

INSPECTION REPORT

MANDEVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

St. Albans, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117142

Headteacher: Amanda Godfrey

Reporting inspector: Alan Andrews
6436

Dates of inspection: 16th-18th September 2002

Inspection number: 247728

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Mandeville Drive
St. Albans
Hertfordshire

Postcode: AL1 2LE

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R Mycock

Date of previous inspection: 28th June 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
6436	Alan Andrews	Registered inspector	English Religious education Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? How high are the standards? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9619	Bob Miller	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1359	Lyne Lavender	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?
2700	Peter Sudworth	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology Music Physical education	
7694	Martyn Richards	Team inspector	Science English as an additional language	

10090	Kath Beck	Team inspector	Art and design Foundation Stage	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	11
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	20
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	23
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	24
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	29

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Mandeville is a smaller than average primary school for girls and boys aged three to eleven. It occupies a large site on the Cottonmill estate area of St. Albans. The children come predominantly from the neighbourhood around the school. This consists of mainly local authority housing but with a very small proportion of owner-occupied accommodation. There are 136 full time children on roll and a further 20 children who attend part time in the nursery class. When they enter the reception year these children attend full time. Overall, the school has an even number of girls and boys, but there is some variation in year groups. Approximately half the children are from ethnic minority backgrounds, mainly Bangladeshi, and 41 per cent speak English as an additional language. This is very high compared to most schools nationally. About a quarter of the group are at an early stage of learning the new language. 43 per cent of the children have been identified as having special educational needs and this is well above the national average. 45 per cent of the children at the school are known to be eligible for free school meals and this is also well above the national average. The majority of children enter the school with levels of attainment well below that expected for their age. There are relatively high numbers of children moving in and out of the school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is tackling its many challenges with energy and optimism. A calm, positive climate for learning is created. Much of this is due to the strong leadership provided by the headteacher and senior management team. They are clear about the direction the school has to go. Governors know the school well and are committed to continuing to raise standards. These vary from year to year, but are improving. Overall, teaching is satisfactory, although some good and very good teaching was observed. Parents are happy with the school and its work. It gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher and senior management team provide strong and effective leadership.
- Governors are well informed and involved in improving the school.
- Children learning English as an additional language make very good progress.
- The good provision for children with special educational needs helps them to achieve well in relation to their abilities.
- The checking of children's progress is very good.
- Financial planning and deployment of resources is very good.
- There is a very good partnership with parents and the community.
- A wealth of opportunities for learning are provided through extra curricular activities, visits and visitors.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, particularly children's speaking and writing skills.*
- Standards in science.*
- Standards in information and communication technology, especially the monitoring and control aspect of the subject.*
- Opportunities for children to take decisions and show initiative in their work.*

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

* The school has already identified the need for these improvements in its school development plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved in many respects since the last inspection in June 2000. The leadership provided by the headteacher and senior management team is now strong. The high turnover of staff is being coped with well and key issues from the previous inspection have been tackled rigorously. The school monitors its performance very carefully and directs funds in ways that will bring further improvement. It has very good relationships with parents and the community and this has a positive impact on the life of the school. Considerable effort has been made, successfully, to match programmes of work to children's needs and interests. Standards have been raised in writing,

particularly at the junior stage, but many children find this area of their work difficult and more needs to be done.

Standards have also been raised in science, but improvements need to be accelerated. Progress in raising standards in information and communication technology has been slower, but the appointment of a new co-ordinator for the subject means that the school is in a better position to ensure children make more rapid progress. Teachers' management and planning of foundation subjects has improved and is helping to raise standards. The special educational needs provision is now good overall and children progress well. The provision for children with English as an additional language is a real strength of the school. It enables children to make very good progress.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E	E	E	B
mathematics	B	E	D	B
science	B	E	E	C

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The table shows that the school's 2001 results of national tests at the end of Year 6 in English and science were well below the national average. They were below average in mathematics. However, the results need to be treated with caution because most of the children begin school with attainment that is well below that typical for their age. The school has a high proportion of children with special educational needs or English as an additional language. Furthermore, the year groups are relatively small and there are high numbers of children moving in and out of the school. This means that variations in the school's national test results are to be expected from year to year. When compared to similar schools, the 2001 results show a much more positive picture. In English and mathematics the results were above the average and in science they were in line with the average. This shows that the school's efforts to raise standards are paying dividends. During the four year period to 2000, the results in national tests fluctuated, but showed an upward trend.

The school's 2001 test results in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 put them in the lowest 5% nationally. When compared to similar schools the results were better, but well below the average. However, results during the period 1997 to 2000 had shown an upward trend. The school predicted the lower 2001 results because of the large number of children with learning difficulties in the cohort. The most recent results are those of 2002, as yet unverified. These show that the school has exceeded targets agreed with the local authority based on the children's prior attainment.

Lesson observations and scrutiny of children's work shows that in the current Year 2, standards in English, mathematics and science are well below average. Standards are better in Year 6, but are below average in all three subjects. This represents satisfactory progress over time.

Many children at the Foundation Stage have difficulties with speaking and communicating their wishes clearly. They make satisfactory progress, but few are on course to meet the expected levels of attainment in each of the areas of learning at the end of the reception year.

The school has made slow progress in improving its provision for information and communication technology and standards are below that expected nationally at the end of both the infant and junior stages. At age seven, children's achievements in art and design, design and technology, history and geography are well below those of most schools. At age eleven, they are below that expected nationally in art and design, history and geography. It was not possible to make overall judgements about music

or about design and technology at the end of the junior stage. Achievements in physical education are in line with most schools at the end of both the infant and junior stages. In religious education, children's achievements meet those expected in the locally agreed syllabus.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Children enjoy coming to school and are mostly keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, although there is some immature behaviour occasionally from a small minority of children.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good. Children are kind and considerate towards one another. When given the opportunity, they undertake responsibility well.
Attendance	Attendance is improving and is now in line with most primary schools.

The school is working hard, successfully, to improve attendance. Almost all children arrive punctually for school, although there are a small number who are persistently late. Lessons start and finish on time. Staff do not provide enough opportunities for children to make decisions and to undertake responsibility.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, teaching is satisfactory. In just over half the lessons seen this was the case. However, a number of teachers are very new to the profession and commendable efforts are being made to help them settle quickly to their tasks. A significant proportion of good teaching was observed in both infant and junior lessons. In addition, there was a small amount of very good teaching found only in Year 2. Expectations of what children can do at the Foundation Stage are appropriate for this time of term as it is also important for them to settle into school. Daily literacy and numeracy lessons are taught satisfactorily. The teaching of children with English as an additional language is very good. For children with special educational needs it is good. Strengths in teaching stem from demanding tasks that challenge children to think and work hard. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons, tasks were not matched appropriately to the needs of the children and there was difficulty in controlling them adequately.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory at the Foundation Stage and at the infant and junior stages. The range of activities provided outside of school time is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Children's self esteem is maintained effectively and they progress well.

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Children's individual needs are assessed and met really well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for children's personal development is good. Their social, moral and cultural development is also good. Their spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school is highly attentive to children's needs.

Parents are pleased with the school. Its caring and supportive environment helps children to feel secure and happy in their work. The curriculum is broad with priority given to literacy and numeracy. However, information and communication technology does not meet requirements in terms of the monitoring and control aspect of the subject. Children's work is enriched through the use of visitors and visits to places of interest. Good procedures help teachers track children's academic progress. More opportunities could be given for them to take initiative and to make decisions for themselves.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Strong leadership from the headteacher and senior management team enhances significantly the school's capacity to improve.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are determined to raise standards further.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school analyses its performance rigorously and uses the information gained to help plan ways to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning and management are very good and ensure that children benefit from the resources available to the school.

The school has undergone considerable changes in staff recently, but is coping well. Strengths in leadership and management stem from a determined approach to the raising of standards and an increased involvement by governors in monitoring the work of the school. There is a satisfactory level of teaching staff and learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to children's progress. Resources are satisfactory and good use is made of the large accommodation. The budget is managed well. The headteacher and governors apply the principles of best value effectively. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
- Children like coming to school and behave well. - They are expected to work hard. - Parents feel they can approach the school with any problems they may have. - They feel the school works closely with them.	Information about their child's progress.

Inspection evidence supports parents' positive views. It found helpful targets in the annual reports to parents about their child's progress, but judged that the reports do not always show clearly the progress made during the academic year. In addition, the reports sometimes appear dull in content.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Attainment on entry of most children is well below that typical for their age, especially in language and number skills. The school is coping well with a high turnover of staff and the challenging environment and background of many of the children, a large number of whom have special educational needs or English as an additional language. There are few higher ability children at the school. From a low base, steady progress is being made and standards are rising, although this is not always reflected in the results of national tests. A similar picture was found in the previous inspection. In addition, relatively small year groups and high numbers of children moving in and out of the school, mean there are variations in the school's national test results from year to year.

2. Findings at the time of the last inspection showed that children in the nursery and reception years made satisfactory progress and achieved standards that were largely appropriate for their age. This is no longer the case. On entry to the nursery most children have attainment that is well below that typical for their age. Many have difficulties with speaking and communicating their wishes clearly. Most have weak literacy skills. Some have significant special educational needs that hinder their learning. These children and their particular needs are identified early. They receive good levels of support and make good progress according to their abilities. Many children have English as an additional language and are at an early stage of learning English. These children are supported well and assessments are carried out in their own language to find out their particular needs. This means they make good progress in learning to speak English. This said, the children have a lot of ground to make up and few are on course to meet the expected levels of attainment in each of the areas of learning by the end of the reception year.

3. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of children's work shows that in the current Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are below average. Standards in Year 2 are well below average in all three subjects. These findings are lower than those found at the time of the previous inspection, but represent satisfactory progress over time from a low base. This is commendable, because the school has a significant number of children at the very early stages of learning English. Despite initial difficulties, these children are enabled to grow in confidence and, at the end of the junior stage, they reach standards as good as those of their English speaking classmates.

4. The school's 2001 test results for children aged seven in reading, writing and mathematics put them in the lowest 5% nationally. Few children reached the higher levels and none did so in writing. When compared to similar schools the results were better, but well below average. However, the results during the previous period of 1997 to 2000 had shown an upward trend. The school predicted the lower 2001 results because of high mobility and a large number of children with special educational needs within the cohort. The most recent results are those of 2002, as yet unverified. These show that the school exceeded targets agreed with the local authority based on the children's prior attainment.

5. The school's 2001 national test results for children aged eleven were well below average in English and science and below average in mathematics. In English, no children reached the higher levels within the tests and in science the percentage doing so was below the national average. The percentage in mathematics was in line with the national average. However, when compared to schools in a similar context a much more positive picture emerges. In English and mathematics the school's 2001 results were above the average and in science they were in line with the average. This shows that the school's efforts to improve standards are bearing fruit. During the period 1997 to 2000, results in national tests fluctuated, but showed an upward trend in all three subjects. The school has worked hard to improve its provision for brighter children and lesson observations show that this is paying dividends.

6. The school is putting considerable effort into analysing data to find reasons for its results and so improve standards. Children's progress is checked carefully and the information gained is used to help plan programmes of work. This is proving very beneficial. The school's analysis of data shows that effects of gender on progress are similar to those found nationally. It also shows that children from ethnic minority groups are performing as well as other children in the school.

7. Children usually enjoy talking to visitors about their work and interests, but many have particular difficulty with the development of speaking skills. These include children who are not learning English as an additional language. Discussions with children show that their range of vocabulary is often limited. Both speaking and listening skills are well below average at age seven because children sometimes find it difficult to concentrate and to communicate more than simple meanings clearly. As they move up through the school their confidence increases and they are more willing to communicate orally. At age eleven, children's speaking and listening skills are better, but below average. Teachers expect children to listen attentively and there are occasions when they contribute to discussions well. An example of this was seen in a Year 1 science lesson about similarities and differences between human and animal features.

8. Children read regularly at school and most also take books home to read. Home school reading diaries are a useful link between parents and teachers, but few parents use these to record comments about how well their child is doing. At age seven, children make some use of letter sounds and pictures when tackling new or difficult words, but their reading skills are mostly well below the level expected nationally. At age eleven, children read with growing confidence and fluency, though with little expression. Their reading skills have improved, but are below the national average. Brighter children have read the work of a number of well known authors and are usually keen to talk about this.

9. The school has worked hard to improve standards in writing, particularly amongst the boys. There have been improvements, but many children still have considerable difficulty with this area of their work and it hinders their progress in all subjects. At age seven, standards are well below those of other children nationally. There is a growing understanding of how to sequence events in the right order, but children's use of basic sentence structure when writing is developing only slowly. At age eleven, standards have improved, but remain below average. Children write for a range of purposes and opportunities are provided for them to draft stories before making a final copy. This leads to improvement. However, there is little imagination in their writing and ideas are seldom developed in an interesting way. Teachers give appropriate attention to spelling and grammatical structure, but children often make simple errors.

10. In mathematics, standards are well below average at age seven and below average at age eleven. Children like practical tasks and mental arithmetic sessions. They work well at these, but in some lessons there is an overuse of worksheets that children find difficult to understand. At the infant stage, the emphasis is placed on becoming competent at counting and writing numbers. Basic skills, such as doubling and halving, enable children to become quicker at mental calculations. Junior children practise adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing sums and correct their mistakes when necessary. Data handling is done at a very simple level and there is little progression in this aspect of mathematics from Year 4.

11. In science, standards are also well below average at age seven and below average at age eleven. Children find the tasks interesting and are encouraged to observe and to carry out simple experiments carefully. However, they find it hard to apply what they have already learned to new situations and to suggest causes for the results they find.

12. The school has made slow progress in improving its provision for information and communication technology and standards are below expectations at the end of both the infant and junior stages. This is because the programmes of work for this area of the curriculum are not yet well enough established and children have insufficient time to use computers. In addition, the school is not fulfilling national requirements in the monitoring and control aspect of the subject.

13. At age seven, children's achievements in art and design, design and technology, history and geography are well below those of most schools. At age eleven, they are below national expectations in art and design, history and geography. It was not possible to make judgements about achievements in music, although an examination of teachers' planning shows programmes of work meet national requirements. A similar situation was found in design and technology at the junior stage. Achievements in physical education are in line with expectations nationally at the end of both the junior and infant stage. In religious education, children's achievements at age seven and eleven meet those expected in the local syllabus. These areas of the curriculum are often enriched through the use of visitors to the school and educational visits to places of interest.

14. The school has a higher than usual number of children with English as an additional language. They make very good progress because their programmes of work are really well prepared and matched closely to their needs. The school also has a high number of children with special educational needs. They make good progress because most teachers continually match work to the individual targets set for them. There are occasions, however, when this does not happen as effectively and, as a result, their progress slows.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Children enjoy coming to school and their attitudes towards it are good. They all show interest and enjoyment in learning throughout the range of school activities, particularly where the teaching challenges them to think and work hard. The behaviour of the large majority of children is good in lessons, assemblies and during break times. There has been one child excluded in the past academic year.

16. The overall good standard of behaviour identified in the previous report has been maintained, although occasionally there is some immature behaviour from a small minority of children. No bullying, racism or sexism was seen during the inspection. Almost all children are polite and friendly and follow instructions carefully. They move around the school in an orderly manner and show respect for their own property and that of others. Playtimes and lunchtimes are pleasant social occasions, where children socialise well with each other. Year 6 children are given some opportunities to show initiative and develop personal responsibility by undertaking tasks, such as assisting at lunchtimes by helping younger children to cut up their food and clearing away after mealtime. However, not enough chances are given for children to make decisions for themselves and to undertake responsibility. The school is actively working to improve this situation.

17. Children with special educational needs take a full and active part in all subjects of the curriculum. Even those with behaviour difficulties usually behave well in class, work at a good pace and are interested in their lessons. This is due to the good management strategies used by their teachers and the valuable help provided for them by learning support assistants.

18. Children with English as an additional language have good attitudes towards school. From their earliest days in the Foundation Stage, they try hard and are motivated well to learn. They are successfully integrated into the life of the school, are very attentive and can concentrate for long periods when supported by bi-lingual staff.

19. Relationships are sound between the children and members of staff and good with each other. Children are mostly kind and considerate towards one another and the large majority show respect for teachers and visitors alike. In class, most children are attentive, but some find it difficult to concentrate for long. They share resources well.

20. Attendance has steadily improved since the last inspection. At around 94 per cent it is now in line with the national average for similar schools. A number of families choose to take holidays in term time, but the school is rigorous in trying to influence them not to. The school realises, and emphasises with the parents concerned, that prolonged absences affect the progress made by their children. Punctuality is sound for the vast majority of children, although there are a small number who are persistently late coming to school. Lessons start and finish on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. A number of the teachers are very new to the school and commendable efforts are being made to help them settle quickly to their tasks. Some good and very good teaching was seen and this is having a positive impact on children's learning. Overall, however, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In just over half the lessons observed this was the case. A relatively small amount of unsatisfactory and poor teaching was observed in mathematics, physical education and in design and technology at the infant and junior stages. Additional evidence was obtained from scrutiny of children's work. This indicates that there has been some good teaching, but that over time it has mostly been satisfactory.

22. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The nursery nurse and learning support assistant are deployed effectively and play an important part in enhancing children's progress. Children are managed well, often with humour and much kindness. Their progress is assessed regularly and this is used effectively to group the children according to ability for some sessions. Homework that children complete is valued and displayed for all to see.

23. The teacher's knowledge for this age group is satisfactory, while that of the nursery nurse is extensive, especially with children with special educational needs. This is a valuable source to make significant improvements to the provision within the Foundation Stage. Expectations are appropriate for this time of the term, as it is important to enable children to learn routines and settle into school quickly. The main weakness relates to planning for the activities. The day-to-day timetable is too rigid and hinders the opportunities to spend time on different activities using their initiative. In addition, there is little to indicate what children are to achieve in each session. This limits opportunities for children to develop their interests, concentration and independence.

24. Teaching at the infant and junior stages is satisfactory. However, a significant proportion of good teaching was observed in both infant and junior lessons. In addition, there was a small amount of very good teaching found only in Year 2. The school rightly concentrates considerable effort on literacy and numeracy and this is paying dividends. It is helping to raise standards, although relatively small numbers of children in each year group means that this is not necessarily reflected in the school's results in national tests. The good teaching begins with secure subject knowledge, careful preparation, interesting activities and an expectation that children will work hard and behave well. Most children respond positively to this and take a pride in their achievements. Learning support assistants are deployed effectively and make a valuable contribution to children's learning. Features of the very good teaching include:

- imaginative and demanding tasks that motivate children to do their best. An example of this was the visit of a mother and her two week old baby to help children consider how they grow and change. The teacher managed the lesson really well. The children were deeply engaged, attentive and observant throughout the lesson, talking quietly as the baby slept;
- an emphasis on building up skills systematically, as in a literacy lesson about writing instructions clearly and in the correct order;
- on-going feedback to children so that they know how to improve;
- a sense of enjoyment that encourages children to think hard and to develop skills effectively.

25. The relatively small amount of unsatisfactory or poor teaching results mainly from:

- difficulty in managing and controlling children, particularly boys. As a consequence there was a health and safety problem;
- tasks not matched appropriately to the needs and abilities of the children;
- insufficient opportunities for children to make decisions and show initiative in their work.

26. The school pays particular attention to the teaching of children with special educational needs or English as an additional language. Relationships are good and children are usually keen to please and to do their best. Their self-esteem is maintained well and they take part fully in class activities. Most teachers take on-going account of the individual targets for children with special educational needs and as a result they make good progress in lessons. Occasionally, however, opportunities are missed to link the children's class work with their targets. When this happens their progress is slower. The teaching of children with English as an additional language benefits considerably from the help and guidance given by a specialist teacher. Children's needs are assessed accurately and their work is pitched at the right level. As a result, they make very good progress.

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

27. The previous inspection highlighted inconsistent practice in curriculum provision and made its improvement a key issue. Considerable progress has been made in putting this right and the curriculum meets the needs and interests of the children satisfactorily. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught, but the monitoring and control aspect of information and communication technology does not meet national requirements. In addition, children do not always have enough opportunities to use computers.

28. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, as it was at the time of the last inspection, and covers all the prescribed areas of learning. The activities planned engage the children's interest and attention. They promote children's learning, especially in speaking and listening and early reading skills. However, the timetable has become too rigid. This limits opportunities for children to spend time on a range of tasks and engage in activities planned by adults and those that they plan and initiate for themselves. It also hinders opportunities for children to explore, experiment, plan and make decisions for themselves. More emphasis has been given to activities outside, but these activities are not always linked to work going on in the classroom. Staff often work with children in ability groups, but the activities in some areas of learning, such as physical development, are the same for all. The school is aware of these issues and has prepared an action plan to improve the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage.

29. Many children take part in the thriving programme of lunch-time and after-school clubs. These support the curriculum very effectively and include dance aerobics, gymnastics, football, rugby, drama, music, choir and recorders, sewing, art and internet surfing. High priority is given to educational visits, for example, to Roman St. Albans, the Millennium Dome, the seaside, wildlife parks, museums, art galleries and places of worship. An informative display in the school library shows children in Years 5 and 6 enjoying a residential visit to York. Music is enhanced by individual instrumental tuition. From time to time special weeks are held to focus attention on books and science. The school invites visitors, such as authors, poets and drama groups, to work with different classes. A pharmacist talks to older children about drugs and the headteacher oversees the teaching of sex education. The breakfast club is very popular with children and parents. It provides a pleasant start to the school day for many.

30. Teachers base the format of lesson plans on the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. The school's policy is for children to be taught in small year groups in these subjects so as to raise standards. These arrangements, alongside the use of additional teaching support, are having a positive impact on standards. The school has just been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Kite Mark in recognition of its work. A two year programme has been devised to cover other subjects and to ensure that children do not repeat topics. This is particularly important when year groups are combined for lessons in the afternoon. Policies have been updated and brought into line with national guidelines for science, art, music, history, geography, design and technology and physical education.

31. The successful programme for personal, social and health education in place at the time of the last inspection is being continued. For instance, children are encouraged to drink water during the day and eat healthy snacks. All teachers take their responsibilities in this area very seriously and plan lessons where sensitive issues can be discussed. In one very good Year 2 lesson, a mother brought her two-week old baby into the class and children were fascinated, asking questions such as "Can he fall asleep on his own?" and "Does he cry by himself?" Strong links with the local community help everyone to understand the responsibilities of citizenship.

32. The school is successful in providing equal opportunities for all. Its aim is to provide "an inclusive education for a diverse population", and this is the foundation of the school's approach to learning. Children work and play together in an atmosphere of racial harmony. They generously raise funds for different charities. Girls and boys are equally encouraged to take part in all aspects of the curriculum and school clubs.

33. The school's provision for children learning English as an additional language is very good. It benefits considerably from the expertise of a specialist teacher provided by the local education authority. The children are given every encouragement to do well and are enabled to play a full part in the life of the school. Their programmes of work are planned carefully and matched effectively to their individual needs. As a result, they make very good progress as they move up through the school.

34. Since the previous inspection, the school has moved to a system of having two co-ordinators to oversee the work of children with special educational needs. One co-ordinator is responsible for the foundation and infant stages whilst the other is responsible for the junior stage. They work together well and the overall provision for children with special educational needs is good. Appropriate emphasis is rightly placed on the early identification of children with learning difficulties and on the construction of specific targets for them to achieve. The targets are precise, realistic and reviewed regularly. Children are enabled to have full access to the curriculum and recent changes to the national Code of Practice for special educational needs have been implemented successfully. The co-ordinators have set up effective systems to monitor and support class teachers in the planning and delivery of programmes of work for children with special educational needs. For example, children's individual targets are now stored on the school's information technology network with confidentiality protected by a password. This storage of information allows monitoring of children's progress to be more effective because past targets can be accessed easily.

35. Since the last inspection the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education has improved and is now good overall. The spiritual aspect is satisfactory and there is evidence of this in lessons, such as literacy. An example of this was found in one child's book about September 11th 2001, when these evocative words were written: "...there were innocent people in the towers. I have sadness, horror and rage myself". Good use is made of assemblies to value everyone's contribution as members of the school community. Awards are given not only to those who work well or try hard but also to those who behave well or help others. Staff nominate children and say why they have been chosen. Acts of collective worship form a brief part of this, but do not contribute significantly to the corporate life of the school and this was commented on in the last inspection report.

36. The school makes good provision for moral development. Everyone is expected to abide by the school's code of conduct and the majority do so. In assemblies, for instance, they are attentive and behave well during the time for reflection. Several classes have agreed their own class rules and anti-social behaviour is seen as unacceptable. Children are clear about the difference between right and wrong and generally behave well, although a few find it difficult to behave in lessons and disrupt others. The school's aim to care for one another is carried out in practice. For example, children who are newly arrived in the country and speak very little English, are helped to settle in quickly and to make friends. Children look after the school and its grounds, putting into practice what they learn in lessons about caring for the environment.

37. Social education is good and teachers plan activities to develop interpersonal skills and attitudes. As a result, children co-operate well in pairs and small groups, swapping ideas and usually listening carefully to what others have to say. Monitors carry out their duties reliably, such as taking registers to the school office and helping to set up tables in the dining room. Social interactions throughout the school are generally good, particularly in the outside areas, where all children play together well. The very wide range of extra-curricular activities and fund-raising initiatives provides further ways for them to socialise with others. There is at present no school council for the children, but it is planned to set one up later this term.

38. Cultural education, including multi-cultural aspects, is good and accurately reflects the diverse nature of the community served by the school. Children experience some of each others' traditions through history, music and literature. Studies of the locality, Henry VIII and a class visit to Bhaktivedanta Manor where children dressed in national costumes, all enrich the curriculum. A Year 2 class recently planned and led an assembly on Bangladesh, comparing it to life in St. Albans. Work in art includes African pattern making as well as a study of western artists such as Picasso. A topic on Shakespeare involved research into the past and a review of one of his plays. Year 2 children chose the Imam as a good leader of the mosque and drew sketches of him and the Bangladesh minister as examples. Museums and places of interest provide a stimulus for class work and events, such as book weeks and poetry sessions, broaden children's cultural understanding.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. There are good procedures in place for supporting children's welfare and personal development. Parents agree that the school helps the children to become mature and responsible.

40. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring the health and safety of both the children and adults in the school are sound. The school has recently reviewed its health and safety policy and is currently updating its formal written risk assessments. The designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection has a clear understanding of the role. Governors are involved effectively in these important aspects of school provision. First aid provision is sound and records are kept of any accidents that occur. The caretaker is conscientious in her day-to-day management of any safety issues that are raised by staff.

41. The school's procedures for monitoring attendance, including the promotion of good attendance, are effective. Registers are accurately kept, but do not always have the total number of children entered daily. The school follows up unexplained absences quickly and strives to convince parents of the need for their children to attend school regularly. Patterns of low attendance are investigated thoroughly.

42. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for eliminating oppressive conduct are effective. There is a clear behaviour policy that is consistently applied by most staff, including mid-day assistants. There are also class rules that reinforce the policy. Rewards are given frequently for positive behaviour and this encourages children to work harder.

43. Arrangements for monitoring and supporting children's personal development are very good in the Foundation Stage and good overall in the rest of the school. Staff know the children well and any areas for development are identified and addressed. When personal targets, such as those connected with behaviour or concentration spans, are set, these are shared with the child and parent concerned. The school works closely and effectively with external advisers for educating children with English as an additional language.

44. There are clear procedures for identifying children with special educational needs. These are applied consistently and are in line with national requirements. All statements of special educational needs are up to date and reviewed regularly.

45. During the past two years since the last inspection, the school has developed good assessment procedures and record keeping systems. They enable all staff to monitor closely the progress children make during the year and to set appropriate targets for improvement. In addition, teachers write evaluative notes at the end of lessons highlighting where children's particular strengths and weaknesses lie. Standards of attainment have risen, albeit slowly, as a result of the greater rigour in checking what has been learned and understood. Clear arrangements are in place for assessing literacy and numeracy, for example, by means of short term and annual tests. Good use is made of data to analyse results, set targets and track individual progress over time. Teachers are given all this information and, combined with their own day-to-day records, a comprehensive profile of each child's strengths and weaknesses is accumulated. Speedy identification of those with learning difficulties ensures that extra support is given. The progress of children with English as an additional language is monitored effectively and they make very good progress as a result.

46. Children's individual records include their progress in speaking and listening, what books have been read and homework done. They contain useful information about previous standards and test results. Annual reports are also included and these show what has been achieved in earlier years. Children complete their own self-evaluation reports at the end of each year. Their comments reveal honest accounts of their strengths and weaknesses. Children set themselves targets for the forthcoming year.

47. The school has collected samples of work in English, mathematics and science to illustrate each National Curriculum level and to help staff make accurate assessments of achievement and plan relevant work. This is particularly helpful for newly appointed teachers and those training alongside staff. All teachers keep a mark book showing the work covered and the date it was completed. The marking of exercise books and worksheets is satisfactory. It includes some good examples of positive comments that confirm what children have learned and tell them how to improve in the future.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. Parents' views of the school are good. Those who attended the pre-inspection meeting, returned the questionnaires or who were spoken to during inspection week, expressed satisfaction with the quality of education provided. Their children like coming to school and parents believe that the school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. They agree that behaviour is good and an improvement on recent years. The school has worked hard at creating effective links between the school and home and a very large proportion of parents feel comfortable should problems arise. The Home-School Family Literacy Co-ordinator is an integral part of these good links, ensuring that those parents from the ethnic minority groups play a full and active part in the life of the school. Literacy and computer courses have been organised for parents to familiarise them with the curriculum and be in a better position to help their children at home. Good quality information is provided for parents and this has a positive impact upon children's learning.

49. The quality of information to parents is good overall. Translations into a variety of languages, particularly Bengali, are undertaken to ensure children from ethnic minority groups are not excluded from taking a full part in the life of the school. Discussions with staff are organised appropriately and parents find teachers to be approachable and more than willing to discuss areas of concern. Most parents feel well informed about their child's progress, but a small number do not. End-of-year reports contain specific academic targets for children and parents to aim for. They do not, however, always clearly show the progress the child has made during the academic year and can appear dull in their content.

50. The school prospectus contains an outline of the procedures the school takes to meet the needs of children with special educational needs. Both the prospectus and the annual report from governors to parents are informative, comprehensive and meet statutory requirements.

51. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is satisfactory. Parents are encouraged to help in school and a number do so, carrying out such tasks as listening to children read. The parent-teacher association raises funds by organising social events and this money has been spent on learning resources. Many parents contribute in a satisfactory manner to their children's learning at home, but some find this difficult. The school is continually developing this important aspect of its provision. It has identified that more needs to be done to help parents become even more effective in diagnosing and responding to children's problems in reading, speaking and listening.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. At the time of the previous inspection the school had an acting headteacher. Leadership and management was judged to be sound. The present headteacher took up post two years ago. She gives clear educational direction and is held in high regard by the parents. An effective senior management team is in place and the overall leadership and management of the school is now very good. Day to day management enables staff to get on with their jobs. The interests of the children are put first and the school's ethos of a caring community is reflected successfully in its daily life. Strengths in leadership stem from a positive and strong approach to the raising of standards and improving the quality of all children's work, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language. The school's results in national tests are analysed carefully to identify the progress of various groups of children and to inform decision making about how to bring about improvements in standards.

53. The governing body, especially the chair of governors, is well informed. It includes a mixture of established governors and new appointees. They meet regularly and appropriate committees are in place. Communication with the headteacher is good and governors make frequent visits to the school in a variety of capacities. There has been governor training on target setting and they are becoming increasingly involved in monitoring the work of the school. Key issues identified in the previous inspection report have been tackled rigorously. A strategic development plan has been agreed following consultation between governors and staff. It focuses clearly on ways to improve the school's performance and includes a helpful vision statement by the headteacher about what the school will be like in three years time. She has set meaningful and realistic targets linked to the raising of standards. The views of the parents are sought through questionnaires and half-termly meetings with the headteacher. This is good practice because it builds effectively on the positive partnership that exists between the school and parents.

54. The headteacher rightly places emphasis on the importance of monitoring, evaluating and developing further the quality of teaching. A comprehensive programme of formal observation of lessons by the headteacher and key co-ordinators is in place. It includes written feedback and targets for development. This is particularly important because of the recent changes in staff and because it helps to identify issues for discussion by the school.

55. Subject co-ordinators are keen to raise standards in their areas of the curriculum, although recent staff changes mean that a number of them have taken on new subject responsibilities. They help to monitor standards through looking at teachers' planning and children's work. The school handles most of the co-ordination of the national curriculum foundation subjects as a team rather than leaving it to individuals. This gives time for new members of staff to settle in and also helps keep subjects interrelated.

56. The school's approach to the teaching and management of children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is really effective. It enables the children concerned to play a full part in the life of the school and to make significant progress. The co-ordination of special educational needs has recently been allocated to two members of the senior management team. They work together very well and the children benefit from this. The school makes good use of a specialist teacher provided by the local education authority in its co-ordination of the work for children with English as an additional language. This too benefits the children.

57. The school is well staffed with a favourable pupil to teacher ratio. The staff's experience and training suits them for their appointed roles in the school. They have good opportunities for in-service training and staff appraisal systems are supportive of staff development. All teachers have an allocation of non-contact time that enables them to fulfil their duties more effectively and to keep abreast of their co-ordination roles. Newcomers are inducted well into the school and there is an effective mentoring system for newly qualified teachers. In the past two years the school has had a high turnover of staff due to a variety of reasons. Learning support assistants, including one bilingual assistant, work effectively and co-operatively with the teaching staff. They feel themselves to be a valued part of the school team. The school has sufficient administrative staff and the recently appointed secretary is settling in to her new role. Good expertise is obtained through buying in financial services. The school finds teacher recruitment difficult and there are few applicants for advertised teaching positions. This is due in part to the cost of housing in the area.

58. The well kept accommodation is spacious internally and externally. Whilst classroom sizes are generally of an adequate size, the overall working area is enhanced by shared

space outside the classrooms. The spacious hall includes a large stage and a good floor surface that facilitates work in physical education. The separate dining room frees up the hall for lunch hour use. The library area is extensive and the well designed and furnished administrative base includes practical working areas for staff as well as storage areas for books and resources. The overall storage facilities in the school are good. The Foundation Stage has spacious accommodation including good external provision. The two large playgrounds are well surfaced and, together with a large field area and a small wild life area, offer ample space for physical and other learning activities. Climbing equipment adds to the quality of the outside environment for the children.

59. The school has spent heavily on learning resources over recent months. It now has satisfactory amounts of equipment and books of mainly good quality. Resources are stored and organised well. They are easily accessible for use.

60. The school's finances are managed and deployed very well. The development plan identifies clearly the priorities for each year's expenditure. Additional money received for the education of children with special educational needs or those learning English as an additional language, is used very effectively. This spending has a marked and positive impact on the standards reached in the school. Within the budget, governors have wisely given priority to appointing sufficient well-qualified teaching and support staff. They aim to ensure small classes and good levels of help for the children who need it.

61. The current year's financial forecast is for a deficit, to be covered by a surplus accrued in previous years. However, this will leave little to carry forward to 2003-2004 and is likely to result in reduced spending levels next year. The governors are fully aware of this and have sound contingency plans for this eventuality. The headteacher and governors have a very good record of attracting additional grants and sponsorship to the school. This may soften the impact of next year's tight budget.

62. Staff and governors share a strong commitment to raising standards even further. They are sharply aware of how the school compares with other, similar, schools and they monitor the progress children make closely and regularly. Children whose learning does not progress as well as expected are identified early and given additional support. In agreeing financial priorities each year, there is full consultation with staff. The headteacher's half-termly meetings with parents mean that they too can put forward ideas for improvement. Competitive tenders are sought for the provision of goods and services. Overall, financial planning and management are very good and ensure that children benefit from the resources available to the school.

63. Taking into account the standards achieved, the quality of education provided and the school's costs, it provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. The governors, headteacher and staff should take action to:
- (1) raise standards in English, particularly children's speaking and writing skills;*
 - (2) raise standards in science;*
 - (3) raise standards in information and communication technology, especially the monitoring and control aspect of the subject;*
 - (4) increase opportunities for children to take decisions and show initiative in their work.*

* The school has already identified the need for these improvements in its school development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	45
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	2	16	23	3	1	0
Percentage	0%	4%	36%	51%	7%	2%	0%

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	10	120
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	57

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	41

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	54

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
%	%

School data	7.9
National comparative data	5.6

School data	0.9
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	5	7	12

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	2	2	3
	Girls	5	5	5
	Total	7	7	8
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	58 (77)	58 (86)	67 (86)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	2	3	3
	Girls	5	5	5
	Total	7	8	8
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	58 (77)	67 (86)	67 (77)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	4	8	12

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	2	2	3
	Girls	7	5	6
	Total	9	7	9
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	75 (55)	58 (55)	75 (64)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	2	2	2
	Girls	5	7	7
	Total	7	9	9
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	58 (32)	75 (73)	75 (73)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	65	1	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	43	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	6	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	6	0	0

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15
Average class size	20

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	181

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Total number of education support staff	0.7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	507168
Total expenditure	516743
Expenditure per pupil	3282
Balance brought forward from previous year	6221
Balance carried forward to next year	-15796

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	11.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	12.8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	148
Number of questionnaires returned	40

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	20	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	33	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	38	5	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	40	5	3	13
The teaching is good.	70	28	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	28	8	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	78	20	0	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	20	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	73	28	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	58	35	0	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	40	0	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	60	15	5	0	20

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

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

65. At the time of the inspection, nearly half the children in the school were learning English as an additional language. About a quarter of this group were still at an early stage in mastering the new language. Among the varied home languages spoken, Bengali, Sylheti, Moroccan and Cantonese, predominate. The provision made to help them learn English is very good and is one of the school's strengths. While many enter the school with very little English, by the time they leave at the age of eleven the standards they reach are as good as those of their native English-speaking classmates.

66. Lesson observations, discussions with children, and an examination of their past work show that standards of English are well below average at the end of the infant stage. Orally they are confident, but find difficulty in explaining ideas and presenting a point of view. Most write alphabet letters correctly, but spelling skills are underdeveloped, and they frequently make grammatical errors. Most read simple texts accurately, using the context to help them with difficult words. While some use sounds well, many still have a lot to learn in this respect. Even when stories are read aloud correctly, children sometimes have a limited understanding of their content. Despite their initial difficulties, the work in their books shows clearly that they progress well in writing as they move towards the junior stage.

67. Progress in mastering English accelerates from this point. By the end of the junior stage standards of English are still below average, but a lot of ground has been made up. Most children talk fluently about their work and take pride in their achievement in learning English. They write using a suitable range of vocabulary, and can adjust the style of their work according to the recipient they have in mind – writing very differently, for example, in a letter of protest to an imaginary town council, from the style used in a set of instructions for making a tile sculpture in clay. They read with evident enjoyment, and use their knowledge of sounds well when necessary. While reading is usually accurate, their comprehension is sometimes uncertain.

68. An analysis of the 2002 English national test results of the eleven year olds for whom English is an additional language, confirms that the standard they reach is comparable to that of the other children in the class, although it is still below the national average. The staff's careful tracking of each child's learning provides evidence of the progress most make in mastering English as they move through the school. Bearing in mind the low levels of English many had when they entered the school, their subsequent achievements are impressive.

69. The very good progress children make results from the school's accurate assessments of each child's strengths and weaknesses. This allows teachers to pitch work at the right level for the children. The school uses additional grants very effectively to ensure that suitably qualified and experienced teachers and support staff are available, and that a satisfactory range of high quality materials and equipment is to hand. In addition to its complement of class teachers, the children benefit from the experience and skills of a specialist teacher provided by the local authority and a number of other staff who work very effectively in the school under her guidance. Good links have been made with parents and, through the Home-School Family Literacy Co-ordinator, opportunities have been made for parents to learn a little more about how they can help their children at home. For parents with little English, there is translation available not only of documents, but also for practical day-to-day issues and concerns. There is a good programme of training for teachers and learning support staff and this ensures a consistent and well-informed approach to the teaching of the children. The small number of children in most classes for morning literacy and numeracy lessons means they have the advantage of a good level of adult support when they need it. As a result, even children at an early stage in learning English benefit to the full from the class lessons they receive.

70. Children's skills in English are developed both in general classroom lessons and through specialist input in small groups by the school's specialist staff. The quality of the teaching in both the infant and the junior stages is very good. This is especially the case when a support assistant or specialist teacher is on hand to explain to individual children the task the class teacher has set and to clarify questions and explanations. This ensures that a lack of language skills does not result in a child misunderstanding the lesson. The teaching provided is knowledgeable, matched effectively to children's individual needs, well organised and encouraging. It is the most important factor in bringing about the very good progress of the children.

71. The children recognise the progress they make and are proud of their successes. They grow in confidence and talk with adults, including those they do not already know, with less reticence. They behave well in their lessons and work hard to accelerate their own learning.

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

72. From September to December, children in the nursery and reception age groups are under the supervision of one teacher, a nursery nurse and classroom assistant. From January each year, children are taught in two separate classes, each with a qualified teacher, one for nursery and one for reception children. The nine reception children start school ten minutes earlier than the 20 nursery children. Often parents with nursery children wait outside for this time. As one teacher has responsibility for these children there is a need to review the way nursery and reception children enter the school. This is to enhance the respect and understanding for the role of the parents and make the best use of time. At the time of the inspection, the Foundation Stage teacher had been in post for seven days.

73. Nursery children attend school for the morning only. When they enter the reception year, they attend full-time. At the time of the inspection, the nursery children had been in school for seven mornings.

74. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. Judgements are based on lesson observations, scrutiny of previous work, teachers' planning and photographic evidence.

Personal, social and emotional development

75. Teaching and children's progress is satisfactory. As it is early in the academic year, staff rightly placed strong emphasis on enabling children to become familiar with routines, getting to know each other and feeling happy and confident in school. They do this successfully. Children respect the adults who work with them and their classmates, listening carefully. Relationships are constructive and children carry out the instructions they are given sensibly. 'Snack time' is used effectively to teach children good manners, to say 'please' and 'thank you'. Staff make the most of 'snack time' to extend children's speaking and listening skills. They offer children the chance to talk about what they have been doing, or something of interest that they want to share. When playing with the toys in the garden, children are taught effectively how to share and play together well. Staff are very good role models, always speaking to the children politely, demonstrating very good social skills.

76. Staff provide good opportunities for children to explore the awe and wonder of the natural world. In a project about fruit, children felt and smelled a pineapple, an avocado, an orange, a banana, a tangerine and a mango. Their interest was captured when the fruit was cut and they could see the flesh, seeds and juice. Later, the children tasted similar fruits at snack time, discussing their likes and dislikes.

77. Photographic evidence shows that children gain knowledge appropriately about other religions and faiths through celebrations, such as the 'Chinese New Year', Easter and the Nativity.

78. Planning needs to be sharper and indicate what is to be learned in planned activities. These should take into account provision for children to make important decisions about their work and use their initiative. They should be encouraged to put on aprons independently and learn how to change their clothing for physical education. Children are encouraged to tidy up at the end of each activity and take care of the classroom.

Communication, language and literacy

79. Teaching and children's progress in communication, language and literacy are satisfactory. Scrutiny of previous work shows that bright children attain and even exceed the expected level of reading and writing for their age. The brighter children at the end of the reception year in the summer of 2002 wrote simple sentences and read books that were in line with the early stages of the National Curriculum.

80. At the time of the inspection, few children were on course to meet the required levels of attainment at the end of the reception year. This is because the children in the current reception class have significant difficulties with their speech and language skills. The school recognises this and appropriate support has been provided. Children at an early stage of learning English are supported well by a bilingual assistant who translates to confirm their understanding of stories and instructions. These children listen intently and make good progress. They like to try out their developing language skills on their friends and adults. Children with special educational needs are supported effectively by staff who ensure children work well towards attaining the targets in their individual education plans.

81. There are many opportunities for children to be involved in discussions with adults, play in the home corner and talk to each other at 'snack time'. Sometimes these groups are too big so that only a few children speak up. They have to wait a long time to speak and lose interest.

82. Children are grouped according to their abilities, rather than age, for many tasks. This helps them to make appropriate progress. Children working with the reception teacher know some of the sounds letters make. They name objects beginning with 's' and think of other words in their vocabulary beginning with the same sound. This gives a foundation on which children can develop early literacy skills. Children working with the nursery nurse, listen attentively to stories, such as 'Handa's Surprise'. This was a good choice of story as it developed children's vocabulary in an interesting way. Opportunities to look at and handle the unusual fruits mentioned in the story brought it alive. The rigid timetable limited the time available for children to browse through books in the story area. This prevented them from talking about or retelling other stories and associating pictures and words. An 'office area' encouraged a few children to write their name.

Mathematical development

83. Scrutiny of photographs of previous work indicates teaching and children's progress in this area of learning are satisfactory overall. Much of the work is based on practical experiences. Children sort objects into differing groups, thread beads in repeating patterns, dial the telephone, learn how to recognise 'o'clock' and count to ten. They also learn number songs and rhymes. Emphasis is placed on vocabulary, such as 'yesterday', 'today' and 'tomorrow' as well as the days of the week. This is taught through stories, such as 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' that capture the children's interest. Scrutiny of work revealed some unnecessary use of low quality worksheets that make few demands on children to take them forward in their learning. It was not possible to make a judgement about the children's attainment at the end of their reception year.

84. Teachers' planning indicated little provision for children's mathematical development during the inspection. Opportunities to build mathematical development into play activities, such as the vegetable and fruit shop, were missed. Few children are on course to meet the expected level of attainment at the end of the reception year.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

85. From scrutiny of work and photographic evidence, nursery and reception children's knowledge and understanding of the world was taught and developed appropriately in the previous year. Too little work had been undertaken in this area of learning at the time of the inspection to make a judgement about children's level of attainment by the end of the reception year. The photographs show that children have:

- grown plants;
- experienced the wonder of placing white carnations in coloured water and watching the flowers change colour;
- learned about people who help us, such as the police and hospital nurses;
- prepared snacks for each other and thought about healthy eating;
- developed more understanding of how they have changed since they were babies;
- considered different environments such as 'the seaside' or 'the city';
- drawn pictures on the computer;
- investigated 'floating' and 'sinking', by making paper boats and placing different numbers of marbles in them;
- dressed dolls in different materials to find out which ones are waterproof;
- explored the properties of melting ice;
- made jelly and discovered what happens when it is heated, mixed with water and left to cool;

and enjoyed opportunities to construct imaginary buildings and vehicles with appropriate toys. These activities are intended to continue this year.

86. However, the rigid timetable limits the chance for children to spend time exploring, experimenting, planning and making decisions for themselves.

Physical development

87. Considerable time was given over to developing children's physical development during the inspection. The new garden was used extensively to enable children in the reception and nursery to learn to play happily together. They ride tricycles and scooters safely, having the control to avoid crashes and steer small cars around obstacles. Children chose to play with a range of toys that included prams, pushchairs, rockers and trampolines and invented their own play. They knew the impact of rigorous exercise on their bodies and said they were 'puffed out', hot and tired after running around. Some children are developing satisfactory skills in throwing and catching a ball, balancing a beanbag on their head and climbing up and over a climbing frame. Others enjoy jumping along a path, counting up to 10 as they go.

88. This area of learning is rigidly timetabled at the same time each day. Teachers' planning shows that it is mostly free play and has few links with learning that is going on in the classroom. All children play in the garden at the same time and adults join in helping children to develop speech or coordination skills.

Creative development

89. Provision, teaching and children's progress are satisfactory. Role-play areas, such as the home corner and fruit and vegetable shop in the classroom and imaginative play as members of the police force in the garden, enable children to develop their language skills. Staff join in and help children to take on appropriate roles.

90. In art, children print colourful pictures using three dimensional shapes and paint with water colours. In design and technology, they make pop-up puppets. However, there is little opportunity for children to express their own ideas in art. Often, the children follow the same ideas presented to them. They have few opportunities to choose the paints, brushes or materials they wish to use.

91. A tape of previous work in music shows that children learn simple songs and nursery rhymes, such as 'Hickory, Dickory Dock' and 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' and enjoy accompanying them with musical instruments.

ENGLISH

92. The last inspection in June 2000 judged that standards were rising, particularly at the infant stage. It found that the school's results in national tests for children aged seven were close to the average achieved in similar schools the previous year. In most lessons observed at the junior stage, the inspection judged that children were achieving levels expected nationally for their age, but that this was not reflected in the school's results in national tests for children aged eleven. It concluded that further work was needed, particularly in writing and this was identified as a key issue for improvement. Since then, the school has established good systems to analyse test results and to check children's progress over time. Considerable effort has been put into raising standards and this is paying dividends. However, results are expected to fluctuate because there are relatively small numbers of children in each year group and the percentage of those with special educational needs varies. Unverified test results for 2002 show an improvement, but are unlikely to reach levels expected nationally.

93. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of children's work during the current inspection show standards of attainment are well below average at the end of the infant stage and below average at the end of the junior stage. This represents satisfactory progress given the difficulties many children have when they start at the school. At both the infant and junior stages, children with special educational needs make good progress. Those with English as an additional language make very good progress because their programmes of work benefit from the guidance provided by an experienced and skilled specialist teacher.

94. The national initiative on literacy has been introduced satisfactorily and is helping to raise standards. Texts are chosen with care and generally appeal to the children's interests. However, more could be done to reinforce literacy skills across all subjects. The school does not have many children of high ability and only a few reach the higher levels of attainment in the national tests. The school is aware of this and is working hard, with some success, to improve the situation. Appropriate efforts are made to use homework that includes writing, spelling and reading as a means to enhance the work covered in lessons.

95. Children are usually pleased to talk to visitors about their work and interests, but often find speaking skills difficult. This applies even to those children who are not learning English as an additional language. Children are polite and respectful. However, many use only a limited range of vocabulary and their listening as well as speaking skills are not as effectively developed as in most other schools. Children listen carefully to instructions and usually respond well to prompts and encouragement. Some, however, quickly become restless and find it difficult to concentrate. By the age of seven, many children find it hard to communicate more than simple meanings clearly and their speaking and listening skills are mostly well below average. By age eleven, children's confidence has grown and they are beginning to use their own experiences to develop their answers to questions. Their speaking and listening skills are generally below average, but there are occasions when they contribute to discussions well. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson some children sensibly shared ideas about the features of a biography. Their comments were sensible and helped to bring about a better understanding of the purpose of a biography.

96. Children enjoy listening to stories. They read regularly at school and a successful shared reading scheme has been established. It involves members of the community visiting the school once a week to read with children. This encourages everyone to take an interest in books and for children to persevere with the development of their reading skills. Most children also take reading books home regularly and home/school reading diaries are used to record the progress they make. This is a useful link between parents and teachers, although few parents use the diaries to record comments about how well their child is doing. Infant children make some use of letter sounds, pictures and the context of the story to help them tackle new words. They know what an author does and some can name books they have read. However, by the age of seven their reading skills are mostly well below the level expected nationally. They often lack confidence and read haltingly.

97. At the junior stage, children read with growing confidence and fluency, but with little expression. By the age of eleven, their reading skills have improved but are below the national average. Children show satisfactory understanding of main characters and story lines, but find it difficult to predict story outcomes and reasonable alternatives. Brighter children have read the work of a range of authors. One Year 6 child talked enthusiastically about stories written by Roald Dahl, Jacqueline Wilson and J. K. Rowling. Most children know about the use of an index and a contents page, but their research skills are limited.

98. Raising standards in writing, particularly at the junior stage, was a key issue in the previous inspection. The school has worked hard to do this and has paid special attention, successfully, to the performance of boys. Improvements have been made, but more still needs to be done. Many children continue to have considerable difficulty with this area of their work and this impedes their progress in all subjects. Standards are generally well below those of other children nationally at the end of the infant stage. Most Year 2 children show a growing understanding of how to sequence events in the right order, but their knowledge of basic sentence structure, including the use of capital letters, full stops and question marks is developing only slowly. Although children try hard with spelling, simple words are often spelt incorrectly. Children use lined books to practice handwriting, but many struggle to transfer their skills successfully to other written work.

99. By the age of eleven, there is an improvement in writing, but standards remain below average. Children write for a range of purposes, such as stories and letters, and are beginning to think more carefully about the use of language and its meaning. Opportunities are provided for them to self-check their work. They sometimes redraft their efforts and this leads to improved handwriting and spelling. However, writing often lacks imagination as well as the skill of developing ideas in an interesting way. Teachers give appropriate attention to spelling and grammatical structure, but children often make simple errors.

100. Some of the teachers have not been in post long. Nevertheless, all of the teaching seen was at least satisfactory. Some of it was good and there was one very good lesson in Year 2. The structure provided by the literacy hour has given teachers clear guidelines about the organisation of lessons and this is proving beneficial. Resources are prepared well and lesson plans are usually clear about what the children are to learn and how. This is often explained to them at the beginning of the lesson so that they know what they are going to do. Most children have good attitudes towards the subject and behave well. The good teaching stems from:

- positive relationships with the children and an expectation that they will do their best;
- secure subject knowledge that is used effectively to clarify particular teaching points;
- good control and management, especially of children who find it difficult to concentrate for long;
- reminders about earlier work and how it links with new tasks to be undertaken;
- well chosen texts and group work that holds children's interest and is appropriately matched to their needs. An example of this was a Year 5 lesson that used extracts from Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* to help children understand about the writing of dialogue. Group work included writing a scene in normal prose and searching the internet for background information about Shakespeare;
- effective use of praise and encouragement that helps build children's confidence in what they can achieve;
- skilful use of questions that assess what children understand and challenge them to think hard;
- effective deployment of support staff to help children who need it most. An example of this was seen in Year 1 lesson when a learning support assistant practised the use of letter sounds with a group of children who have difficulty with reading.

101. Features of the very good lesson included;

- the recognition and use of opportunities to reinforce basic skills. For example, getting children to use their knowledge of letter sounds to read the word equipment;
- giving children time to think before answering questions;
- high expectations of what the children could achieve in the time available;
- a sense of purpose and pace that encouraged children to develop their skills effectively.

102. The school works hard successfully to widen and enrich the children's literacy experiences. There are many posters and displays that encourage children to read. Activities have included a Book Week, visits to the theatre, visits by poets and annual productions. These all help to motivate and enliven the children's interest in the subject.

MATHEMATICS

103. Based on inspection evidence, standards of attainment by the age of seven are well below the national average and at age eleven they are below average. This is lower than at the time of the previous inspection when standards were in line with national averages. The 2001 test results and comparisons with similar schools show that standards are well below the national average at the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. Unverified test results for this year show that the school has exceeded its targets for improvement but standards are still unlikely to reach that expected nationally. This indicates good progress given the difficulties many children experience with mathematics on entry to the school. The overall trend is upwards which mirrors the national picture. Because year groups are relatively small and numbers fluctuate from year to year, variations in standards are likely.

104. The emphasis at the infant stage is on developing numeracy skills and becoming competent in counting and writing numbers. Problem solving activities, like being a number detective, help children consolidate what they know. This is reinforced in simple games on the computer. In a Year 2 lesson, children showed confidence when adding in tens, the more able counting confidently forwards and backwards to 100. Fractions are taught through shape with children labelling halves and quarters correctly. Basic skills, such as doubling and halving, enable children to become quicker at mental calculations. They can tell the time to the half-hour and measure length and capacity using simple standard measures.

105. By the end of Year 6 children have progressed to a sound understanding of place value. They practise adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing sums and correct their mistakes when necessary. In previous work, children used their skills to round figures up and down, to estimate possible results and to pick out prime numbers. They make accurate use of calculators in decimal sums. In the current Year 6, children had difficulty in finding the area of a rectangular photo frame as they did not know the correct formula to use. Data handling in the form of bar charts, for example on favourite pets, is done at a very simple level. There is very little progression in this aspect of mathematics from Year 4 and there are few links with information and communication technology.

106. The subject co-ordinator is concerned that children do not like mathematics and is endeavouring through a questionnaire to find out why. Generally, most work hard in lessons, although it takes time for some to settle to the written task. For a few, behaviour deteriorates when their concentration wanes and they are not motivated by the task.

107. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good lessons at both the infant and junior stages. Where the teaching is most effective, lessons are structured well and have good pace. Staff are confident and make sure work is pitched at the right level, for example, taking account of targets on individual education plans for children with special educational needs. Children make better progress when lessons have a practical element and resources are used to good effect. Work in these classes during mental and oral sessions, such as a bingo game in Year 5, keeps children well motivated and they are keen to do more. In the less effective teaching, worksheets are over-used and sometimes too difficult to understand. They are folded into exercise books so that progress cannot easily be checked from one lesson to another. Classes are kept deliberately small for the numeracy hour and learning support assistants ably help children with special needs to make good progress. Those who are learning English as an additional language make very good progress. Numbers 1-10 are written on charts in Sylheti in all classes to assist these children in number recognition and counting.

108. Children's progress is checked systematically by daily teacher assessments and through interim and annual tests. The school pays for an additional teacher to take small numbers of able children and those under-achieving, to help them reach higher targets. All make good progress in their selected groups and parents are invited to attend the sessions and to take a bag of resources to continue the work at home. Another worthwhile initiative is the adult numeracy classes that are held in the school.

SCIENCE

109. Raising standards in science, especially at the infant stage, was a key issue arising from the 2000 inspection, and the school has devoted considerable time and resources through its annual development plan to bring about improvements. The programme of work the children follow has been revised, additional equipment bought and a programme of further training for staff set in place. More attention has been paid to the importance of practical and experimental work as well as the accurate use of scientific vocabulary. There are now two science subject leaders, one each in the infant and junior stages. Children's progress in the subject is more closely checked to make sure they progress as well as they can and they are now set individual targets in science. Children's work seen during the inspection and examination of work in the recent past, show that the school's efforts are meeting with some success, but that more remains to be done.

110. The standards reached at the end of the junior stage are below average, because important early learning in the subject has not been put in place in past years. Despite this, standards are now better than indicated in the 2001 national tests where they were found to be well below the national average.

111. Standards at the end of the infant stage are well below average. This too represents an improvement over the results of the 2001 national assessments, when standards were adjudged to be very low. These results are due in part to the proportion of children in the infants who are still at a very early stage of learning English and find difficulty in discussing and recording their work in writing. By the time they reach Year 6, most have the linguistic confidence and fluency to cope satisfactorily with the science curriculum.

112. The 2001 national test results allow a comparison to be made with other similar schools. Standards at the end of the junior stage were similar to those in such schools, but those at the infant stage were well below.

113. Standards have varied sharply from year to year, but the overall trend has been one of improvement. However, this is more marked in the juniors than in the infants. The school recognises that more needs to be done to raise standards and has realistic strategies in its development plan to achieve this.

114. The science curriculum children now follow covers all the required areas of the national curriculum. An excellent recent initiative was a Science Week, with exciting practical activities and visits by practising scientists. Good links have been established with a local secondary school and teachers and children can use some of its facilities, for example its nature pond, to enrich their own programme of work. Much of the work in both the infant and the junior stages is lively and interesting to the children. They are encouraged to observe results of simple experiments carefully and record their findings in pictures, tables and diagrams, as well as in written form.

115. By the age of seven, most of the children appreciate that animals can be divided into groups with common features and that humans are a special group. They have learned that objects move when forces are applied to them and can recognise the different effects of pushes, pulls, twists and stretches. They have carried out experiments to see how sound can travel and learned about some of the different sources of light.

116. By the time they are eleven, children have built on their learning. They carry out experiments to see which materials act as insulators for sound and some of the children can explain how sound is created through vibration. They have learned about how plants develop and reproduce and how electrical circuits are built.

117. However, in both the infant and the junior stages, work is at a lower level than expected for their age. The children find difficulty, in particular, in applying past knowledge to new situations and in suggesting causes for the results they observe.

118. Children with special educational needs as well as those learning English as an additional language, take a full part in science lessons and gain the same benefit from them as others in the class. This is because there is always skilled adult help to hand if they lack the linguistic fluency to answer questions, or find tasks hard to understand.

119. Three lessons were seen during the inspection, two in the junior stage and one in the infants. They were all satisfactory and one of the junior lessons was good. When teaching is at its best, work is set at a level to challenge the children's thinking. It calls on them to investigate or experiment, as well as acquire factual knowledge. Tasks interest them, so that they work hard throughout the lesson. In an upper junior lesson, children carried out a range of experiments to see which materials best insulated against sound. Having observed that the wood of classroom tables allowed sound through, some of the children realised that the amount of energy given to the production of the sound was an important factor, as was its pitch. This in turn led to an insight into the importance of identifying and controlling the factors that might influence the outcome of their experiment.

120. There are some weaknesses in otherwise satisfactory teaching. Scrutiny of work in the recent past shows that some lessons in the infant stage asked too much of some children's writing skills, with the result that children found it hard to understand or record the underlying scientific ideas. Some junior stage lessons repeatedly required children simply to copy information and diagrams from the whiteboard, with too little emphasis on the investigative aspect of the subject. Some lessons are too tightly structured, with the teacher unnecessarily limiting the challenge to the children's thinking as well as the opportunity for them to exercise initiative. On some occasions, teachers attach too little importance to asking children to predict outcomes of experiments and to compare their predictions with their results.

121. Children enjoy their work in science and look forward to their lessons. They behave well in class and try their best to learn. They collaborate well in practical work in pairs and small groups.

122. The school's rigorous action to raise science standards is already having a positive impact. Many children start from a low base of relevant knowledge and of language skill. It will take time for the school's good initiatives to bear their full fruit.

ART AND DESIGN

123. Art and design was not taught during the inspection. Time is set aside so that the subject is covered over a period of time in either the first or second half of each term. Judgements are based on scrutiny of photographic evidence, teachers' plans and displays in public areas of the school. There was very little art work on classroom walls to reflect the value teachers place on the subject. The school has purchased good quality pictures to hang in the corridors to give children a good idea of what can be achieved.

124. Attainment in art and design is well below that found in most schools at the end of the infant stage and below at the end of the junior stage. This is because children do not have sufficient opportunity to use their initiative and express their own ideas. There are a few examples of high quality work on display, illustrating use of a range of materials, textures, line and tone. However, these are mostly copies of famous works of art, such as 'Weeping Woman' by Picasso or 'A Face' by Alexei Jawlensky, rather than the children working in the style of famous artists.

125. Work on display in the library indicates that some children mix watercolours effectively with pastels to paint simple landscapes. These are very similar to one another. Some children have explored working in different media, such as paper mache. Pictures of fish and butterflies made this way are colourful. Faces made of clay and self-portraits are also good quality. Road safety posters, advertisements for books, Aboriginal designs, collages and large paintings on material show the range of art work in the curriculum. The school follows national advice about the art and design curriculum, but does not do enough to allow children to bring their own ideas and imagination to the tasks.

126. Scrutiny of sketchbooks, indicates that many children lack confidence in the subject. Pictures are small and immature. Those where children have used their observational skills, such as drawings of dandelions, periwinkles or daffodils, are better. In the infant stage, children paint large pictures, but often their work consists of illustrations using felt tip pens. Towards the end of the junior stage, children draw careful, detailed pictures, illustrating Shakespearean stories or historical events.

127. Art and design is often confused with design and technology. The subject has been squeezed by the need to enhance children's literacy and numeracy skills.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

128. Children's attainments at the end of Year 2 are line with expectations and children make satisfactory progress, but there was insufficient evidence to judge the quality of work at the upper junior stage to make an accurate judgement. However, scrutiny of planning indicates that the subject is covered adequately and that the content meets National Curriculum requirements. Previous work at the lower junior stage was examined and show that children can design a simple monster according to set criteria, for example one with a moving part. This was carried out using a balloon to effect a simple pneumatic system using cereal type boxes. They also draw simple designs for a picture frame, but do not record in their plans the materials from which they will make them nor give any indication of the approximate measurements. By age seven, children can design and make puppets from felt using a blanket stitch to fasten the ends. They are able to design their own 'Incy Wincy Spider' by using an egg carton to make the spider and attach a bobbin winding mechanism using doweling to move the spider up the spout. They make a simple chassis for a car using doweling for the axle and a choice of prepared circular card, plastic and wood for the wheels. They can make a sandwich from a choice of ingredients. Using pipe cleaners, lolly sticks, bobbins and other such materials, they design and make their own model playground.

129. The teaching observed during the inspection ranged from good to unsatisfactory at the infant stage. The one lesson observed at the junior stage was poor. However, scrutiny of teachers' planning and children's work products, indicates that teaching is satisfactory overall. In the best teaching at the infants, the lesson intention was clear and shared effectively with the children. Their interest was quickly aroused through discussion of toy cars and the challenge to find out how the wheels turned. Further good quality discussion followed and there were some good visual aids to help children's thinking. A good range of resources was prepared for them to choose from to make their own chassis. When they were working on their models, good quality questioning kept the children thinking. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, too much was done for the children. For example, all the materials were prepared for them and children merely stuck them on to a collage. As a result, they often worked without sufficient attention to care and detail. Children were fidgety during class discussion times, lacked concentration and few answered the teachers' questions. In the poor lesson at the junior stage, insufficient attention was given to health and safety matters and children's behaviour was unsatisfactory, particularly that of the boys. There was a lack of intellectual and creative effort. The quality of questioning was unsatisfactory and the lesson did not manage to captivate the children's interest.

130. Staff changes have meant that co-ordination of the subject has been difficult. This has impeded the monitoring of children's work.

GEOGRAPHY

131. Attainment in geography at age seven is well below what is expected nationally and at age eleven it is below. Lesson observations, teachers' planning and the scrutiny of last year's work show satisfactory progress overall, but there are significant gaps in knowledge and understanding. For example, a traffic survey done in Year 1 and repeated in Year 4 did not reflect the development of skills that is expected.

132. Satisfactory progress is made in the infants. At Year 1, children gain an understanding of the geographical features of the school and the local environment. They sketch their route to school to the best of their ability and talk a little about what can be seen on the way. In Year 2, the class endeavours to work out the differences between human and physical features on the Island of Struay. Most find this task very difficult.

133. Progress in the juniors is satisfactory. In Year 3 children learn about the immediate environment around the school. They explore the extensive grounds on a class walk, identifying particular parts of the building on a school plan. Effective links were made with history in another lesson when a class looked at an old map of the local area and compared it to one of today. Although they found this task hard through lack of previous knowledge, a good effort was made to spot the differences. Some children could identify that where they now lived was once a field of corn. Older juniors study the effect of humans on the environment. They depict places on a world map that are under threat, such as the rain forests, showing trees killed by acid rain and land turning to desert. There is some understanding of the way people can improve or damage the environment and how decisions concerning places can affect the quality of life.

134. Current displays focus mainly on map work. In one example, children identified and marked places they had visited for their holiday. One caption read "I went to Bangladesh and it took 12 hours by plane". A school journey enabled Years 5 and 6 children to make visual comparisons between York Minster and St. Albans during their stay. However, there is little use of information and communication technology to help in geographical investigation.

135. Children's response to geography is satisfactory. They show some confidence when talking in class discussions, but when it comes to writing they work at a much lower level and take considerable time to put their thoughts on paper. The whole school went to Walton-on-the-Naze this year as many children had never seen the sea.

136. Teaching is satisfactory. Staff make learning meaningful by using resources, such as large books, maps and aerial photographs in lessons. The overhead projector is effectively used as a lead in to lessons and to show children what is required. Worksheets are simplified for those with learning difficulties. Learning support assistants help those who are learning English as an additional language and enable them to take a full part in lessons.

137. National guidelines are used as a basis for planning, but is not always matched carefully enough to children's needs. Marking is not rigorous enough and children's work shows few comments from teachers on how to improve.

HISTORY

138. By the age of seven, attainment is well below that expected nationally. It is below national expectations at age eleven. Lesson observations, teachers' planning and the scrutiny of last year's work shows that, from a low base, children's progress is satisfactory at both the infant and the junior stages. Children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, progress well as a result of the extra support they receive.

139. No lessons were seen in the infants as history is timetabled for later in the term. Very little past work was seen in Year 2. Every book included a sketch of Florence Nightingale with captions about her life, particularly nursing. A class book on the Queen Mother's funeral contained writing about the gun carriage carrying the coffin, the church bells pealing and how sad everyone was, including the Queen. The illustrations in the book showed many interesting observations of the scene, such as the guards' uniforms.

140. In one Year 6 study about Shakespeare and the Globe Theatre, children looked at the play of Macbeth. One imaginative idea was for Macbeth to describe his success in battle via an e-mail to Lady Macbeth! Another study was made of how World War Two affected young

people, such as Anne Frank. It included the effects of rationing on children and their families. Children made useful notes from seeing a video of Ancient Egypt which led to an understanding of how the River Nile affected the economy of the country. A portrait of Henry VIII was shown in one lesson and the class worked hard in deciding what kind of person he was. They used words, such as kingly, proud, arrogant and ugly. Previous work on the Ancient Greeks included legends such as Theseus and the Minotaur and accounts of the Trojan War. Children identified the different ways the past can be interpreted, for example from drawings on pottery, plays and writing by eye-witnesses. Younger juniors studied the Romans, but were only able to record a small amount of work.

141. Children's attitudes to history are mainly positive. They are fascinated by some aspects of it and like to show off their new found knowledge, such as remembering the names and order of Henry VIII's six wives. Many children have difficulty with writing skills. Problems also arise with a small number who lack concentration and can only sustain interest for short periods of time.

142. Teaching is satisfactory. Resources are used effectively to stimulate children at the start of lessons, for example, using music of the time to set the scene for work on the Tudors. Children are not always able to maintain this enthusiasm through to the end of the lesson. Support staff help those with special needs or who have English as an additional language when they are present. Lessons in the juniors are based on planning from national guidelines and this helps to ensure that topics are not repeated in the mixed age classes.

143. The history curriculum is enriched by visits to places of interest, including a residential school journey to York. The group went to the Minster and the City Wall and one child wrote from this first-hand experience: "We walked along the Roman Wall, part of it was scary so we all held hands." At the National Railway Museum, they took rubbings of several old engine plates and the results are displayed in the library alongside their photographs. Visits to St. Albans Abbey, Verulamium and museums also support the work in history and help children to gain a better understanding of the past.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

144. The school has made slow progress since the last inspection in addressing the issues raised at that time due to the large turnover of staff, the need to re-schedule staff training and to develop the new staff's skills and confidence. However, there has been recent improvement in the co-ordination of the subject. The new co-ordinator, who has good subject knowledge, has worked hard in a short time and outlined a three-year strategy to improve provision and standards in the subject. The school recognises the need to establish an information and communication technology suite as part of this process. The co-ordinator has devised record sheets of key skills for different age groups, re-organised the computer network to include individual access for children, updated the information and communication technology policy, but recognises where improvements still need to be made. He has analysed all the school's software and provided written guidance for staff about its appropriate use for children of different ages. Under the guidance of the new co-ordinator the school is now in a position to ensure children make more rapid progress.

145. Children's attainment is below expectations at the end of both key stages. This is in part due to the difficulties the school has been facing. It is also because the curriculum is not yet well enough established. Furthermore, children have limited opportunities to use the

computers because they have to take turns. This does not enable the children, few of whom have computers at home on which to practise, to gain sufficient confidence and skill. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls or of different ethnic groups.

146. The school is not yet fulfilling National Curriculum requirements in the monitoring and control aspect of the subject and there is insufficient use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. Some use was observed in mathematics in Years 5 and 6.

147. By the end of Year 2 children can log on, use the mouse to click on icons and move objects around the screen, as when they dress or hide Teddy in one program they use. They are able to control a moving toy by programming it to find 'hidden treasure'. They can use an art program to design self-portraits and to draw and paint, selecting different colours. They make some, but limited, use of composing their writing directly on to the screen.

148. By the end of Year 6 children can access the Internet and some can use a search engine. Some children are becoming familiar with the use of favourite menus. Children can log on and shut down independently. They can merge text and graphics, cut and paste, select different fonts, colours and formats. They can use the computer to word-process their work, although several children still work with one hand when typing which is slowing up their work. They are becoming familiar with data-handling techniques and the use of correct terminology for such work as 'fields' and 'records'. Overall, the progress they have been making has been slow, but in upper juniors this is beginning to speed up and children are beginning to recover some lost ground. Currently, all children, irrespective of ability, cover similar ground, but those who have special educational needs receive more adult support when working alone.

149. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have varying degrees of confidence in teaching the subject, but they do not always see the possibilities of exploiting opportunities across the curriculum. A few short sessions were observed that involved the teaching of a key skill to groups of children and these were generally well managed, although the small screen sizes did not make it easy for children to see the detail. Teachers have good relationships with the children. A good feature of the teaching is the way in which through questioning they both extend and revise children's knowledge. In a good Year 3 lesson taught by the information and communication technology co-ordinator, the teacher asked 'How can we zoom in and out?' His effective demonstration and good questioning technique enabled the children to make good progress in this lesson. However, despite the revision, the absence of written reminders about program procedures means that children sometimes get stuck with their work when they have their own turn later in the week. An unusual but successful feature of the learning process is the support older children give to younger children on occasions to help them acquire computer skills. For example, older children were observed confidently teaching a specific program to Year 2 children about how they should use the shift key and space bar.

150. In lessons, most children show good levels of interest and concentration and are keen to learn the demonstrated procedures. Their behaviour is usually good. They persevere when they work independently.

151. Resources for the subject are satisfactory. However, the school lacks control and monitoring software in the junior stage. The school recognises the benefits better demonstration facilities and a computer suite would bring.

MUSIC

152. Apart from very short group singing practices, there was little opportunity to observe music during the inspection period because only one class lesson was time-tabled during that time. It is, therefore, not possible to make judgements about children's attainment or their progress. Scrutiny of planning indicates that National Curriculum requirements are fulfilled and there is a clearly outlined scheme. Good use is made of local authority music personnel to undertake singing sessions and to teach the children piano, brass, violin and woodwind. About 30 children are engaged in these group lessons and ten children are in the recorder group. The curriculum includes violin tuition for all children in Years 3 and 4 and recorders in Year 2 and so they receive every encouragement to take up an instrument. As yet there is no school orchestra.

153. There was insufficient teaching to judge its overall quality. In the one lesson observed, the teaching was good. Year 2 children made good progress in identifying high and low sounds. There was good reference to high and low sounds heard daily, such as vacuuming compared with the song of the birds. Good use was made of a variety of methods to keep the children's interest. For example they had to sit or stand according to whether the sound of the chime bar was high or low. They positioned their hands in a high or low position in response to the sound of the chime bars or the piano. The two teachers who shared the lesson had good musical knowledge and this was demonstrated in the piano playing and the teaching of the correct technique for holding and blowing a recorder. Children made good progress in differentiating pitch in the lesson. In whole key stage singing sessions, children sang joyfully and enthusiastically albeit at the expense of tunefulness and harmony. Nevertheless, there was good emphasis by the teacher on fitting the words to the tune and pronouncing word endings correctly.

154. The enthusiastic music co-ordinator has good skills and arranges a music concert each year. Several children have taken part in outside performances in the area.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

155. Children's attainment meets those expected nationally by the end of Years 2 and 6 and is similar to that reported previously. There is no difference in overall attainment between different ethnic groups or between boys and girls. Children make satisfactory progress and the school fulfils the requirements of the national curriculum with due balance given to the different elements of the subject. Children have good opportunities for swimming in the juniors enabling many of them to reach the expected standard by age 11.

156. By the end of Year 2 children pass a ball to each other with reasonable accuracy and are developing appropriate catching skills, though with a tendency to snatch for a ball when catching rather than bringing the ball into their body when receiving it. They use different parts of their bodies to take their weight whilst still or moving and can transfer the weight from

their feet to their hands. They learn to land correctly when jumping. By age 11, children effect controlled movements in gymnastics, such as rotating around individual small mats using their self-chosen rolling movements and combining these into a sequence. In dance, they respond imaginatively to stimulus such as 'the haunted house' and work at different levels, such as crouching and dodging, using a satisfactory range of gestures to reflect the mood of that particular moment. They engage in a variety of games activities and learn specific game skills. For example, they learn to retain close control of a ball with a plastic hockey stick and show suitable team co-operation. Some children participate in out-of-school activities that enable them to take part in fixtures against other schools. A regular feature of the school year is the inter-schools athletics competition for which the children are prepared in a range of athletics events.

157. Children are well kitted out for lessons. They work barefooted in gymnastics and dance which adds to the sensitivity of their movements. Children are enthusiastic about the activities, but at times some become over excited. Their behaviour in lessons observed was satisfactory overall. They co-operate well in pairs, but their listening skills are sometimes unsatisfactory and in occasional lessons they do not always do as they are asked. Sometimes, they become noisy. In one junior stage lesson this resulted in its abandonment. In the main, children contribute well to demonstrations and to the evaluation of others' movements. This leads to improved performance.

158. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory at both the infant and junior stages with a range from good to occasionally unsatisfactory. Lessons have a clear focus and follow a published scheme. In the best teaching, there is good class management and clearly set expectations of conduct. Instructions are clear and high expectations are set, for example by ensuring there is a good entry into movements and a polished finish. Good use is made of language by teachers to describe movements, such as fluid and organised. Children then use this vocabulary in their own evaluations. Teachers ensure children think about all parts of their body when they move, such as the use of arms and back when performing rolling movements. As a result, children in Years 5 and 6 effected controlled rolling movements of a good standard. Good attention is paid to health and safety issues, such as ensuring children's earrings are taken out before a lesson begins. In the unsatisfactory teaching observed, there was a mismatch between children's capabilities and what was asked of them and the detail became too complicated. Children were unable to carry out what was asked and they made unsatisfactory progress as a result.

159. The co-ordination of the subject has recently changed hands and is now undertaken by a keen nursery nurse who has a personal interest in the subject. Resources are satisfactory, although some of the standing equipment is rather old and heavy. The good quality of the accommodation benefits work in the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

160. Children's achievements in religious education are similar to those found generally at age seven and eleven and are in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

The programmes of work help children to begin to learn that religious faith is a common feature of communities and that people who share a faith express it through religious observance and the way in which they live their lives. In the main, the programmes are based on Christianity, but are careful to take due account of the teaching and practices of other principle religions represented in this country. Children make satisfactory progress over time, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language. However, the general lack of speaking and writing skills sometimes hinders their ability to put forward views and to communicate what they know to others.

161. Interviews with children and scrutiny of previous work show that many can recount elements of religious stories, such as those about the life of Moses. By the end of the infant stage, children have a growing awareness of the importance of religious occasions, such as Christmas, Easter and Eid. They can explain, in simple terms, the meaning behind such occasions. Many children are beginning to appreciate that there are a variety of ways of celebrating special times in people's lives, such as birthdays, weddings and the birth of a baby within the family. They know that abbeys, churches and mosques are important buildings and places where people go to pray. They have considered the significance of some religious objects and symbols and have started to understand the messages expressed through them. Some children have made their own stained glass windows using tissue paper and card. They know that such windows often include pictures of important figures and special events. One child enthusiastically explained that bells are sometimes used to remind people when it is time to go to church.

162. At the end of the junior stage, children have a wider factual knowledge of religious education issues. They have studied a good number of religions, including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and Buddhism and are beginning to understand something about the practices and lifestyles of the people who belong to them. For example, children know that fasting is sometimes a custom within a religion. They can explain that Christians fast during Lent which lasts for forty days leading up to Easter. Children know that there are special books, such as the Bible and the Koran, and that there are figures of authority in each religion. One child explained how he had dressed up as a Bishop during a class visit to St. Albans Abbey. They know that prayer is important and are beginning to understand the significance of periods of quiet. Some children remembered that during a school visit to York Minster they needed to be quiet whilst people were praying. Many of them have built successfully on their knowledge and understanding of the use of religious symbols, such as crosses and candles. One child knew that bread and wine is used to symbolise the body and blood of Christ.

163. Both infant and junior children have considered relationships and the importance of care and concern for others, particularly those less fortunate than themselves. Infant children have thought about their own experiences and what makes them happy or unhappy. Older children have considered relationships with one another and are beginning to relate this to religious teaching.

164. In the one lesson seen during the period of the inspection the quality of teaching was satisfactory. During the lesson, children from Years 3 and 4 looked at the use of patterns and symbols in Islamic religion. Their attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory. They were sometimes rather noisy, but were motivated well by the tasks and showed a particular interest in the painting and significance of Mendhi patterns. The teacher ensured that

appropriate resources were to hand and that good use was made of support staff during group work and the plenary session. As a result, children's knowledge and understanding of Islam and its use of symbols and patterns grew satisfactorily.

165. Scrutiny of the school's records show that good use is made of visits and visitors to enrich the children's learning in religious education. Assemblies are used to celebrate important occasions, such as Easter and harvest festival. Interviews with the children show that these experiences add considerably to their overall understanding and knowledge of the subject.

