

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Ashbrook First School**

Two Mile Ash, Milton Keynes

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique Reference Number: 110384

Headteacher: Mrs Janet Newman

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Reporting inspector: Mrs Stephanie Lacey

Dates of inspection: 6 - 9 December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707009

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 8
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The High Street Two Mile Ash Milton Keynes MK8 8NA
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Isabella Coles
Date of previous inspection:	13 - 16 May 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

<b>Team members</b>	<b>Subject responsibilities</b>	<b>Aspect responsibilities</b>
Stephanie Lacey, Rgl	English Geography History Special educational needs	Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management
Derek Bowers, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, welfare and guidance Efficiency
Sue Butcher	Science Art Design and technology Physical education Equal opportunities English as an additional language	Partnership with parents and the community Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Fred Riches	Areas of learning for children under five Mathematics Information Technology Music Religious education	Curriculum and assessment Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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London WC2B 6SE

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

- Pupils reach high standards, compared to the national picture, in writing, mathematics and science.
- Pupils' behaviour and positive approach to learning are both excellent.
- The teaching is good overall, with a high proportion of very good and excellent lessons.
- The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The curriculum is very well planned.
- The school is very well led and managed and provides very good value for money.
- The staff team work very well together and have very good relationships with pupils.
- The school is very well supported by parents and the local community.

### Where the school has weaknesses

- I. The school does not have any significant weaknesses.

**This is a very good school with many strengths and no significant weaknesses.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has successfully addressed the points for development noted by the last inspection. These were all related to maintaining and developing the many strengths of the school. Consequently the staff and governors have continued to provide a secure and caring environment. They have continued to develop the curriculum and have implemented very effectively new initiatives, such as the literacy and numeracy strategies. They have also made a very good start on developing systems to monitor both teaching and pupils' attainment. The quality of the teaching, which was good at the time of the last inspection, has improved. The school has set realistic academic targets for the current year, which it is likely to achieve.

### Standards in subjects

This table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds in 1999 year based on the National Curriculum tests:

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools		Key
			<i>well above average</i>	A
			<i>above average</i>	B
Reading tests	B	C	<i>average</i>	C
Writing tests	A	B	<i>below average</i>	D
Mathematics tests	A	B	<i>well below average</i>	E

This table shows that pupils' attainment in national tests was well above average in writing and mathematics in 1999 and above average in reading. In comparison with schools similar to Ashbrook across the country, in the percentage of pupils entitled to free school

meals, pupils' attainment was better in writing and mathematics and matched similar schools in reading. A similar pattern was identified in the 1998 tests, but there has been an improvement in pupils' attainment in mathematics and reading in relation to similar schools.

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The inspection found that children in the reception year make very good progress and that many meet the nationally recommended learning outcomes for five-year-olds before their fifth birthdays. Pupils make good progress in Years 1, 2 and 3 in English, mathematics, science and information technology. At the end of Key Stage 1 and when they leave the school, pupils' attainment is well above the national average in writing, mathematics and science and above the national average in reading and information technology. Pupils' attainment broadly meets the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus in religious education because pupils make satisfactory progress. They make good progress throughout the school in all other subjects.

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*Inspectors are required to make judgements about attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and when pupils leave the school.*

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### Quality of teaching

Teaching in	Under 5	5 – 7 years	7 – 11 years
English	Very good	Good	Good
Mathematics	Very good	Good	Good
Science		Very good	Very good
Information technology		Good	Good
Religious education		Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Other subjects	Very good	Good	Good

*(Children under five follow an early years curriculum and are not taught science, information technology and religious education as separate subjects.)*

41 per cent of the teaching seen was very good or better, 35 per cent was good and 22 per cent was satisfactory with only one unsatisfactory lesson seen. The teaching of children under five is particularly strong. Overall this marks an improvement from the last inspection, when there was not such a high proportion of very good teaching. This overall good quality of the teaching is undoubtedly a strength of the school.

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

· **Other aspects of the school**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Excellent behaviour, both in the classrooms and at playtimes. This plays a very important part in ensuring that pupils maintain good progress in their work.
Attendance	Good; above the national average.
Ethos*	Very good; there is a very purposeful atmosphere in the school; pupils have excellent attitudes towards their work and very good relationships set a firm basis for the school's commitment to high standards.
Leadership and management	Very good; headteacher, staff and governors work very well together. There is a very clear, shared educational direction for the school.
Curriculum	A very well planned, interesting and vibrant curriculum.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good; emphasis given to helping pupils with reading and writing. Good levels of extra support for these pupils.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good; this is a strength of the school and all four aspects are very well promoted.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Very good overall; experienced staff work well together, very good accommodation and resources.
Value for money	The school provides very good value for money.

*\*Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

· **The parents' views of the school**

**What most parents like about the school**

- II. The high standards of behaviour.
- III. The ways in which staff and governors encourage parents to become involved in the life of the school.
- IV. The high academic standards.
- V. Their children are happy at school.
- VI. The staff are approachable.

**What some parents are not happy about**

- VII. A very small number feel that the school
- VIII. A very small number of parents did not understand the school's register of special educational need.

Inspection findings unreservedly support parents' positive views. Discussions with staff and governors show that parental complaints are always taken very seriously. Staff report that they always inform parents when their children are placed on the register of special educational need, and discuss the extra support which the pupils will be given. Misunderstanding has probably arisen because parents are not given any written information of this provision.

· **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

There are no key issues for the school to address but, in the context of its many strengths, the following minor points for improvement should be considered as a basis for the action plan:

IX. raise standards even higher in reading by:

reviewing and evaluating the success of the current strategies and refining those which work;  
continuing to involve all parents in supporting their children at home;

X. improve further the good support for pupils with special educational needs by:

sharpening the targets in their individual education plans;  
ensuring regular, specific work is planned for pupils' learning;  
giving parents written information about pupils' targets;  
recording all contacts with parents about their children's progress.

· **INTRODUCTION**

· **Characteristics of the school**

1 Ashbrook First School is in Two Mile Ash, on the western side of Milton Keynes. The school is fourteen years old. There are 232 boys and girls on the school roll. 199 attend full time and a further 33 attend on a part time basis. Most come from Two Mile Ash and some pupils travel from areas nearby. The pupils come from families that represent a broad social mix, although most parents are in full employment and own their homes. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is 0.5 per cent, which is very low. The school has pupils from a rich variety of ethnic backgrounds. Fifteen per cent of the pupils have cultural roots outside the British Isles and ten per cent of the pupils do not have English as their first language. This is a change from the last inspection when 25 per cent of the pupils were from other ethnic backgrounds. The school has 13 per cent of its pupils on the school's register of special educational need, which is slightly below average. This is a higher percentage than at the time of the last inspection, but reflects the school's earlier identification of these pupils, rather than a change in intake. No pupil has a statement of special educational need. Most children start school part time in the term before their fifth birthdays. They attend school on a full time basis in the term after their fifth birthdays. At the time of the inspection there were two four-year-olds within a class of 'rising fives' attending for the morning session and 13 four-year-olds in the afternoon reception class. Baseline assessment indicates that when children start school their skills and understanding are usually above average, although this year, children's knowledge, understanding and skills are well above average.

2 The way the school is managed and run is reflected well in its motto 'Everyone matters, everyone is important'.

The school's objectives are:

XI. to establish a secure, caring community;

XII. to provide quality teaching and learning experiences within a stimulating environment;

XIII. to promote high standards of behaviour and academic achievement;

XIV. to enable children to appreciate their own, and other, cultures.

There is also an Ashbrook creed, displayed in classrooms, which is frequently shared in assemblies.

3 Particular targets for the coming year include the implementation of the National Numeracy Project and the implementation of the home/school agreement.

## Key indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 1<sup>1</sup>

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	33	32	65

National Curriculum		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
<b>Test/Task Results</b>				
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or Above	Boys	30	33	33
	Girls	26	30	32
	Total	56	63	65
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	86(87)	97(90)	100(97)
	National	82(80)	83(81)	87(84)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or Above	Boys	31	33	33
	Girls	29	30	32
	Total	60	63	65
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	92(87)	97(90)	100(100)
	National	82(81)	86(85)	87(86)

### Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year: %

Authorised	School	4.3
Absence	National comparative data	5.0
Unauthorised	School	0.0
Absence	National comparative data	0.5

### Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year: Number

Fixed period	0
Permanent	0

### Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is: %

Very good or better	41
Satisfactory or better	98
Less than satisfactory	2

<sup>1</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

- **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**
- **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**
- **Attainment and progress**

4 Children begin school part time in the term after their fourth birthdays. Most have had some experience in pre-school education and usually their understanding, knowledge and skills are above average when they begin school. This year the children who started school were well above average. Children make very good progress in the reception year and many reach the nationally expected levels for five year olds well before their fifth birthdays in their personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development.

5 Statutory tests and assessments show that standards have been above the national average at the end of Key Stage 1 since the last inspection of the school. Statutory tests in 1999 indicated that the attainment of seven-year-olds at Ashbrook was well above average in writing and mathematics and above average in reading. Statutory teacher assessments in science showed that standards were well above average in this subject. Within this positive picture, there have been some fluctuations in different subjects from year to year. Generally, there has been a drift downwards against the national average in reading over the last four years, although the percentage of pupils reaching higher levels in reading rose again in 1999. The school's careful analysis of statutory reading tests does not show any clear reasons for the relative weakness in reading. Standards in mathematics also rose slightly this year.

6 When compared with schools similar to Ashbrook in size and in the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, pupils' attainment was above average in writing and mathematics and about average in reading. The school has set realistic targets for attainment levels in 2000 statutory tests and assessments, which it is likely to meet.

7 Inspection findings confirm the attainment levels in English, mathematics and science identified by statutory tests and assessments. The current Year 2 pupils are well above average in writing, mathematics and science and above average in reading. Pupils in Key Stage 2 also achieve high standards and most of the oldest pupils attain levels expected for their age with some doing better. This matches the high standards reported at the last inspection of the school. Pupils make good progress because of good teaching. Teachers and support staff expect a lot of pupils, who do not let the adults down.

8 Attainment is well above average at the end of Key Stage 1 in writing and above average in speaking and listening and reading. Pupils in Years 3 also reach high standards and most reach levels expected for their age with some doing better. All pupils make good progress. Throughout the school, pupils speak confidently, using increasingly complex language. They listen carefully to their teachers and each other. The school provides good quality literature; this helps to develop pupils' reading, as well as the help they get at home. Generally, pupils apply their spelling, grammar and handwriting skills to their writing in English and other areas of the curriculum. The school has adopted the literacy strategy and this has had a positive impact on pupils' understanding of the structure of language.

9 Pupils' attainment in mathematics is well above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 3. Overall, pupils make good progress throughout the school both in relation to their numeracy skills and in other areas of mathematics. The school piloted the numeracy strategy last year before its formal introduction this September and it has already had a positive impact on standards.

10 The school has predicted the levels that Year 2 pupils might be expected to reach in the 2000 national tests and assessments. These are based on current assessments of their attainment levels, rather than ambitious targets.

11 In science, pupils' attainment is well above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 3. Pupils make good progress throughout the school because they are well taught.

12 In information technology, pupils' attainment is above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 3. All pupils make good progress. In religious education, pupils make sound, and sometimes good, progress. Where pupils make better progress, teachers are more confident in the way they teach. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding meets the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 3.

13 Pupils in all classes make good progress in art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education because of the well-planned curriculum and good teaching.

14 There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils respond to this, doing their best and reaching standards which are appropriate to their ability

15 Most pupils on the school's register of special educational need have identified difficulties with language. They make good progress in this area because of the appropriate tasks set and the extra support given to them by teachers and classroom assistants. Very occasionally, some work on activities that are too difficult and at these times make unsatisfactory progress.

16 Pupils speaking English as an additional language make good progress throughout the school. They are given many opportunities to extend their speaking and listening skills and receive effective additional help with reading and writing. By the time they leave the school, most are sufficiently competent in their use of English to attain appropriate standards for their age in all areas of the curriculum.

· **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

17 Pupils have excellent attitudes and high standards of behaviour. These have been maintained well since the last inspection. In every lesson the pupils show great interest and motivation. They settle very quickly and maintain their interest and concentration throughout the lessons. When they are given the opportunity, pupils eagerly get on with their individual tasks. They are keen to complete their work and strive to attain high standards.

18 The children in reception also have excellent attitudes to their work. They have settled very well into school because of the sensitive support given to them by the teacher. They are fully conversant with school routines and clearly know the difference between right and wrong.

19 Behaviour throughout the day is excellent. In lessons this creates an ideal environment for teaching and learning. The pupils settle and obey instructions from staff quickly. Behaviour at playtimes and lunchtimes is of an equally high standard. There have been no exclusions from school for bad behaviour.

20 The pupils are very courteous and polite to staff and visitors. They can be trusted to work and play without constant supervision. There was no evidence during the inspection of bullying. Lunchtimes are very pleasant, civilised occasions and during bad weather the pupils behave exceptionally well in their own classrooms. The pupils appreciate the very good, clean environment and the attractive grounds. They tidy up well at the end of each lesson. Books, materials and equipment are looked after well.

21 Pupils from different cultural and religious backgrounds get on extremely well together. Boys and girls work and play well together. Relationships with the teachers and all other members of staff are very good. There is mutual respect and friendly, constructive partnerships are established between adults and pupils throughout their time in school. Pupils collaborate well in group work. Equipment is shared sensibly and without prompting.

22 In lessons and assemblies the pupils show genuine interest in other cultures and religions. They enthusiastically share their knowledge and ideas on these occasions. They invariably listen with interest when adults or other pupils are speaking. They show genuine appreciation and enthusiasm for the achievements of others in lessons and assemblies.

23 Whenever pupils are given tasks within lessons or assemblies they respond very well. They are encouraged to take some responsibility for their own learning in the reception classes and this develops well throughout their time at the school. Class and assembly monitors carry out their responsibilities enthusiastically and responsibly. These activities help in the smooth running of the school. The pupils know and practise clear routines for organising themselves and their resources in lessons. For example, pupils change quickly before and after physical education sessions and this ensures good use of the time.

- **Attendance**

24 Attendance is good and has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The attendance of the pupils is well above the national average and there have been no unauthorised absences in recent years. The pupils arrive early for school each day and go quickly to their classrooms. After playtimes they move back to their classrooms and settle quickly so that there is no slippage of time for lessons.

- **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

## · Teaching

25 The good quality of the teaching is a strength of the school. 41 per cent of the teaching seen was very good or better, 35 per cent was good and 22 per cent was satisfactory with only one unsatisfactory lesson seen. This marks an improvement from the last inspection, in that the amount of very good teaching has increased.

26 The teaching of children under five is very good. The teacher and assistant provide a rich variety of experiences to extend children's knowledge and understanding. Resources in every area are readily available and well organised. The teacher prepares lessons thoroughly. Her excellent organisation ensures effective use of time. Her firm control and caring relationships with children lead to their concentrating well in individual work as well as class sessions. The good relationships create a calm, working atmosphere. Thoughtful questioning involves all children in answering and offering ideas confidently. The teacher uses every opportunity to extend children's language. She develops children's early mental numeracy skills while they get changed for physical education, for example. The teacher has implemented and adapted the literacy hour and numeracy lessons successfully. Children especially enjoy reading together. This is having a positive impact on their attainment. Staff teach children to work independently and to use equipment and resources carefully. They usually plan effective use of the well-resourced outside environment, although this was not observed during the inspection.

27 The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 and Year 3 is good overall. Particular strengths throughout the school include thorough planning. There are clear objectives for sessions, which are often shared with pupils. In the better lessons, these objectives are reviewed at the end with pupils. Tasks are usually very well planned to meet the needs of pupils of different attainment. Teachers and staff in parallel classes plan together. Therefore good ideas are shared and pupils of the same age follow the same programme of work. This is a strong feature of their planning.

28 This very good teamwork is also apparent in the ways in which staff work together, particularly in literacy and numeracy sessions. One full time member of the teaching staff takes out groups from Years 1 and 2 throughout the week, and another supports pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 in numeracy for one day a week. Support staff also work with groups in these sessions. This enables staff to work with targeted smaller groups and is having a positive impact on pupils' good progress. The smaller groups also help teachers to successfully challenge the higher attaining pupils, which was an area for development noted in the last inspection. Different parts of the lesson are very well managed and pupils move to their various groups with the minimum of fuss. Consequently they settle quickly to work and much is achieved. Staff are confident in most aspects of the literacy and numeracy strategies and take care to develop pupils' skills in these areas across the curriculum. Teaching is predominantly good, with very good features. One unsatisfactory numeracy lesson was seen, but pupils' progress suggests that this is unusual.

29 Teachers have a good understanding of how young children learn. They explain new ideas to the pupils in interesting and imaginative ways. A good example of this was the way in which a lesson on sound was introduced to Year 1 pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They usually introduce new concepts well, presenting the information in a lively and imaginative way. All subjects are well taught and science and physical education are very well taught. Support staff are well briefed about their work and in most

situations have sufficient subject knowledge to undertake the work with the groups assigned to them. This is an improvement from the last inspection.

30 All teachers are very well organised. Their classrooms are stimulating and exciting. Displays are used well to reinforce earlier learning, to introduce new topics and to celebrate pupils' work. Books and equipment are stored tidily and this helps the pupils to find what they need quickly and settle to work without wasting time hunting for what they need.

31 Throughout the school very good relationships between staff and pupils form a very good basis for pupils' positive attitudes. Consequently pupils feel valued and this helps them to do their best. Teachers also help pupils to achieve their personal best by setting individual targets for English, mathematics and science. This is a relatively new development, but is already proving effective. Pupils' targets are pasted into the front of their books as a constant reminder of what they need to do to improve.

32 Teachers usually plan appropriate activities for pupils with special educational needs, which are linked to the work undertaken by the rest of the class. Very occasionally, pupils struggle with tasks that are too difficult for them. Targets on pupils' individual education plans are not specifically referred to in teachers' plans. In many cases these targets are quite general and relate more to the work planned for the year group as a whole, rather than individual difficulties. These pupils often have extra support from teachers or classroom assistants and this focused attention helps them to make good progress in the main.

33 Valuable specialist support is given to pupils speaking English as an additional language. Their skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are effectively reinforced. Class teachers share their thorough daily planning with the support assistants, ensuring that what pupils are to learn is identified and pursued. When specialist support is not available, teachers show their awareness of the needs of pupils speaking English as an additional language. Through ongoing support and interaction they involve pupils fully in the lessons and make sure that they are able to cope with the demands of the curriculum.

· **The curriculum and assessment**

34 The school has improved its curriculum for under fives and for pupils at both key stages since the last inspection. It now provides a very good, rich and varied curriculum, which meets pupils' intellectual, physical and personal needs and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. The curriculum is broad and balanced and fulfils statutory requirements in relation to the National Curriculum, religious education and sex and drugs education.

35 The early years co-ordinator plans the curriculum for the under-fives effectively, basing the timetable on the six areas of learning. The school's very good curriculum planning ensures that pupils whose attainment already meets the desirable learning outcomes for five-year-olds begin work on the early stages of the National Curriculum. Provision for creative and physical development is much improved since the last inspection, with increased space and improved resources for these activities.

36 Planning for the curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 is very thorough. Subject co-ordinators have led the review of detailed schemes of work in each subject. The school piloted the national numeracy strategy the year before it was due to be implemented. All teachers show confidence in their teaching of both the numeracy and literacy strategies. Designated additional staff create smaller groupings during numeracy lessons, ensuring that all pupils have greater opportunity to participate actively, explaining their mental strategies for solving problems, for example. In other subjects, the school is adapting appropriate elements of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's schemes of work to fit into its own successful termly plans for each year group. These ensure that each subject covers an agreed range of skills for each year group and that skills are built upon systematically from year to year. Planning for religious education follows the Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus appropriately.

37 Teachers enrich the curriculum further by organising a number of visits in the local environment, to museums and other places of interest. Pupils in each year group study different aspects of Two Mile Ash, for example, in geography. They develop their knowledge of the local environment gradually, as the planned visits for each year group go further afield. Pupils visit museums during their history studies and Emberton Park for science and environmental work, including pond dipping, where they receive the support of the Park Ranger. Visitors to the school, such as an 'Ancient Greek' and authors during Book Week also enhance the curriculum.

38 The school does not currently provide any after-school opportunities for personal development. The headteacher feels that pupils of this age are ready for a break at the end of the school day and that parents find many opportunities for their children to develop additional interests or pursue hobbies elsewhere. The school does make arrangements within the school day to develop musical talents, such as recorder playing for all Year 3 pupils. Occasionally it offers short bursts of additional pursuits, such as road safety training and soccer, which are run by parents. Pupils take part in a number of concerts and performances during the year. They participate in Morris and country dancing, and Year 3 pupils provide an annual leavers' performance. The parental survey shows that 80 per cent of parents feel the school actively encourages pupils to become involved in more than their daily lessons. Provision is satisfactory overall.

39 The school has an effective policy for personal and social education, which is taught through topic work and other opportunities that arise, including assemblies. Class rules, reward systems and the general ethos of the school reinforce positive messages about personal safety and self-esteem. The school does not have a formal programme for sex education, but staff deal with issues appropriately as they arise through individual questions or discussion during topic studies. The school also has a policy for drugs education and staff are receiving training during the current year.

40 The school provides equal opportunities for all pupils, irrespective of age, gender, ethnic origin or prior attainment. Appropriate attention is given to equal opportunities in curriculum policies. All pupils have access to the whole curriculum and care is taken to ensure that boys and girls experience similar challenges. Pupils capable of higher attainment are well catered for through extension activities and high expectations. The headteacher and senior staff work closely together to allocate appropriate support for pupils learning English as an additional language and for pupils with special educational needs.

41 Pupils with special educational needs work on the same curriculum as their peers. They receive a mixture of in-class support and withdrawal sessions. Sometimes these pupils are withdrawn for help with reading and writing when the class is working on another subject area. This is not ideal, but the school monitors this carefully and makes sure that the pupils do not miss the same subject each week. Some pupils are kept out of assembly for extra help. At these times, the pupils have a short act of worship at the beginning of the session.

42 Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good. The school has maintained and developed further the effective practice identified in the last report. The school is now embarking upon a computerised assessment tracking system, which will enable staff to track pupils' progress from starting school through to the middle school. Since the summer, the school has also introduced half-termly assessments for all pupils in English, mathematics, science and information technology. Pupils complete an assessment task in all other subjects either termly or annually. The assessment co-ordinator is leading this process, which is designed to create a more manageable, yet still comprehensive record of assessment evidence. It is beginning to provide a useful tool for tracking individual progress. This supplements information from standardised tests. In addition to the Leeds Baseline Assessment and the statutory tests at the end of Key Stage 1, the school uses a reading test regularly to check on progress and optional national tests in English and mathematics at the end of Year 3.

43 Individual records are kept of the progress of pupils with special educational needs, but there is no composite record kept of these pupils as they move through the school. No specific analysis has been undertaken of the ethnicity or gender of pupils on the special educational needs register. The progress of pupils speaking English as an additional language is assessed well. Monitoring sheets are completed at the end of each session with specialist support and these are used effectively by class teachers to plan subsequently. Pupils' learning needs are assessed termly and other assessment data are analysed by ethnicity so that any specific areas of difficulty for different ethnic groups can be addressed.

44 Teachers use assessment very effectively to plan for the next stage of learning. They are beginning to use the outcomes of half-termly assessments to add to the overall picture they have from their records of each pupil's progress. At present, each teacher keeps their class records in different formats, which makes monitoring difficult. At the end of the reception year and at the end of Year 1, staff make predictions of pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2. They analyse results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 1, comparing them with earlier predictions and the optional national tests in English and mathematics at the end of Year 3. In this way, they set expectations for the following teacher and check progress retrospectively against their expectations. In the process, they improve their skills at setting performance targets for the end of Key Stage 1.

45 Teachers build assessment into their planning and use it to decide what classes, individuals and groups of pupils need to do next. Teachers highlight immediate targets for each pupil in English and mathematics on a list of targets for the year group, pasted in the front cover of each pupil's exercise books. In this way, the school involves pupils successfully in recognising what they have to do to improve and move on to a further set of targets. The highlighted lists are equally useful for discussing pupils' progress with their parents. The school is very successful in the early identification of pupils with potential

special educational needs in order to target appropriate support. It also identifies more able pupils and ensures that they are appropriately challenged.

#### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

46 The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. It remains a strength of the school, as highlighted in the last inspection report. The example set by staff, the caring ethos of the school, the sense of community and importance of individuals highlighted in assemblies all promote very positive attitudes and behaviour among pupils. The school's policy underpins its commitment to this area of its work, with guidelines for provision in each year group.

47 The headteacher and staff use assemblies very successfully to promote pupils' spiritual development and succeed in creating a genuine atmosphere of wonder or reflection on occasions. Good examples of this were when a small group of pupils danced in blue and white costume to 'Jack Frost' music and when a pupil led the assembled hall in echoing the school creed. Pupils also write individual prayers, which are used in assemblies from time to time. The school lays great store by its motto: 'Everyone matters – Everyone is important'. Praise and birthday assemblies reflect the school's affirmation of each pupil. In religious education, teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their own and others' beliefs and, in Year 3, to compare the significance of a variety of winter celebrations, such as Diwali, Hanukkah and Advent. Staff arrange for pupils to ponder the importance of special places, people and things and to respect the fact that different things are important to different people. The school uses opportunities in music, art and English lessons to develop pupils' sense of wonder. It offers opportunities in personal and social education lessons for pupils to reflect and develop a respect for each other's beliefs.

48 The school's caring ethos and values provide a very clear moral framework for pupils, through which they are taught the principles that distinguish right from wrong. This is underlined through the behaviour policy and the classroom rules. Teachers involve older pupils in formulating these. Teachers select pupils weekly for particular praise, and their achievements are highlighted in assembly, where the whole school cheers this moment of recognition. There is no need for teachers to enforce rules. The professionalism of the staff leads to all being ready and prepared to receive their classes or groups of pupils in a calm, welcoming and orderly way that gives pupils a sense of security and respect for their teachers and helpers. As a result, pupils' behaviour throughout the school is excellent. A very special book, beautifully crafted in material and bound, has been prepared for the noting of Gold Star Awards. The attention to detail is typical of the school's commitment to excellence.

49 The school is very successful in promoting pupils' social development by ensuring that they participate in organising themselves and their classroom from an early age. Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in pairs and in small groups, especially in information technology, design and technology and physical education. A particularly successful venture is a link with the middle school, which involves Year 7 pupils working alongside Ashbrook pupils. The teaching and assessment role adopted by the older pupils provides a very positive role model for the younger pupils. The school also involves pupils in occasional decision-making. As well as involving Year 3 pupils in formulating class rules, the school asks all pupils for suggestions about new library books or 'story sacks' and uses their written suggestions. Home learning arrangements also develop pupils'

sense of responsibility, as, together with their parents, they choose from optional activities in a number of subjects set for a variety of different abilities. By celebrating pupils' birthdays in school assemblies, the school re-inforces pupils' self-esteem and makes them feel important contributors to the community. The school encourages pupils to develop confidence through performances in concerts and annual events, such as the Year 3 leavers' celebration.

50 The school develops pupils' awareness of their own cultural traditions and those of other cultures very well in a number of ways. It has a strong singing and dancing tradition. Teachers give pupils the opportunity to learn to play musical instruments, sing and dance at annual events and to listen regularly in assemblies and lessons to the music of famous composers. They also study the work of famous artists and have opportunities to visit museums and other places of interest. Visiting authors, musicians and artists further enhance pupils' cultural development. The school teaches pupils to appreciate the richness and diversity of other cultures through the study of the world's major religions and through studies of other parts of the world, particularly those from which some of its pupils originate. The school also has a well-established link with a school in Nairobi and pupils are eager to learn about the lives of their Kenyan counterparts. The school's own annual celebrations, together with the comparative studies of events celebrated by major world faiths, give pupils clear insight into the value of cultures and traditions.

#### · **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

51 Measures taken by the staff have helped the school to continue to provide a secure, caring environment since the previous inspection. The provision for the support, guidance and welfare of the pupils is very good.

Pupils receive very good support and advice in their academic and personal development. All of the staff know the pupils and their families well. Each class teacher keeps an on-going assessment folder for the pupils in their classes. The welcoming, open nature of the school and its staff ensures easy access to parents to discuss any problems. The carefully planned grouping arrangements bring the pupils into close contact with a variety of staff. The good formal monitoring and assessment arrangements complement the informal ones effectively.

52 Teachers know the pupils with special educational needs well and the progress of these pupils is monitored well informally. At the termly reviews the potential special needs of each pupil are considered carefully. Record sheets on individual pupils are not always kept up to date. At the moment, parents and pupils are not involved in reviews of progress, although the teachers keep parents informed of their child's progress. The school gives appropriate attention to the needs of pupils speaking English as an additional language. They are well supported in class and efforts are made to raise staff and pupil awareness of other languages and cultures.

53 The staff are very aware of the details of the well-established behaviour policy. They are very consistent in their expectations and management of the pupils in lessons and at play. There is a great deal of teamwork and sharing of responsibilities in this area. The expectations of very good behaviour are communicated well to parents and they are very supportive. There are clearly shared values between staff, pupils and parents. The staff

are very vigilant in monitoring relationships between the pupils and there is no evidence that bullying is a problem in the school.

54 The importance of good, regular attendance is frequently reinforced in informal and formal meetings and in documentation for parents. This begins with the home visits to the parents of children who are about to join the school. The school also stresses the need to avoid term-time holidays. Close monitoring of attendance and holidays has reduced problems to an insignificant level. Attendance has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now above average by national standards. Patient work has resulted in excellent co-operation from parents so that in the previous two years there have been no unauthorised absences.

55 The school follows local child protection procedures closely. The headteacher attends briefing courses and after the most recent, earlier this year, she reported in detail to the other members of staff. There is very effective liaison with outside agencies when the need arises. There is effective teaching, which helps children to protect themselves and to familiarise them with aspects of safe, secure, healthy living.

56 The well-established health and safety policy is constantly updated to take account of new guidelines and procedures from the local authority. The health and safety governor and staff representative carry out termly inspections. They record their findings and the actions subsequently taken well. Fire appliances, electrical equipment and physical education equipment are inspected regularly. Fire drills take place each term and careful planning ensures that lunchtimes, mornings and afternoons are included. All members of staff have received first-aid training and three are fully qualified. There are very good procedures for supervising lunchtimes and playtimes and managing illness and accidents.

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· **Partnership with parents and the community**

57 Ashbrook is a popular school that makes every effort to involve parents and is very well supported by them. Parents particularly value the fact that the school enables their children to achieve good standards of work and high standards of behaviour. They feel that they are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school. A significant number help regularly with a range of activities which include assisting in the library, playing games, sewing, cooking and art and craft activities. Grandparents and friends, as well as parents, are welcome to offer help. The school provides a good deal of written guidance on parental involvement. Parents are asked to support and encourage their children's home learning and are requested to alert the class teacher if the school's expectations become too demanding. The school has an effective partnership with parents, regularly seeking their opinions and working to establish closer relationships. A home-school link programme helps children settle into school well. The headteacher makes home visits and parents and child are invited to visit the school. The support assistant for pupils speaking English as an additional language also provides effective home-school links, which parents value. There is an active Friends' Association that regularly involves parents and children in social activities and is successful in raising money to support curriculum initiatives.

58 The quality of the information provided for parents is good. Parents of children who are rising-five are able to discuss their child's programme of work in the first term following an assessment by the school. All parents are welcome to talk to class teachers and look at work at the end of each afternoon. A very informative half-termly curriculum newsletter is sent out, explaining what pupils will be studying in their different subjects. The prospectus, though rather small to be user-friendly, gives general information on each curriculum area. Another useful booklet provides information on home-school link visits, as well as how parents can help their children at home with mathematics, letter and number formation and reading together. Meetings, which inform parents about national tests, home learning and the school's philosophy and ethos, are further evidence of the school's efforts to involve parents in their children's education. However, in spite of these efforts, a few parents feel that the school does not give them a clear understanding of what is taught and that they are not kept well informed about their children's progress. A translation service is available to those parents speaking English as an additional language. There are termly consultations for all parents and each pupil has an annual report, which details what they can do, and sometimes sets targets for improvement. Appropriate information is provided about pupils' social development, attitudes and work habits as well as their progress in all curriculum areas. Some comments about religious education do not adequately reflect what pupils have learnt. Inspection evidence shows that good systems are in place for sharing information with parents. An effective working partnership is encouraged which enables pupils to achieve higher standards and in some cases to overcome short-term difficulties.

59 The school has strong links with local playgroups and in particular with the middle school. Year 7 pupils work alongside younger pupils to support their learning of information and communication technology skills. A classroom assistant is presently funded by the middle school to work with identified Year 3 pupils and monitor their progress before transfer, in order to help them move smoothly into their new school. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education by visits from middle school staff and their own visit to their new school. Visitors from the local community regularly come into the school to share their knowledge and experiences with the pupils. The language support assistant is a valuable resource in helping staff and pupils to learn more about the culture and religions of ethnic minority groups. Sponsorship from a local company means that some pupils learning English as an additional language benefit from an additional support assistant. The adoption of the school by the Park Ranger is encouraging pupils in their ideas for the further development of the environmental studies area. Pupils from the local comprehensive school help to maintain this area and work alongside the younger pupils. Links with The Prodigal Rescue School in Nairobi and the support given to a hospice and home in Russia have a significant impact on pupils' understanding of the wider world. The local schools partnership group helps pupils to know they are part of a wider school community by providing worthwhile activities where pupils from different schools can meet together.

60 The school aims to work closely with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are notified verbally when their child is entered onto the register of special educational need and their specific problems are discussed. This works well in most cases, but comments from parents at the meeting held before the inspection as well as notes on the questionnaires indicate that a very small number of parents are not aware that their child has been identified as having a special educational need. This confusion has possibly arisen because parents are not notified in writing of their child's inclusion on the register, or given a written copy of the targets on their child's individual education plan.

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· **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

· **Leadership and management**

61 The school is very well led and managed, as it was at the time of the last inspection. There have been some management changes since that time, but a clear educational vision provided by the headteacher, staff and governors, remains at the heart of the school's work. The new headteacher has taken on her role with enthusiasm and works closely with the deputy headteacher and chair of governors to provide a firm steer for the school's work. They are very well supported by the well-established staff and talented governors. There is a very positive ethos in the school, which is evident in the excellent attitudes of the pupils and in the high commitment of all staff. Consequently, standards are high.

62 Both the headteacher and deputy head had been on the Ashbrook staff for some time before their new appointments and, as a result, work on the action plan following the last inspection was implemented quickly because all staff knew the school well. The issues were related to maintaining the good provision identified in the school and these have been addressed successfully by staff and governors. The secure, caring environment has been successfully maintained, for example. The curriculum has been effectively developed and staff have worked hard to implement both the literacy and numeracy strategies. Staff and governors have also made a good start on monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' levels of attainment. The focus on the monitoring of teaching has been particularly within the literacy hour and staff have found it helpful. The headteacher and deputy have been most heavily involved in this monitoring. Some staff with subject responsibilities have also had the opportunity to look at work in classes. Governors have visited lessons related to their subject responsibilities and discussed their observations with the teachers and headteacher. This good focus on work in classrooms has contributed to the improvement in the quality of the teaching. The school has tackled the monitoring of pupils' progress very conscientiously and four staff have some special responsibility in this area. A good start has been made on tracking individual pupils' progress through the school, as well as analysing the overall performance of different year groups. Staff use the information gained well to target particular groups of pupils, particularly in reading and mathematics.

63 These improvements have been made within the framework laid down in the school improvement plan. This is a detailed and comprehensive document, which sets a clear agenda for school improvement. It is discussed by staff and governors and all are clear about the proposed developments year by year. In some sections, there is some confusion between what task is to be done, how staff will know they have successfully completed the task and how they judge the effectiveness of the work.

64 The headteacher successfully leads a strong staff team who work very well together. Open discussion about educational matters is encouraged and staff strive continually to improve what they offer and how they teach. All teaching staff have some special areas of responsibility and all manage these well.

65 The equal opportunities policy is thorough and the school's aims and objectives are clear about equality for all pupils. The school works hard to fulfil its objectives. The headteacher is responsible for the management of special educational needs in the school. She is very involved in both the planning and reviews of individual education plans. She monitors how staff support pupils and pupils' progress as part of her general monitoring of teaching and attainment. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs knows the school closely and is well informed about provision and pupils' progress.

66 The school is making good provision for pupils speaking English as an additional language. It deploys and uses specialist staff well. It pays good attention to the importance of home/school links. The achievement of pupils from ethnic minorities is promoted through an effective policy document and the school analyses assessment and attendance data so that it is quickly informed of any issues or weaknesses.

67 The governors are very effective. There is a good balance on the governing body of experience and expertise. Governors use their talents well to help the school. The chair of the finance committee, for example, has special skills in this area. Many governors are frequent visitors during the school day and all are well informed about developments within the school. The governors' annual report to parents is a clear and interesting document, which gives a good picture of the school. There are some omissions in the report, especially related to provision for disabled pupils. Otherwise all statutory requirements are met.

#### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

68 The school has a dedicated, hard-working staff. All are suitably qualified and there are sufficient teachers and support staff to meet the demands of the National Curriculum and the requirements of the under-fives. An extra teacher allocated for Key Stage 1 enables the school to keep teaching groups to under thirty. The class assistant role has developed well following detailed recent analysis. Assistants are fully involved in school professional development sessions and make valuable contributions to pupils' learning. Year 3 pupils benefit from extra support funded by the middle school before their transfer there. The support given to pupils with special educational needs is good. These pupils frequently work with classroom assistants, who are very experienced. Pupils speaking English as an additional language receive regular specialist support, which is very effective in helping them with their work and extending their understanding and use of English. The headteacher is ably assisted by clerical staff who ensure the smooth running of the routine administration of the school. Many parents and volunteers help in school on a regular basis and this helps teachers to plan work for small groups. One voluntary helper comes in daily and gives excellent support to staff and pupils.

69 There is a strong team spirit and the school constantly seeks to review its use of human resources as the most effective way of raising standards. New, inexperienced staff receive an effective induction programme and newly qualified teachers are helped by a link teacher and mentor. A system of appraisal is in place for all staff and personal short-term targets are identified for each teacher's work within the school. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are itemised in the school improvement plan and are closely and appropriately linked to whole school improvement. They reflect county and national priorities and, where appropriate, any individual staff needs identified in appraisal.

For example, a lack of confidence in teaching the recorder was overcome through training set up through the local authority's music adviser.

70 The accommodation is very good. It is well maintained and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. The school buildings are easily accessible for those with physical disabilities. The previous report indicated that class sizes put pressure on the home bases and shared areas. Extra staffing and the very successful and efficient management and use of these areas enable the school to keep teaching groups to thirty pupils, although classes are larger. The hall is a good size for physical education lessons and whole school assemblies. The music and video room provides a welcoming space which stimulates and motivates pupils. There is a small room off the hall, which is used well for small group work with pupils learning English as an additional language and for pupils with special educational needs. The grounds are very attractive and the environmental studies area, ponds and nature trail make very positive contributions to pupils' learning.

71 The school is very well equipped with learning resources for teaching all areas of the National Curriculum. Resources are of a high quality, well organised and easily accessible. Attractive displays and resources reflect other cultures and celebrate many languages. Displays generally are of a very high standard, combining pupils' work with well-chosen artefacts and informative labelling. They set pupils a very good example and reflect the value given by all staff to pupils' work and the standards they achieve. The library is well stocked and attractively and efficiently organised so that pupils enjoy going there. As they progress through the school, they become increasingly confident at finding what they need. Resources are regularly evaluated to ensure that books do not stereotype other cultures. Further multicultural resources are supplied on loan as required and the school has addressed the need for more books that will appeal to boys in Key Stage 2. The hall is fully equipped with a good range of resources for games and gymnastics. Computers are sufficient and well used to support learning. A good variety of outdoor play equipment is available in the Early Years play area. Local walks and visits to museums support pupils' schoolwork and visitors to the school provide further opportunities for extending pupils' knowledge and understanding in many curriculum areas.

· **The efficiency of the school**

72 Since the previous inspection the school has continued to develop its very good planning, budgeting and administration. It continues to provide very good value for money. The overall quality of financial planning is very good. The development plan is detailed and gives a clear outline of priorities and estimates of resources and costs. The plan is used actively to inform the financial planning. The financial planning has been particularly effective in recent years during the period of great uncertainty following the creation of the new unitary authority of Milton Keynes. Very good use is made of funds from different sources to provide good teaching and support staffing levels on an overall budget that has been below the national average. The school uses this additional support imaginatively and this has had a positive impact on writing and numeracy. The school has established a thorough lettings policy and receives significant income from use of its facilities. The staff and governors endeavour to seek value for money in their purchases and there is considerable informal monitoring of the outcomes of expenditure. Formal procedures for evaluating value for money are less well developed.

73 The overall deployment of teaching and support staff is very good. The arrangements

for adult support have had a positive impact on standards, particularly in numeracy. The overall use of the accommodation is very good. The hall and shared teaching areas are used actively and imaginatively. The arrangements for the group activities make very effective use of the space and help to limit overcrowding in the largest classes. Good use is made of the wider environment to support pupils' learning. The overall use of the learning resources is very good.

74 The overall efficiency of financial control and school administration is very good. The very experienced staff work flexibly together and use their accumulated experience well. All documents are well organised with very good records of personnel, pupils and resources. The effective administration underpins the smooth running of the school. The accounts are in good order and the staff provide accurate information in their regular reports to the senior management team and the governors. The most recent audit was carried out immediately before the current inspection. The report confirmed the effective procedures and good records maintained by the school. There were a few recommendations for additional procedures and the school has agreed a feasible timetable for their implementation. The accounts for the separate school fund are well kept and they are audited each year.

75 The overall use of specific grants for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school accounts very clearly for this expenditure in a separate account. The funds are used well for the intended purpose. The school makes an appropriate allocation from its own budget for work in this area. Thirty-nine pupils are supported through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, which is administered by the local authority support service. Funding is used appropriately to provide specialist support and to raise pupils' attainment. The expenditure of the income for staff development through the standards fund is accounted for fully and used appropriately.

76 Pupils' attainment is very good and pupils make good progress during their time at the school. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils are excellent and the quality of education provided by the school, particularly teaching, is good. Taking these factors into account and setting them against the below average cost per pupil, and the above average socio-economic circumstances and attainment of the pupils on entry, the school provides very good value for money.

- **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

- **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE**

77 At the time of the inspection there were 17 children attending the 'rising fives' part-time morning sessions and 13 children attending the part-time afternoon sessions for four-year-olds. Children enter school part-time two terms before their fifth birthday. When they arrive, their attainment is above average in the main. In some groups, it is well above average. As a result of consistently very good teaching and support in small class groups, children born in the autumn and spring make very good progress in all areas of learning. By the age of five, most children have already achieved the recommended desirable learning outcomes in personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical understanding, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development. Many are already working on the initial level of the National Curriculum. The attainment of children at age five is currently well above average.

78 There were no summer-born five-year-olds in the reception classes at the time of the inspection. The school has analysed the attainment of summer-born five-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 1 and finds that this is lower overall than both autumn-born and spring-born pupils. The last report described pupils' attainment and progress as good. Current standards show clear improvement in all areas of learning.

- **Personal and social development**

79 Children's behaviour is very good. They work and play together well. They collaborate well with one another in the stable role-play area, for example, as Mary sends back the kings when they arrive before the shepherds, but then beckons them in when they point out that the star is there. Children understand and enjoy the classroom routines. They put their hands up and wait their turn to speak. They listen carefully to staff and follow instructions successfully. They treat their resources and equipment with care and tidy them away at the end of sessions. They concentrate and show perseverance with both their directed and chosen activities. They organise themselves well and show a high level of independence when getting changed for physical education. They collaborate safely and sensibly to carry benches, mats and A-frames into position in the hall and return them at the close of the lesson.

- **Language and literacy**

80 Children make good progress as a result of the very good planning in this area and the sensitive encouragement which staff give to the children. Consequently children are confident when talking and happily explain what they are doing. They suggest what Mary and Joseph might say and how the kings might walk and what they would wear, for example. They listen well to instructions, stories and rhymes. They recognise simple words and suggest rhymes for 'hay'. They know the sounds made by individual letters at the start of words and recognise that the object on the alphabetical advent calendar must begin with the next letter in the alphabet. All children have started to read by the age of five and higher attainers are beginning to read simple repetitive stories accurately. They form letters correctly and know that sentences start with a capital letter and end with a full stop. Children who require a little extra support receive brief, daily handwriting practice

sessions with a support assistant. Most children write their own names accurately. By the time they are five, they write recognisable phrases and words and the highest attainers even write a recognisable short retelling of a story. Most form their letters correctly and hold their pencils properly.

- **Mathematics**

81 Children make very good progress in this area because the teacher helps children to develop their understanding by clear explanations and good use of practical equipment. All children count to ten and beyond. When the teacher reads out a sequence of numbers, such as 9, 8, 6, 5, the children recognise the missing number. A few higher attainers pick out the missing number in such patterns as 60, 50, 30, 20 and 14, 24, 44, 54. They can provide a number 'more than' 28 and a number 'less than' 54. Almost all solve simple number problems of addition and subtraction using small apparatus. They collaborate in small groups to play board games using dice, developing very good skills at counting on and back, as well as recognising numbers. They identify triangles, squares, circles and rectangles. They enjoy experiences of early capacity as they pour and fill containers with water or sand, understanding and learning concepts such as 'full' and 'empty'.

- **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

82 The work planned is interesting and this helps children to make very good progress in this area. When working on the computer, children know the functions of the mouse and show good control. Children use the computer keyboard independently to type their names. They make teddy biscuits with assistance. They build up an understanding of the sequence of the seasons. For example, they make large collages showing a winter tree and winter clothing and recognise the change from autumn. They learn the days of the week and the months of the year. They find out about the local environment by exploring the school grounds as one of their topics each year. They develop their designing and making skills. For example, children design and make models, using small and large construction materials. They cut, glue and sew materials to make finger puppets.

- **Creative development**

83 The teacher plans activities which will grasp children's imaginations and this helps them to make very good progress. Children take pride in their work and handle paint and brushes carefully. Their paintings of toys and teddies are bold and show good recognition of shape and form. Their paintings and collages of fireworks are vivid and bright. Their teacher's labels, 'fizz', 'whoosh', 'boom', reflect the action in their creations. No musical activities were observed in the early years area, but children participated enthusiastically in assembly songs. The stable role-play area, which changes appropriately with each topic, provides opportunities for children to extend their language and skills of co-operation as they decide and act out their roles. They are very enthusiastic about dressing up and taking the parts of nativity story characters.

- **Physical development**

84 Children make very good progress in this area because the activities are challenging

and the teacher explains the purpose of the activities carefully. Children manipulate small writing and drawing implements effectively in their creative and writing activities. They handle small equipment and construction materials skilfully. In their physical education activities, they have excellent awareness of the space around them and show high levels of skill when hopping, jumping and crawling forwards, sideways and backwards. They enjoy exploring different ways of moving on their hands and feet across the floor and benefit greatly from watching excellent examples. They show very good co-ordination and control as they begin to travel along gym tables, down slanted benches on to mats in a variety of movements using their hands and feet. They follow instructions closely, keeping still or changing from fast to slow movements smoothly. They are beginning to throw beanbags accurately towards a hoop.

85 Children with special educational needs and those who are higher attainers are identified early. Staff support them effectively, and they make very good progress. Staff are approachable, friendly and patient with the children. They always praise and encourage them, motivating them to succeed in their tasks and promoting their self-esteem. The staff are good role models. They work together well and share the aims and values of the school effectively with parents. As a result of this consistently very good provision and positive partnership with parents, the children are secure and happy.

- **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

- **English**

86 In 1999, pupils' attainment in national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 was well above average in writing and above average in reading. These high standards in statutory tests have been maintained since the last inspection of the school. Seven-year-olds are doing better at Ashbrook than their peers in similar schools in writing, and matching them in reading.

87 Inspection findings confirm the high standards indicated by national tests. Standards are above average this year in speaking and listening and reading and well above average in writing at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils in Years 3 also attain high standards and this year most of the oldest pupils reach the levels expected for their age, with some doing better. Progress is good throughout the school in all areas of English because of the good overall quality of the teaching. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets on their individual education plans. Pupils with English as an additional language are also making good progress because of the focused support given.

88 Pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills because of opportunities to respond to teachers' questions during the introductions to lessons. Most pupils are keen to contribute at these times and express themselves clearly. They listen carefully to each other and their teachers. Occasionally pupils have opportunities to speak to a larger audience, in assembly, for example. In discussions with pupils during the inspection, it was apparent that most were consistently using Standard English and older pupils were adapting their language well to suite the situation. There was less evidence during the inspection of pupils entering into dialogue as part of their work, as part of a collaborative task for example. Opportunities for pupils to express themselves through drama are built into some topics, such as the work on Ancient Greece in Year 3.

89 Most pupils make good progress in reading. They build on early skills, established in the reception class, when they move into Year 1. They develop a range of strategies to help them to read, and make good use of the phonic understanding that is developed in the literacy hour. Pupils in Year 2 describe the tactics that they use to work out difficult words and these reflect good teaching in this area. Pupils understand how books work and from a young age are aware of the meaning of words such as author and illustrator, for example. Regular sessions in the school library help pupils to understand how to locate reference books and by the end of Year 1 pupils are confident in using the contents page and index to locate information. Most pupils enjoy stories. Their love of literature is encouraged by good quality books available in school and by special events, such as Book Week. Staff have looked carefully into the reasons for the relative weakness in reading attainment in relation to standards in other subjects. Inspection findings confirm the school's view that the teaching is good and the curriculum appropriate. Staff take care to support pupils who have difficulties with reading and these pupils share books with adults in school several times a week, in addition to the group reading sessions as part of the literacy hour. Staff monitor the support that pupils receive from home and encourage all parents and carers to share books with their children on a daily basis. Pupils who are supported by parents in this way make consistently good progress.

90 Pupils make good progress in writing through the school. They have opportunities to write for a range of purposes and pupils often develop their writing skills in other subjects. In Year 2, for example, pupils have written newspaper reports as part of their history topic on the Great Fire of London. During the inspection, they began to write small diaries after hearing about the famous diarist Samuel Pepys. Good attention is paid to helping pupils to use language well and some of the writing is imaginative and lively. Good examples of this are seen in Year 3 poems about Jack Frost. One pupil wrote, 'white stars falling gently, softly down to earth'. In the literacy hour pupils concentrate more on developing writing skills, such as spelling and handwriting. Sometimes they undertake short pieces of independent writing at these times. By the time they reach the end of Year 2, many pupils write in a joined and legible hand. They use spelling patterns to help them to build up words, which are usually phonetically correct. In Year 3, pupils often use pen to complete their work and are becoming confident in the use of dictionaries to help with spelling. This term, pupils have not undertaken many pieces of extended writing although more is planned for pupils in Year 3 after Christmas.

91 Most pupils on the school's register of special educational need have identified difficulties with English. They receive good support from teachers and classroom assistants and this enables them to make good progress. They work on tasks which are usually matched well to their particular needs. Similarly, pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress because of the extra support that they are given. Some of these pupils lack confidence in large class groups and at these times the teachers sensitively include them in the discussions.

92 Pupils work very hard in literacy sessions and persevere well with their work, even when they find it challenging. All pupils listen very well to the teachers and are interested in what they are taught. Most pupils enjoy reading and some have developed clear tastes in genre and author. Shirley Hughes and Roald Dahl, for example, are firm favourites. Many pupils belong to libraries in Milton Keynes and visit these regularly. The school works imaginatively to make reading enjoyable, for example by providing book bags and mounting attractive displays. In spite of these efforts, there are still a few pupils who do not enjoy reading and in most cases this is linked to their competence as readers.

93 The quality of the teaching in the lessons seen ranged from satisfactory to very good, but is predominantly good. Three of the nine lessons seen were very good, two were good and the remaining four were satisfactory. Teachers have worked hard and enthusiastically to implement the literacy strategy. The way in which staff have worked together to do this is impressive. The quality of the planning is good and clearly identifies what pupils are expected to learn from day to day. Teachers and support staff work very closely together to plan sessions. Lessons flow smoothly with little time lost. In most sessions teachers explain work very clearly and in the best lessons a lively approach helps pupils to remember what they have been taught. There was a good example of this in a session on vowels and consonants in Year 2. Occasionally teachers give confusing messages in their attempts to teach the structure of language in simple ways. This happened in several lessons on verbs in Year 3. All teachers are very well organised; pupils' books are easily accessible and work is very well prepared for the activity part of the session. Displays give pupils very helpful reminders about what they have learnt and what they need to know, as well as providing opportunities to celebrate good work. Teachers give pupils good verbal and written feedback on how they are doing and provide individual targets for pupils so that they know what they have to do to improve. Pupils are also given opportunities to evaluate their work, which helps them to realise what they need to do to improve.

#### • **Mathematics**

94 Results of national tests in 1999 show pupils' attainment well above the national average and above that of similar schools. The trend over the last few years shows results improving. Results in 1999 indicate that all pupils reached the standard level for seven-year-olds and a third attained a higher level. This reflects the large proportion of higher attaining pupils. Inspection evidence confirms that attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 is well above the national average and that a significant minority of pupils are set to attain above the standard for seven-year-olds. In Year 3, attainment is also well above average. Standards were already high at the time of the last inspection. The school has maintained and built on these standards. Throughout Key Stage 1 and Year 3, all pupils make good progress. Higher attainers and pupils with special educational needs make equally good progress as a result of well-targeted teaching. Pupils learning English as an additional language also receive sufficient support to enable them to make good progress.

95 Pupils make good progress because of the strong teaching. Consequently a high proportion of pupils in Year 1 count accurately forwards and backwards, using numbers to twenty. They know the meaning of 'double' and 'half' and several higher attainers already give a rapid response to the challenge to double a number up to ten. They solve problems, for example, working out how many snowmen are left from eight built, when four have melted. Pupils count in tens to one hundred and fill in missing numbers on a number line. They know about odd and even numbers. They know the names and some of the properties of regular two and three-dimensional shapes. They weigh a number of objects to find the heaviest and lightest. Pupils in Year 2 have made good progress in understanding and using numbers up to one hundred and beyond. They use a wide range of mathematical vocabulary and several pupils explain their mental strategies well during the initial mental and oral work in their daily numeracy lessons. For example, a teacher asked one class to 'decrease' 165 by 22' and one pupil explained, 'I know that 20 from 65 is 45 and then I took away two and added 100'. Pupils count forwards and backwards in twos, fives and tens, recognise the patterns in the multiples and are beginning to recall

these tables. They work out 'the story' of numbers up to ten and many already show good recall of addition and subtraction number facts to ten. They build further on their knowledge of shapes and measures. During the inspection, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were developing their ability to handle data. They make good progress overall towards an understanding of the use of lists, tally charts, frequency charts, block graphs and pictograms.

96 Pupils in Year 3 order numbers to a thousand. They relate addition and subtraction and understand terms such as 'inverse operation'. They find a number half way between two given numbers. They choose the correct operation when given 150. They add in pounds and pence to find the total cost of two items of shopping. They estimate and measure in metres and centimetres. They know, for example, that 9m 21 cm is the same as 921 cm. They describe the properties of a hidden shape, in order that the rest of the class can work out what it is. They use terms such as 'right angle', 'vertical' and 'axis of symmetry' accurately. They understand simple fractions and work out fractions of numbers, such as three-quarters of 20. Pupils make further good progress in their use of mental mathematical strategies and their memorising of addition, subtraction and multiplication facts. During the inspection week, work in numeracy lessons focused on data handling. Pupils made good progress in their formation of charts and graphs and in their interpretation of data. Higher attainers use pictograms, for example, where each picture on the traffic chart represents five vehicles, and work out rapidly that a row of 19 car symbols represents 95 cars passing.

97 At both key stages pupils respond well to mathematics and work well together when required on group or paired tasks. In a Year 2 class, they particularly enjoyed playing 'Bing, Bang, Zong' to improve their addition skills and awareness of odd and even numbers. Pupils are keen to participate during discussions and work quietly and steadily during the group activities. They are enthusiastic and confident and reluctant to stop working because they are challenged with interesting and appropriate work.

98 The quality of teaching is good overall in Key Stage 1 and in Year 3. Of ten lessons observed, two were very good, six good, one satisfactory and one unsatisfactory. All teachers plan and prepare numeracy lessons thoroughly. They are extremely well organised. The school ensures that pupils derive maximum benefit from effective staffing arrangements. Both classes in each year group have their daily numeracy lessons simultaneously and an additional teacher is deployed to create three classes for each lesson. The school also allocates support staff to work with two of the three class groups formed. The arrangements provide all pupils with greater opportunity to express their mathematical understanding and to receive more individual attention. Teachers' expectations take account of pupils' previous knowledge and they present challenging work, which is well matched to pupils' current attainment. In the good and very good lessons, teachers clarify for pupils the purpose of the lesson and summarise achievements at the close, ensuring that pupils know what they have learned and feel a sense of achievement. In several lessons, teachers add a touch of imagination to engage pupils' interest. For example, one teacher had a calibrated stick, from which all but one of the attached numbers had fallen during her drive to school and pupils were eager to help replace the multiples of three in the correct positions. Another introduced the lesson by involving the class in recitation of their favourite humorous mathematics poem 'Two and two is twenty-two'.

99 Teachers conduct brisk bursts of mental mathematics at the start of each lesson. In most lessons, they involve pupils well in explaining the various mental strategies used to solve mathematical problems. In a few lessons, teachers talk for too long and do not give pupils sufficient opportunity to share their understanding. In a very small number of lessons, teachers do not allow pupils enough time to complete tasks and have to rush the summing up at the close of the lesson. In one lesson, the initial class teaching was successful, but one of the group tasks did not take pupils' learning forward and the other was confusing to pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive, and classroom assistants make a valuable contribution. The school has been developing useful assessment information, but still has insufficient information to track pupils' progress between the baseline and tests at the end of Year 2. Teachers make very good use of assessments during lessons. Their marking is also very helpful, with positive and useful comments noted regularly in all books. Teachers paste a set of targets in the front of each pupil's exercise book and highlight their particular targets. This is a particularly effective way of engaging pupils in self-assessment and giving them a sense of challenge.

100 There are a few instances of numeracy skills being developed in the context of other subjects, notably in science. Staff are improving the use of information technology to support mathematics. Teachers and support staff are confident in their implementation of the national numeracy strategy. The school has already piloted the strategy for a year and all staff are enthusiastic about it, with the result that implementation has been effective in improving teaching skills and raising standards.

#### • **Science**

101 The end of Key Stage 1 National Curriculum teacher assessments for 1999 show that pupils attain standards which are very high in comparison with the national average. The school target for 100 per cent of the pupils to attain level 2 or above has been reached in the previous two years. The number of pupils attaining level 3 and above has dropped slightly this year but is still above average. Inspection findings confirm continued high standards in the current Year 2. Pupils at the beginning of Key Stage 2 also attain standards which are well above those expected for their age. The school has maintained the high standards of attainment found in the previous inspection.

102 Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress in science as they move through Key Stage 1. Pupils speaking English as an additional language make good progress because of the appropriate support they receive in smaller teaching groups and the attention given to their needs in the whole class situation.

103 Pupils make very good progress in developing experimental and investigative skills. They become increasingly confident at expressing what they have learnt in their experiments and investigations and explain their findings. In Year 2, for example, they predict the length of the sound coming from an instrument, then test their predictions, making sure that it is a fair test by using the same person, the same amount of force and the same stop-watch to time it. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils know how to use their senses to investigate different materials and phenomena. They describe what they see, hear, smell, taste and touch, and are learning to ask appropriate questions in order to find out more. They plan their own investigation on how to make materials waterproof. When finding out whether materials are magnetic or not, they make and test their predictions. They record their own results in different ways and draw sensible conclusions based on

their findings. In Year 3, they classify the instruments as string, percussion, wind and brass and have a very good understanding of what constitutes a fair test. They explain, for example, that changing one extra variable, such as height, when testing which ball bounces best, would invalidate the findings.

104 Pupils make very good progress in developing their scientific knowledge and understanding. In Year 2, for example, pupils know that humans need water and food in order to live. Their work with different materials enables them to recognise and describe their properties. They know that materials change when they are heated or cooled and that some of these changes are reversible. Pupils recognise familiar sounds and know that sounds and light have many sources. Their understanding and use of scientific vocabulary develops well throughout Key Stage 1. This is especially evident in Year 2 where pupils gain a lot from the tasks and activities involving electricity. They name everyday appliances that have switches and know what equipment is necessary to make a circuit. They understand that a bulb will not light when wires are attached to the same side of the battery and some give very clear and detailed explanations about what happens inside a switch. In Year 3, not all pupils are able to remember the specialist terms from work done the previous year. Their understanding is dependent on visual representation and regular reinforcement.

105 Links with other subjects enhance the relevance of pupils' work. For example, younger pupils classify the ways in which they use musical instruments, by tapping, blowing, plucking and shaking. Building on early fact-finding and classification of minibeads in Year 1, pupils at the beginning of Key Stage 2 undertake research in the literacy hour. They learn to record information on a chart and to write a non-chronological report.

106 Pupils involve themselves completely in their science lessons. They listen attentively and are keen to contribute answers and ideas. They are stimulated by the activities, especially where these are clearly linked to their previous knowledge and to other areas of the curriculum and when they are obviously relevant to their everyday experiences. All pupils have respect for issues of safety and hygiene and can be relied upon to obey instructions and not to touch materials and equipment until directed. They settle quickly to their tasks without fuss and most work independently without continual teacher intervention. When required, pupils work well together, cooperating appropriately and supportive of the contributions of others. They are excited by the revelations of science and show their enjoyment of the tasks and activities prepared for them.

107 The quality of teaching is very good, which marks an improvement from the previous inspection. No direct teaching of science in Key Stage 2 was observed during this inspection. A scrutiny of pupils' work, examination of planning documents, discussions with pupils and links with science during a literacy hour have contributed to overall judgements on attainment, progress and response. Teachers plan activities which are well matched to pupils' needs and which stimulate, interest and motivate them. The tasks promote understanding and effectively extend pupils' knowledge. The circuit game, for example, through the joining of hands, clearly demonstrates to pupils what happens when the circuit is broken. Pupils enjoy playing the part of wires, battery, bulb, buzzer and switch and are then able to relate this to circuit diagrams. Teachers have very high but realistic expectations of what pupils can comprehend and achieve. Their explanations and good questioning techniques enable pupils to fulfil these expectations. In discussions, teachers make efforts to involve every pupil, not just those who consistently raise their

hands. This is especially beneficial to pupils speaking English as an additional language, as they are given the necessary time to think and formulate a response and opportunities to repeat unfamiliar terms and phrases.

108 Teachers have very secure subject knowledge. They link present work with what has gone before and increase its relevance through vital cross-curricular links. Especially effective is when teachers give pupils time to pause and consider the wonder of science and its impact on our world, as when thinking about leaves contributing to the richness of soil which then helps things to grow. Pupils are consistently challenged in their lessons to think for themselves and attain higher standards. All teachers manage their classes very well. Resources are well prepared and used effectively to promote learning. The brisk pace of lessons means that pupils are constantly involved and their interest is maintained, often leaving them wanting to continue with the activity. Teaching is particularly effective where the aims of the lesson are shared with the pupils and they are given time to consider what they have learnt at the end of the lesson. Occasionally pupils have insufficient active involvement in practical activities. Most teachers are aware of a tendency for boys to dominate in giving scientific explanations and ensure that girls are given equal opportunity.

109 Teachers' planning is very thorough and the liaison and co-operation within year groups and between teachers and support staff are a strength of the school. The appraisal system makes a very positive contribution to standards of attainment with half-termly target-setting for individual pupils, groups and classes. Pupils are made aware of their own targets for improvement and involve themselves enthusiastically in reaching them. The co-ordinator monitors learning effectively by examining planning documents and looking at work samples to check for coverage, progression and continuity throughout the school. As a result of this the school has increased the time given to science in Key Stage 2. Resources were also found to be inaccessible and have since been effectively reorganised, clearly labelled and extended through money raised by Friends of the school. Formal assessment procedures are good with regular activities recorded in one book. Ongoing informal assessment ensures that individual strengths and weaknesses are identified and pursued. Another strength of the school is the environmental studies area and nature trail. Through this pupils learn to take responsibility for their environment. They develop a deeper understanding of the wonders of nature and a greater appreciation of the changing seasons.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Information technology**

110 Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 3 is above average. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress. Higher attainers make good progress through the tasks set in each year group, but have few opportunities to extend their skills beyond the level required for each year. The school has maintained above-average standards in information technology since the last inspection.

111 Pupils in Year 1 know how to load and access information on a CD-ROM by clicking on the appropriate menu buttons. In geography, they click and drag items to design their

own town and print it off. They build on good skill development in the reception classes in their use of the mouse and keyboard. They improve their literacy skills by using the shift key, spacebar and keyboard to copy or create a sentence. They create labels for their computer diaries. They add three numbers together using a mathematical program. Year 2 pupils use the return key to create line breaks in a poem. They delete and insert text to improve readability. They use the 'pen' and 'floodfill' tools in art, together with the 'undo' command. They become more adept at moving the cursor, using either mouse or arrow keys. Pupils in Year 3 use the toolbar accurately to copy and paste their address. They are increasingly confident in their use of the mouse and tools, using WordArt to design labels for one of the celebrations studied in religious education and selecting a picture to create a special effect. They know how to enhance text using 'bold', 'italic' and 'underline'. They have developed good editing skills, replacing the word 'said' in a given text, for example, using a choice of more appropriate verbs. These pupils showed good appreciation of the principles of programming robots and objects on screen, making adjustments to sequences, in order to achieve greater accuracy.

112 Pupils in both key stages are enthusiastic about using computers. They are eager to learn and give full attention during instructional class lessons. When working in pairs, they collaborate well, supporting each other and taking turns. Year 1 pupils enjoy the individual support of Year 7 pupils from the local middle school, who work alongside them, teaching and making assessment notes as part of their personal and social education programme. Pupils in all year groups work confidently during their short spells of access to computers and make good progress as a result of their focused concentration over a brief period.

113 Teaching is good overall at both key stages. All staff show confident subject knowledge. They plan and prepare their lessons and pupils' paired and group sessions well. The organisation of groups and deployment of support staff are strengths of the school's provision. Teachers develop pupils' skills well through a carefully planned sequence of lessons. They use computer terminology precisely and encourage pupils to do so. They give clear instructions and ensure equality of access and opportunity. Both classes in each year group follow the same curriculum and all pupils in turn undertake the activity and apply the skills being taught. Teachers and assistants make good informal assessments during lessons and group or paired work, so that they can give appropriate prompting or support. They require little extra from higher attainers, but challenge them within the tasks set by offering less individual support. They give good support to pupils with special educational needs, which ensures that they succeed in developing similar skills to their peers. Information technology skills are successfully linked to studies in all other subjects. This provides a series of relevant contexts for pupils to learn and apply their skills. Each teacher keeps a record of pupils' access and progress, but there is no common system across the school. While pupils make good progress within the time available, the school is currently giving each pupil only thirty minutes direct access to a computer each week. This gives time to cover the skills, but little practice at applying them. The school has identified the need to improve resources in its improvement plan.

## **Religious education**

114 Pupils make satisfactory progress overall through Key Stage 1 and in Year 3. Standards meet the requirements of the Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 3. Lessons observed, work samples seen and displays of pupils' work around the school show that pupils' knowledge and understanding are appropriate for their age, but their work does not reflect the very high standards highlighted in the previous

report.

115 Evidence of pupils' involvement in performances to parents during festivals, such as Christmas, shows that teachers successfully develop much of the learning in religious education through drama and music. Pupils in Year 1 know about traditions and celebrations. They understand that Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas each year and know the main events of the story. In one class, pupils showed good appreciation of the need for different tones of voice to portray different emotions and characters, when dramatising the Christmas story. Pupils in Year 2 share information about people who are special to them. They give reasons for their dad or mum being special and draw the face of five different special people on the end of each finger, after drawing round an outline of their hands. They express their feelings well in discussion with their teacher. Pupils in Year 3 also talk well about how various characters in the Christmas story might feel, showing insight into other people's points of view.

116 It is clear from displays in classrooms and samples of pupils' recorded comments in assessment books that pupils learn successfully in Year 3 about different festivals and their significance. One display shows pupils' diagrams comparing the traditions associated with various winter festivals, such as Diwali, Thanksgiving Day, Hanukkah and Christmas. Pupils create their own Diwali poems and use their word-processing skills to create labels about each festival studied. Displays in Year 2 classrooms show that pupils have learned about the significance of special furniture and artefacts in the local church, as well as discussing the symbolism of the minister's robes. Pupils write about their own special places.

117 The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers plan and prepare lessons well and organise interesting activities. They ensure that tasks are completed within the time available. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. One of the strengths in teaching is the way teachers ask questions and listen to pupils explaining their thoughtful answers. This encourages all pupils to gain confidence in expressing their views. Teachers have high expectations in terms of pupils' ability to contribute orally. In one lesson, the teacher involved pupils very well in considering how different characters would express their thoughts and feelings. Teachers do not keep pupils' work in an exercise book, religious education diary or folder. Although pupils complete an assessment activity each term, it is difficult for teachers and the co-ordinator to track pupils' progress or to maintain an overview of the quantity and quality of each pupil's work in the subject.

## **Art**

118 Only one lesson was observed during the inspection. Judgements are made on this and augmented by a scrutiny of pupils' work, the examination of planning documents and discussions with staff and pupils. Progress in art is good throughout Key Stage 1 and into Year 3. By the time they leave the school, pupils have experienced an appropriate range of materials and media and are developing their knowledge and understanding of different approaches and methods. The school has maintained the high standards found at the time of the previous inspection.

119 Younger pupils rapidly gain confidence in recording their ideas. They illustrate 'The

Toys' Party ', for example, using bright, colourful paints and experiment with 2-dimensional shapes to design their own pictures. They explore onomatopoeia in their paintings of fireworks to illustrate splutter, whizz and pop. Pupils have many opportunities to consider art in other cultures, especially when thinking about festivals and celebrations. They make their own rangoli patterns in connection with the Hindu festival of Diwali and produce exciting artwork for Chinese New Year; a colourful dragon, fans and Chinese writing. Christmas provides another opportunity for mixing paint to show the different shades of colour in trees, for making cards and calendars using the computer or collage, for using printing techniques for their wrapping paper designs and for winter paintings of bare trees in black, standing out against a pale, washed background. At Easter they design and make Easter hats. Work in other subjects also provides valuable opportunities for pupils to express themselves through art. They listen to music while painting, considering how it makes them feel and how those feelings can best be recorded. When studying the ancient Greeks, they design and make costumes. Pupils in Year 3 have visited a workshop where they made models of the Parthenon, masks and Greek clay pots. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils explain the advantages of using pens and charcoal in their pictures showing a scene from the great fire of London. They feel they have good control over the pens which do not smudge and 'are easy when you want lines to get thinner and thinner.' Charcoal is effective because 'you can get dark bits and if you smudge it, it looks like smoke.' They experiment with the different effects and see how they can use them to suggest different elements in their pictures. Pupils look at the work of famous artists and produce their own paintings in the style of Van Gogh. They learn from a local artist demonstrating water colours and wet-on-wet. Older pupils work with a local designer on a multi-media picture.

120 Pupils obviously love their art lessons and are keen to get on with their tasks. They settle quickly to work and give of their very best. They talk sensibly about what they are doing to adults and each other and express appreciation of the efforts of others. Teachers encourage this positive classroom ethos. They provide opportunities for pupils to experiment and offer appropriate advice for further improvement. Clear expectations are set for the task and the use of resources. Pupils respond accordingly. Pupils' progress can be clearly seen through an annual assessment task. An observational drawing of a leaf is used as the subject throughout pupils' time in the school, with various degrees of complexity demanded of them. This subject is effectively led and supported by the co-ordinator who monitors the coverage and standard of work. Joint planning and a sharing of expertise amongst staff contribute to its success. The very high standard of art displays around the school has a significant impact on pupils' learning. They are regularly used and evaluated and provide a model of excellence and a source of inspiration.

## **Design and technology**

121 Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress in design and technology and this continues into Year 3. This maintains the positive picture outlined by the last inspection.

122 From an early age pupils have many opportunities for working with a range of different materials. In the reception class, they enjoy making Teddy biscuits, learning the skills of adding one ingredient to another, mixing, rolling, cutting, decorating and cooking.

They use silver thread to sew fabric bells and make collage pictures using felt. Their finger puppets provide valuable early experience in the different ways of assembling and joining materials. By the end of the key stage, pupils are confident in designing their own puppets, choosing which character from traditional tales they wish to represent. They appreciate the value of having their own labelled design sheet to work from and know the importance of using suitable materials for the task. Pupils are very aware of safety implications, realising that a soft puppet would be best for a young child. They think carefully about the size of their puppet, using their hand-size to guide their decisions. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to incorporate moving parts into their work. They know they can use pivots and sliders and appreciate the effect it will have. Pupils in Year 1 reach high standards in their interpretation of the task. They talk about their designs and about what they are making. They suggest further improvements, as with one pupil considering three options on his slider which would allow his bear to have its eyes open, shut, or one open and one shut. Pupils also consider technical improvements as when improving their work to stop the slider moving up and down. Older pupils talk about the use of wheels and axles and how they cope with making a carriage capable of carrying a weight.

123 Pupils become very involved in their work and enjoy the feeling of satisfaction when their efforts are praised and they know that their designs have turned out well. They listen intently to instructions and advice and are able to incorporate new ideas into their work. The answers they give in evaluating what they have done, clearly reflect the design and technology programmes of study. This shows how well focused the teaching has been. Pupils independently express appreciation of others' work. They are confident in initiating questions and comments during discussions. They remain interested and well behaved throughout their lessons.

124 Teaching is good and is clearly the reason why pupils make good progress. Teachers effectively review previous work and the task so far. Pupils therefore see clearly how well they are fulfilling the intention of the assignment and consider how to improve on what they have done and how to proceed. Teachers provide pupils with appropriate technical input, leading them forward in their understanding of how to adapt the drawing on their design sheet to the larger paper and how to shade large areas effectively so that it does not end up as scribble. Pupils' work is well chosen to demonstrate good practice. Through their questioning, teachers challenge pupils to think for themselves and to build effectively on their understanding of the importance of good finishing techniques. High standards and personal responsibility are promoted throughout the lessons. Occasionally, too little time is allowed for pupils to express their ideas and explain what they are trying to achieve. This is when the session is predominantly teacher-led and dependent on pupils responding to questions, which often require answers of only one or two words. In one excellent lesson, all pupils were very effectively involved in evaluating their work. Pupils talked about the reasons for their choice of materials, the type of puppet they were making and the success or otherwise of their different joining techniques. The result was an excellent series of evaluative judgements from the pupils, revealing a very secure understanding of the processes involved.

125 The school has recognised that there was previously insufficient focus on the skills involved in designing and making and this has now been competently addressed. Money raised by Friends of the school has been well used to provide extra construction toys to increase pupils' experience and understanding of working with basic mechanisms. Design and technology is used very well alongside the main topics of work being covered and

there are extensive links with other subjects, increasing the relevance of the subject in the minds of the pupils. Great care is taken however to ensure that the requirements of this subject do not become lost in the demands of other subjects. The very high standard of attractive displays around the school motivates and encourages pupils.

## **Geography**

126 Geography was not a focus of the topic work during the inspection period and no lessons were seen. Based on pupils' work and discussions with them about what they knew and understood, pupils make at least satisfactory progress through the school. This reflects the standards noted by the last inspection.

127 Work is planned within the topic framework set down for each half term and this helps to make the subject interesting and relevant. There is a good emphasis on the study of places. In all years, pupils look at the local area. This involves walks around Two Mile Ash and a trip to Emberton village. Within these studies pupils' mapping skills are developed well. Pupils in Year 2, for example, recalled maps they drew of the environmental studies area, when they were in Year 1. They explained the maps that they had drawn of their routes to school. In Year 3, pupils draw maps of Two Mile Ash to show the land use, using a key to denote important features. Pupils also develop an understanding of places in other countries. This has been recently enhanced by the introduction of 'Barnaby Bear', who is to accompany individuals on their trips around the British Isles in Year 1 and around the world in Year 2. Another good link with a place in another country is that with the Prodigal School in Kenya. Pupils from Ashbrook learn about the daily lives of children in a different culture by exchanging letters and photographs. Within their study of places, pupils are looking particularly at the effect of weather on people's lives. In Year 2, for example, pupils have looked at the differences in the winters of Sweden, Australia and England. They know that Sweden is the coldest and explain that the nights are very long there in winter.

128 Pupils are interested in geography because of the interesting work planned by the teachers. Although no teaching was observed during the inspection, teachers' planning indicates that it is at least satisfactory. Teachers make good use of resources and artefacts to bring the subject alive and the good quality displays help pupils to appreciate life in other places. Good links are made with other subjects and literacy skills are developed well, in writing about weather, for example.

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## **History**

129 The positive picture noted by the last inspection has been maintained and pupils make good progress in developing their historical skills and understanding. Only one lesson was seen during the inspection and judgements are also based on teachers' planning and discussions with pupils about their work.

130 Work is planned within the topic set for each half term and this helps pupils to relate what they learn in history to other subjects. In some topics, there is a stronger historical emphasis than others. In Year 2, for example, pupils are studying the Great Fire of London this term in relation to their work on 'Bells ring, stars shine'. They are building up a good understanding of life in the past. They recall how the fire started and the devastation

that it caused, for example. They also remember some of the particular details about the diarist Samuel Pepys, that he buried his cheese to save it from the fire, for example, and that he wrote in a special code. Pupils are also developing an understanding of chronology. In Year 1, for example, pupils have made timelines to show the order in which Christmas traditions built up. In Year 2 pupils have worked on a time line stretching from 1600 to 2000.

131 Pupils are also developing an understanding of how people find out about the past. In Year 2, pupils know that books written now, as well as contemporary documents, are useful sources of information. They realise that elderly people can be a source of details about life in earlier times and they appreciate that old buildings and photographs can also throw light onto life in former times. This work is developed in the summer term when Year 1 pupils set up a museum of old household artefacts. This type of project helps pupils to develop an enthusiasm for finding out about the past.

132 The teaching in the lesson seen was good and teachers' planning indicates that this is usually the case. This good quality of teaching has a direct impact on the good progress that pupils make. Teachers take care to plan work that is based on first hand experience. In Years 1 and 2, for example, pupils visit the Milton Keynes Museum at Stacey Bushes. In Year 3, pupils study the Ancient Greeks and as part of the work a 'Greek soldier' visits the pupils, who take on the role of Ancient Greeks for the day. This helps the pupils to step back into the past and imagine what life would have been like long ago. Teachers also take care to make good links with other subjects. In one session about Samuel Pepys, for example, pupils in Year 2 wrote a diary for a week. This helped them to develop their literacy skills and focused on an area of writing which teachers had noted for development.

## **Music**

133 The school has a strong musical tradition. This subject is one of its strengths. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in class lessons as a result of the good, and often very good teaching. The school has maintained its high standards since the last inspection. Staff and pupils make excellent use of the music room and resources.

134 Pupils show real enthusiasm as teachers make very good use of time during lessons timetabled in the purpose-built music room. Year 1 pupils maintain a regular four-beat pulse, clapping, patting their knees, nodding and shrugging their shoulders in turn, keeping time with the music. They sing patterns of crotchets, quavers and rests, echoing their teacher's lively 'Doo-day, Doo', reading the notation patterns and placing a finger on their lips for each crotchet rest. They echo these rhythm patterns successfully on percussion instruments and invent words such as 'drumbling' and 'dingling' to describe the sounds of tambours and tambourines. Pupils in Year 2 make very good progress at recognising and appraising different styles of music, as a result of their teacher's thorough preparation of a range of pieces and an excellent series of questions. In the lesson observed, all pupils selected a fitting phrase from four options on a chart to describe, for example, whether the music was 'fast and jumpy' or 'rhythmical with a good beat'. They decided whether each piece made them feel as if they were 'celebrating' or 'telling a story' and what they thought it was written for. They listened to decide whether they could hear a choir, an orchestra or a repeating pattern, for example, in each excerpt. The teacher led the session at a brisk

pace and involved all pupils in careful listening, encouraging pupils to comment and decide on choices.

135 Pupils in Key Stage 2 follow musical notes on a staff and recognise similar melodic and rhythmical patterns in the different lines of a song. They keep time while playing in a round, recognise the symbols for staccato and identify brass instruments. In a lesson observed, the teacher used a recorded television programme well to promote pupils' enthusiasm for reading music and playing percussion instruments. Year 3 pupils all learn to play the recorder through a weekly lesson in the hall. This enriches their musical experience and gives them early knowledge of notation, as well as developing recorder skills. Recorder players and percussionists regularly accompany singing in assembly.

136 Pupils listen regularly and attentively to music in assembly. During the inspection, they commented on the atmosphere and pictures conjured up in their minds by listening to Prokofiev's 'Troika'. Pupils' singing in assembly is strong, tuneful and confident. Pupils often sing solo verses. The school's provision is further enriched by visiting musicians and by school concert performances, organised by the enthusiastic co-ordinator.

### **Physical education**

137 Pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language, make good and often very good progress in physical education. They build successfully on their previous learning and improve their coordination, body control and interpretative skills. Good standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

138 Younger pupils show a good awareness of different parts of the body. They move bean bags around their bodies in innovative ways, for example. They flick bean bags with their toes, showing considerable control and many are above average for their age in their ability to throw accurately and catch. Slightly older pupils understand that our feelings affect the way we move. They express in words how the music makes them feel and are not afraid to use their bodies in a variety of ways in responding to music. Their movements are controlled and they have good balance. Some dramatic interpretations of a high standard were observed in some lessons. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a good awareness of space in relation to others. They travel in different ways and respond appropriately to the actions of others in follow-my-leader. Pupils are confident in planning simple skills sequences. They incorporate the required criteria with considerable concentration. They explain what it is that makes a task successful. They improve on their own performance through close attention to the teacher's technical input and their observations of others. Older pupils show increasing skill in planning their own sequence of actions. They find appropriate solutions to the challenge of linking a curl and a stretch with a roll. They show control in holding their body shape in a moment of stillness and move smoothly from one action to another. Throughout the school, pupils use their bodies well and maintain a good posture.

139 Pupils enjoy their lessons and work hard to please. They make effective use of their previous experiences to improve their present actions, so that an observer can see how skills and responses have been developed over time. They respond willingly to instructions and maintain their concentration in interpreting their task. All understand the need to dress appropriately for physical education and older pupils can explain the

benefits of exercise and why it is important to keep the body fit. Pupils show great personal responsibility in preparing and putting away the apparatus. They work together efficiently and sensibly to ensure that everything is done carefully and correctly.

140 The quality of teaching is very good overall and never less than satisfactory. Teachers manage the pupils well and their organisation of the class and the activities contributes to the progress made in each lesson. Teacher and pupil demonstration is used well and helps pupils to successfully improve on their own performances. Where teacher expectations are high and technical input is provided, pupils achieve high standards. Praise and encouragement reinforce pupils' interest in the tasks and help them to feel a pride in their own achievements. Lessons are particularly effective when teachers participate in the activities and involve the pupils in a consideration of what is successful and why. Positive pupil and teacher interaction and rapport have a marked effect on pupils' attainment in this subject. Lessons are varied and stimulating in their format so that pupils' interest is maintained throughout. Teachers make progressive demands, which challenge and motivate pupils. Lessons are not so successful when there is insufficient reinforcement of safety considerations resulting in overcrowding and some frustration. Occasionally the lesson is rather rushed, giving pupils no time to warm up appropriately or wind down at the end. Planning sheets have been prepared for each year group for games, dance and gymnastics. Coverage is checked and continuity ensured through the planning. The whole school enjoys its annual sports day and country dancing festival. Year 3 pupils benefit from joint sports with pupils from other local schools. They have also visited the hockey stadium and been taught hockey skills by a specialist. There is plenty of grassy space and hard areas around the school. The school hall is of an appropriate size with good quality large and small equipment, which is easily accessible.

- **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

- **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

141 The team consisted of four inspectors, spending a total of twelve and a half days in school over a three and a half day period. During the inspection, 49 teaching sessions, four registration sessions, all assemblies and a range of other activities were seen. The team spent over 43 hours observing lessons, attending assemblies, hearing pupils read and talking to them about their work. A further seven and a half hours were spent looking at pupils' work, which included all the available written work from a representative sample of pupils from each class. Inspectors spoke to several governors, including the chair, about their roles. All teachers were interviewed and inspectors spoke to other members of the school staff about their work. Considerable documentation provided by the school was analysed, both before and during the inspection. Before the inspection, 25 parents attended an evening meeting held by the registered inspector to seek their views. There were 77 responses to a questionnaire sent to them, seeking their views on specific issues.

- **DATA AND INDICATORS**

- **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR - Y3	215.5	0	30	1

- **Teachers and classes**

- **Qualified teachers (YR - Y3)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	9.20
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	23

- **Education support staff (YR - Y3)**

Total number of education support staff:	7
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	131

Average class size:	31
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• **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998-99
	£
Total Income	362217
Total Expenditure	367266
Expenditure per pupil	1469.06
Balance brought forward from previous year	22374
Balance carried forward to next year	17325

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	232
Number of questionnaires returned:	77

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	61	34	5	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	48	48	1	3	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	22	43	23	4	3
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	38	53	5	4	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	34	53	5	5	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	44	52	3	1	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	27	53	13	5	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	38	56	3	3	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	47	47	1	4	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	47	51	3	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	60	36	1	3	0