pupils have a clear understanding of numeracy and are prepared to experiment when finding patterns. They describe their work clearly and can argue the calculations and reasons for the patterns they find.

71. The quality of teaching is good overall. Most of the teachers demonstrate good quality teaching and are planning work that successfully matches the needs of all the pupils. They are enabling the lower attaining pupils to receive added support whilst the higher ability pupils are being challenged well with tasks that extend their skills and understanding very effectively. In one instance a pupil with SEN explained in their own words something that another pupil had already covered but he was allowed to make his own explanation in order to secure understanding. This is good practice.
72. Throughout the school the lessons are planned well and are imaginative in general and the pupils are interested in their work, bringing about good achievements. For example, the pupils in Year 3 were observed making calculations where several numbers were missing. This caused them to find many different answers correctly. This brings about an understanding that not just one answer is the only solution to the problem set. In these good lessons the teachers make good use of ICT to help teach areas that the pupils find more difficult to understand. Information and communication technology, mainly in the use of laptop computers linked to a projector, is used very effectively to introduce learning objectives and provides the pupils with a focal point for their learning. Many older pupils, especially in Year 4, are keen to explain their calculations and this they do competently and clearly. This helps them to further their own thinking effectively. This style of teaching enables the pupils to explore new areas of learning and to acquire new knowledge and understanding because they are allowed to probe beyond the task immediately set for them. This is done with careful questioning as the tasks become more demanding and this deepens the pupils' understanding. This positive approach to mathematics inspires the older pupils and they show enthusiasm in their investigative work.
73. Where the teaching is satisfactory the teacher does not have high enough expectations. Sometimes the teacher does not think right through the objectives for the lesson and is not prepared to advance the pupils' learning beyond what has been planned for the lesson. Consequently, the pace of work is slower than in the good and very good lessons. This is often because the tasks are not promoted with enough rigour for pupils to extend their understanding as quickly as they might. For instance, the pupils were challenged to find a pattern in the numbers they were using but the teacher gave no clue or example that would have helped the pupils succeed. Often the more able pupils are given extra work that does not extend their understanding but does more to give them additional practise in tasks already fully understood.
74. The subject leader has good vision for the development of the subject and many developments she has instigated have proved to be successful. For example, since September the assessment procedures have been updated and these are beginning to be used throughout the school as an agreed format to record what each pupil has achieved. The pupils' standards and achievements are now continually checked by

the subject leader and following the analysis of test results and pupils' work, she identified areas that needed further emphasis during the current year to improve standards. She has subsequently changed the topic cycle so that the pupils have more time and opportunities to measure and to explore shapes and space. However, before September 2004 she had had no training in the management of a subject and she did not have a clear understanding of what she should do to take responsibility for mathematics. Since then she has monitored teaching in all classes and given feedback to the teachers to help them improve. This is beneficial. One area that is unsatisfactory is the way in which the pupils' work is stored. Most duplicated sheets do not have a date and they are not compiled in an orderly manner, which prevents the teachers and the pupils referring back to previously completed work to assess how much progress has been made.

75. In lessons, pupils were observed to be well motivated by the good use of technology. This helps the pupils to enjoy their learning and to extend their understanding. For example, in a good lesson in Year 4, the projector was used effectively to help the pupils to make accurate measurements on a thermometer. Some pupils used the laptop to place the pointer at various temperatures, including minus temperatures, to challenge the rest of the class to decide upon the temperature. The pupils understood this procedure very quickly and were soon able to measure with precision.

Mathematics across the curriculum

76. The teachers use mathematics well in science lessons to measure results in investigations. It is also clear from displays around the school that the pupils use their mathematical knowledge in ICT to draw graphs and pie charts to work out details about colours of their friends' eyes and height.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good attitudes to science and currently their standards are above the expected levels for their ages.
- The quality of teaching is good overall and very often very good in Years 3 and 4.
- Challenges are increased during lessons through the use of rigorous, well focused questions and requests for pupils to justify their views with evidence.
- Teachers give good emphasis to developing pupils' skills of scientific enquiry and their scientific language.
- In some lessons, in Years 1 and 2 pupils are not set sufficiently challenging work.
- Some of the work is not marked well enough to provide the pupils with an understanding of how they can improve.

Commentary

77. The teachers' assessments for science for pupils in Year 2 in 2004 are not truly representative of the pupils' standards. The results show that the pupils' performance was below the national average and that the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 was also well below average. When comparisons are made with similar schools then the performance was well below average but this is not a reliable comparison because of the reasons stated above.

78. Currently, the standards in Year 2 and Year 4 are above the expected levels. Standards are sometimes well above average in Year 4 in certain elements of science. Most pupils achieve well and they thoroughly enjoy their science lessons. The emphasis the school places on practical and investigative activities is a key factor leading to the pupils' good achievement overall and often very good achievement in Year 4. This strong feature has further developed since the previous inspection. Although standards have declined since the last inspection, attainment on entry is broadly average now whereas before it was above.
79. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good overall in Years 3 and 4. Samples of work show that by the end of Year 2, pupils have classified food through their study of life process, made electrical circuits in their study of physical processes, found out which materials are waterproof in their study of materials and their properties and investigated how materials change when they are heated. However, progress is not accelerated enough by giving higher attaining pupils more challenging work. The very good teaching in Year 4 enables pupils to achieve at least well, including those with special educational needs. This is demonstrated by the teacher increasing the challenges given to pupils during lessons through the use of rigorous, well focused questioning and requests for pupils to justify their views with evidence.
80. A number of areas of the curriculum such as ICT, mathematics and literacy, are used well to support learning in science. For example, a Year 3 class were required to use the web site on laptop computers to find the correct word for different bones on the skeleton. Teachers do not always help pupils understand how they can improve as work is frequently left unmarked and presentation skills could be improved in all classes.
81. The new subject leader has made a good start in identifying where further improvements can be made. She has already observed teaching across the school and identified the need to simplify the schemes used by teachers to improve consistency of planning and aid monitoring. The school's tracking procedures are now up and running and work for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and at end of year 4 is moderated but the subject leader does not analyse all pupils' work on a regular basis to track the pace of their progress through the school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are in line with expected levels and have improved significantly in control aspects of the curriculum since the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with many teachers using the ICT projectors in their classrooms with confidence and imagination.
- Methods to record what each pupil has achieved are still in preparation.

Commentary

82. The pupils' standards are broadly in line with the expected standards by the end of Year 4 and the pupils achieve satisfactorily in all aspects of the curriculum. The standards in Year 2 are also as expected for their age. The standards are the same as at the time of the last inspection but the school has developed the uses of control, which is a significant improvement.
83. The pupils in Year 2 achieve satisfactorily in their work but no children were observed using computers during the inspection and judgements are made following an inspection of their printed work and after discussions with pupils about what they have

done. They access the programs satisfactorily and they use text and graphics well. It is clear that they enjoy using the computers and that they work conscientiously and orderly. From their printed work it is evident that most succeed in completing their tasks.

84. The pupils in Year 4 can access the computer system and run programs with ease. They enthusiastically demonstrated their knowledge of word processing programs and database facilities. Word processing skills have been mastered well and most of the pupils are very competent in the uses of *Word art* and *Clipart* to enhance their writing and designs. Most pupils can enhance their work using graphics and other commands to change the font, colour and shape of their text. The quality of this work is as expected for their age. The use of databases has been an integral part of their science topic and they are able to record observations of birds visiting the bird table.
85. The quality of teaching throughout the school is now satisfactory overall and in Year 4 it is good. This quality of teaching of these older pupils has been a main factor in raising the pupils' standards of work. The teachers use the national guidelines effectively to plan the ICT curriculum for their classes. The teachers have all undertaken training in the uses of ICT to support the teaching in other subjects and they have improved their own skills, knowledge and confidence effectively since the last inspection. Many teachers are using the laptop computers recently purchased and together with the projector, this newly acquired equipment has improved the quality of teaching across the whole curriculum especially in Year 4. However, some teachers are still a little reluctant to use the laptop computers and the subject leader has not yet timetabled this equipment into each classroom.
86. From discussions with pupils it is clear that throughout the school they have good attitudes to their work. They pursue their tasks quietly and with perseverance. The pupils in Year 4 demonstrated their uses of the Internet effectively to research topics in history and geography.
87. The unqualified teacher was already responsible for the development of ICT when she was a learning support assistant in the school and she has maintained this post now that she is on a temporary teaching post as the teacher for Year 4. She has a good knowledge of the subject and understands what is needed in the future. She has rigorously pursued the purchase of the laptop computers as prior to September 2004 there had been a long and unnecessary delay in making a decision. These laptops are now established especially in Year 4 and are available for each teacher to use in their own classrooms. The subject leader is knowledgeable and ensures that pupils in Year 4 progress appropriately in completing all the aspects of ICT. Apart from the new laptop computers, the rest of the computers in the school are old and although the teachers are managing to ensure that all pupils follow the curriculum adequately, these computers are now beginning to restrict the pupils' growth in their ICT skills. For example, because of the nature of the network, the pupils cannot easily find work previously completed and saved. Their work is stored on individual computers and they have to remember which station they worked on. Even the Year 4 pupils, when asked, had difficulty remembering which computer they used for a particular task. The teachers have devised a sensible system whereby pupils note down which computer they used when they print out a copy of their work but this is still unsatisfactory when trying to track each pupil's progress.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

88. It is clear from the displays around the school that the pupils have been taught to use graphics programs effectively and that the use of the digital camera is being developed well to record events such as the pupils' awards celebration each week. The use of the Internet is restricted to the use of the small set of laptops that can be moved around from class to class because of the wireless links that are installed. This is adequate but as there is no whole school full network system it restricts the use of the Internet and ICT skills to enhance teaching in other subjects.

HUMANITIES

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Religious education develops pupils' understanding and awareness of other faiths very well.
- The action plan does not effectively identify areas of development and ways of raising standards.

COMMENTARY

89. It was only possible to see two lessons during the inspection but these, along with a review of pupils' work indicate that pupils' standards are in line with the expectations of the local agreed syllabus. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily and make sound progress. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
90. The teachers plan lessons and follow the local agreed syllabus effectively. The pupils are encouraged to think about faith and religious belief and relate it to their own experiences. There are good links here with pupils' personal and social and emotional development as, for example, the pupils in Year 2 think about 'belonging'. Thus, religious education helps to further pupils' spiritual, moral and social development well and this is an improvement on the last inspection when this was only satisfactory.
91. The subject nurtures pupils' cultural development very well and this is a big improvement on the last inspection when it was a weakness in the school generally. The school has acquired a range of artefacts covering different religions and these help to make the subject more meaningful and interesting. Pupils continue to visit different local churches, giving an insight into how Christians worship, but they have also visited a mosque in Watford and visitors from other faiths have come to the school to expand the pupils' awareness and interest. These faiths include Hare Krishna, Sikh, Jewish and Hindu. As well as Christian festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest, their understanding has been enriched by looking at how others celebrate their faiths, such as Hindu Divali and Chinese New Year. The impressive collage of the rooster in the entrance foyer is one indication of the latter.
92. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and one very good lesson was observed. The pupils in Year 4 were observed looking at the painting of "The Last Supper" and thinking about how it marked a new beginning and a new 'communion'. As well as looking at the details of the Bible account, the pupils were encouraged to think about the importance to those taking part and how they might have felt. They were also

reflecting about how they themselves might have felt and responded. Work was very well targeted to the needs of different pupils so that all were challenged and extended.

93. The role of the subject leader is still being developed and she intends to explore ways of monitoring standards and how the subject is being taught. She has a satisfactory picture of what is happening in the subject. There is an action plan but this is more like a list of what needs to be done and does not identify areas and strategies clearly and specifically enough. Religious education supports literacy well, with good opportunities for pupils to develop extended writing skills. Satisfactory use is made of information and communication technology to support the subject.

History and Geography

94. No lessons were observed in geography and only one in history so it is not possible to make any judgements on provision, or the quality of the teaching and learning in these subjects or to make any comparisons with the previous inspection. However, examination of samples of pupils' work and the various displays around the school show that standards are at about the expected level in Year 2 and by Year 4 they are above the level expected. From the curriculum overview and teachers' planning, it is clear that all relevant areas of the national curriculum are covered.
95. Discussions with pupils show that they have positive attitudes to the humanities. There was considerably more history than geography work available, partly because it is taught in blocks. The discussions show that pupils also have a better recall of history than of geography. Year 3 pupils, for example, were able to talk at some length about what they knew about the Anglo-Saxons and (especially) the Romans but were less certain about the work they had done about weather in geography. According to the pupils "This was partly because the topic on Romans captured the imagination". Some good work has been done in geography, though. The work on global warming tied in to current affairs is one example and linked well with information and communication technology, mathematics, and literacy. The on-going tapestry, picturing the local area is a good example of developing an awareness of the local area and the community in an imaginative way.
96. The one history lesson seen was very good as Year 3 pupils were stimulated to develop skills of historical investigation through examining contemporary artefacts through an archaeologist's eyes. Helped by the teacher's skilful guidance, the pupils posed questions and came to conclusions and judgements about the people to whom the objects belonged. This led on to looking at the discoveries at Sutton Hoo and pupils were given a range of different research activities, well-targeted to their abilities.
97. Good use is made of visits and visitors to make the subjects more interesting and relevant. The Year 3 visits to Verulamium and the work linked to the Year 4 residential visits are good examples of this.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

It is not possible to give judgement on provision in these subjects. Only a few lessons were observed as the main focus was on provision in the core subjects.

98. Only one lesson in **art and design** was observed. However, on the evidence of the pupils' past work, teachers' planning and the very good range of activities provided, the achievement of pupils, including those with special needs, is good and standards are above the expected levels by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. The very good variety of experiences linked to a number of other areas of the curriculum makes the work

relevant and interesting for the pupils. For example, a tapestry representing a map of the school and the surrounding area is being completed over a period of time by all pupils in the school. They are given the opportunity to work collaboratively on the project, which supports their personal, social and emotional development. By using the skills and techniques they have systematically developed, they are producing an imaginative tapestry of high quality.

99. No lessons in **design and technology** could be inspected, however from the work seen standards are at least in line with expected levels at the end of Year 2 and in Year 4. Achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. The teachers make good use of the national guidelines in their planning to ensure the curriculum is covered effectively. They provide a range of very good experiences which are of interest to the pupils. Tasks are often linked to other areas of the curriculum making the work relevant.
100. Skills are taught systematically throughout the school year. They measure, mark out, cut and shape a range of materials and the strong links to science and art in particular, enable them to find out about the working characteristics of materials. Visits to Cuffley camp give them the opportunity to illustrate what they have learned, when for example, Year 4 make models of dragon flies out of “Modroc”. Assessment is presently under developed although a start has been made by individual teachers to record pupils’ attainment. Pupils enjoy the subject and are keen to explain their work. Further opportunities for pupils in Years 3 and 4 to develop, plan and communicate ideas through a range of materials are offered in a popular design and technology after-school club. Standards represent satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.
101. One **music** lesson was seen in Year 1 but no other lessons were observed. From the examples of pupils’ singing in assemblies it is judged that the quality of singing is above expected levels by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4. The singing is good with the pupils singing in tune with good diction and expression. The pupils in Years 3 and 4 took part in a workshop during the inspection: they explored the rhythms of the samba. They listened well and with percussion instruments performed their individual parts well to form a whole class rhythm band. They kept a strict beat and they were totally engaged, responding very well to the instructions and the sounds they were making. This was a good performance and was a good experience from which they gained a wide range of skills. Their attitudes were very good and full of enthusiasm.
102. In the lesson in Year 1, the teaching was good and the pupils achieved well in playing percussion instruments and in listening to others. The teacher planned the lesson well and made good use of the CD player. The pupils were positive in the response to the tasks and took turns with the instruments effectively.
103. No lessons in **physical education** could be inspected but the planning of lessons based upon the national guidelines shows that the school covers the curriculum well. The resources are satisfactory and the accommodation, including the outdoor facilities, is adequate but there are problems with the amount of furniture placed in the hall that restricts certain activities. Most pupils are able to swim the required distance by the end of Year 4. The older pupils and those in Year 3 visit the local swimming pool for instruction once a week for a limited period.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The planned programme for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good. A new co-ordinator has recently taken over the development of this area. There are satisfactory policies established for sex education and drugs awareness. Specific lessons help pupils to understand how to care for and relate to each other. The opinions of all pupils are valued and the school council is a means for pupils to develop their understanding of the social needs of the school. The pupils' health education is enhanced through regular lessons and the encouragement to eat fruit each day. Their social development is enhanced effectively through visits, especially the two residential visits that are organised for the pupils in Year 4.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

| | |
|--|----------|
| The overall effectiveness of the school | 3 |
| How inclusive the school is | 2 |
| How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection | 4 |
| Value for money provided by the school | 3 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Overall standards achieved | 3 |
| Pupils' achievement | 3 |

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | 2 |
| Attendance | 3 |
| Attitudes | 2 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 2 |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of education provided by the school | 3 |
| The quality of teaching | 3 |
| How well pupils learn | 3 |
| The quality of assessment | 3 |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs | 3 |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities | 3 |
| Accommodation and resources | 4 |
| Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety | 2 |
| Support, advice and guidance for pupils | 2 |
| How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's links with parents | 2 |
| The quality of the school's links with the community | 2 |
| The school's links with other schools and colleges | 2 |

| | |
|--|----------|
| The leadership and management of the school | 4 |
| The governance of the school | 4 |
| The leadership of the headteacher | 3 |
| 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).