

INSPECTION REPORT

OLNEY FIRST SCHOOL

Olney, Buckinghamshire

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 110246

Headteacher: Mr Alan Killman

Reporting inspector: Mrs Heather Evans
21374

Dates of inspection: 15 -19 May 2000

Inspection number: 191661

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 8
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Spinney Hill Road Olney Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	MK46 5AD
Telephone number:	01234 711388
Fax number:	01234 711388
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Patrick Booth
Date of previous inspection:	27 January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs H Evans	Registered inspector	Science	What sort of school is it?
		Information technology	School's results and achievements
		History	How well are pupils taught?
		Music	What should the school do to improve further?
		English as an additional language	How well is the school led and managed?
		Special educational needs	
Mr D Haynes	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its' pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mrs K McArthur	Team inspector	English	
		Art	
		Under fives	
Mr M Heyes	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Design and technology	
		Geography	
		Physical education	
		Religious education	

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services
Strathblane House
Ashfield Road
Cheadle
Stockport
SK8 1BB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	13
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	16
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	21
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	22
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	23
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	26
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	27
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Olney First School is a bigger than average school situated in the well-established market town of Olney in north Buckinghamshire. It is close to Milton Keynes and provides an education for 305 (292 full-time equivalent with 26 part-time) pupils aged between 4 and 8. Each of the twelve classes caters for a single age group. The annual admission number is 70 and the average class size is 24. Although there is a high percentage of relatively advantaged homes in the immediate area pupils come from a number of other villages and a range of social backgrounds. Very few claim entitlement for free school meals. The assessment tests carried out in the reception classes show that most children's attainment on entry is similar to that expected for the average child. Although there is some variation in different years, there is an equal proportion of boys and girls. There are 25 pupils on the schools' register of special educational needs and at the present time no pupil has a statement of special educational needs. At the time of the inspection, the 24 children attending the third reception class, the rising 5 class were still 4 and had been in the school for just 9 half days.

There is no nursery and children are admitted to one of the reception classes in the term in which they will be five on a part-time basis. Children become full-time in the term after their fifth birthday. Most children have experienced some form of playgroup or other pre-school opportunity and most have an understanding of books, counting and stories. Almost all the children speak English as their first language at home.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. By the time pupils are 7 at the end of Year 2, and at the end of Year 3, in almost all lessons and in all subjects the standards achieved are above the national average. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, attain levels that are as high as can reasonably be expected taking into account their varying length of time in full-time education. The attendance level is higher than in most schools nationally and all pupils behave very well. They like school and are keen to work hard and learn well. The quality of teaching observed was predominantly good with 40 per cent being judged very good or excellent. Teachers plan work that is interesting and challenging and pupils are supported effectively as they learn in a positive environment. Teachers all work together to challenge pupils' thinking. At all times they expect pupils to strive for the highest possible standards. Pupils are cared for sensitively by all adults in the school including welfare, administrative and maintenance staff. The governing body is very effective and with parents, governors are regularly involved in supporting teachers and children as they work harmoniously together. The school has improved since the last inspection both in the quality of teaching and in its curricular provision. Taking into account the relatively low amount of money allocated for each child, all the positive elements and outcomes, very good management of money and resources with the very good standard of teaching, the school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- It enables pupils to attain academic standards that are above the national average in most subjects.
- The standard achieved in information technology at the end of Year 2 when pupils are 7 is well above that in most schools nationally.
- Teaching is predominantly good with 40 per cent being very good or excellent.
- The good curriculum, which meets all national requirements, is enhanced by many additional elements.
- Attitudes to work, behaviour and attendance are all very good.
- The leadership, vision and educational direction of the headteacher is very good.
- Management and leadership by the headteacher, governors and senior staff are very good.
- Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are very good.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good overall.
- Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good.
- Partnership with parents is very good.

What could be improved

- The library facilities are cramped and have no computerised catalogue system.
- There is a lack of additional services and a water supply for the mobile classrooms deemed to be permanent.
- The facilities for the children who attend only part-time in the summer term in the third reception class need to be improved with better play opportunities provided.
- There is insufficient storage space for materials and resources not in current use.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected in January 1997 it was considered to be a good school with very few weaknesses. The headteacher, staff and the governing body have been very successful in resolving all the listed weaknesses. The school has undertaken a systematic review of all teaching methods and has made sensitive and profitable improvements. Shared collaborative planning is now a strong feature and all methods selected provide good support and encouragement for pupils of all abilities in the reception classes for younger children and in classes at both key stages. All of the revised schemes of work are well structured and are subject to regular planned audit. They provide for continuity between parallel classes and between the key stages. The governors are fully involved in the review, monitoring and evaluation of teaching, finance and curricular developments. The systems employed for monitoring and evaluating the work of teachers and pupils in the classrooms and through their written work are thorough and comprehensive. The school has developed a consistent approach to encourage children to make individual choices about their work in design and technology and art and pupils' skills in investigational and experimental work are now being effectively developed in all classes. The school has been successful in introducing and implementing the literacy hour and the numeracy strategies. Standards have varied slightly as teachers and pupils have changed and the new methods and strategies have been introduced but they have been maintained at above the national average. Parents are very well satisfied. The leadership has been strengthened by additional governor training as well as the appointment of a talented and supportive deputy headteacher. Overall there has been good improvement since the last inspection and this is now a very effective school.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
reading	A	B	A	C
writing	A	B	B	C
mathematics	A	B	B	C

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

When set against all schools the standards achieved over the last three years have been maintained at a level above the average and reflect the hard work of pupils and teachers and the support of parents. The apparently lower standards when compared with similar schools take no account of the fact that few families claim the free school meals to which they are entitled and the very limited time in formal education available to many pupils before they start full-time education in Year 1. During the inspection standards in science were above and in information technology were well above those found in most schools nationally at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 3. Attainments in religious education are better than those found in most schools. Attainment levels in all other subjects are at least in line with national expectations in classes across the school and are above national expectations in geography, history, music and art. Attainment in design and technology is at least satisfactory and there are examples in Year 2 classes where standards were above national expectations. In physical education standards are in line with national expectations except in dance where the attainment level is above national expectations. Targets set for the years 2000 and 2001 in English and mathematics are demanding but the school expects to achieve them as standards are set at an appropriately high level.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school and to learning are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils invariably behave very well and are interested and involved in all the school's activities in and out of the classroom.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' relationships with one another and with adults are very good. They all have a clear idea of how their behaviour impacts on the feelings and learning opportunities of others.
Attendance	Attendance is very good and exceeds the national average.

All of these aspects of how pupils behave and work well in school are very good and in turn they have a positive effect on how pupils develop and learn in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

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

The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was almost always good. In the lessons observed 97 per cent were at least good of these 33 per cent were very good with 7 per cent being judged excellent. Examples of very good teaching were seen in English, mathematics, science, information technology, geography, music and physical education. Teachers' detailed and extensive subject knowledge is a strength of the teaching as is their keen awareness of the prior attainment and abilities of the pupils. Planning for the year, term, week and day is thorough and detailed. Careful analysis enables work to be matched to individual pupils and group needs and to present challenge for pupils with differing abilities at all times. Teachers provide well for pupils of all abilities including those capable of high attainment and those with special educational needs by grouping them according to prior attainment. Teachers have high expectations which are matched by the pupils' own desire to do their best and attain high standards. Literacy and numeracy are taught well and pupils are encouraged to use the skills learned in literacy and numeracy in other subjects of the curriculum. Teachers encourage pupils to use a variety of strategies to support independent learning and to test ideas as individuals and collaboratively with friends. The very effective working atmosphere developed throughout the school enables teachers and pupils to complete large amounts of work to high standards in a productive and enjoyable manner.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum is good and is enhanced by a wide range of additional visits and by visitors to the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for in all classes and all subjects.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' personal development is supported very well. Pupils spiritual, moral and social development is provided for very well and there is good provision for pupils' cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is very successful in its care for all pupils both in lessons and in other aspects of school life.

The school is very successful in its work in partnership with parents. The great majority of parents believe the school to be effective and like how their children are making progress. Parents welcome the information presented in newsletters and in the annual written reports. A range of interesting extra-curricular opportunities including literary, information technology, musical and the green clubs is provided. Parents support their children in their work at home, many in classrooms and others when pupils are engaged in special projects or benefiting from school visits.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher who is supported effectively by the new deputy headteacher, all the co-ordinators and the teaching team has a clear sense of vision and educational direction and leads the school very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body are skilled and very knowledgeable. They are very effective in fulfilling all their statutory responsibilities and share fully in the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Through its regular evaluation and review process the school has a clear view of what it does well and where it need to plan for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The governing body, the headteacher and the senior management team carry out the monitoring of staff and resources very effectively. Personnel and all other resources are managed very well.

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The number, experience and expertise of staff are well matched to the needs of the school and its pupils. There are well-structured plans to improve the facilities for work and play in the third reception class. The temporary mobile classrooms have now been deemed permanent and therefore need the addition of toilets and a water supply to be equal to the good standard in the rest of the school. The governing body uses its collective skills well to monitor all parts of the school's budget and planning systems and endeavour to check that the principles of best value are effectively applied.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are pleased that their children like school and learn well. • They like the approachability of all the teachers. • They are pleased that children work hard. • They like the fact that behaviour is good. • They know the school is well led and managed. • They are glad that they can see good teaching. • They like the quality of information provided. • They feel that they are full partners in education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents would like there to be more homework especially in Year 3. • A small minority of parents would like there to be less homework for children of 5 and 6. • A minority of parents of older pupils in Years 2 and 3 would welcome more sporting activities for extra-curricular activities.

The inspection team agrees with the parents about the positive aspects of this school. The school development plan indicates that the school is looking to make changes in the pattern of setting homework for pupils in Year 3 but, on balance, the team considers that the present arrangement is about right. The range of extra-curricular activities is more extensive than that often found in an infant department and the team believes that the range of available activities is very suitable for the age and abilities of the pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 Children under five in the three reception classes work in the six areas of learning recommended by the Department for Education and Employment. On entry there is a spread of attainment but tests show that overall children have average attainment by the time they are five. Almost all of the children have had some experience in day nurseries or in pre-school play groups before starting at the school. Teachers take care to provide a suitable range of experiences in all the areas of learning and the great majority of the children have attained the desirable learning outcomes in the six areas of learning by the time they reach five. Almost all children have good linguistic and numeracy skills and most develop good personal and social skills as they play and work with their classmates. For some training to listen is the most difficult task. There are suitable activities provided for children to develop skills in creativity such as painting and listening to and creating music. Children develop well physically and enjoy making models with construction toys and demonstrating a range of skills on the computers. Children are admitted to the reception classes as rising fives in the term before their fifth birthday for just the morning session. They begin full-time education in the term after their fifth birthday. There are three intakes per year and at the time of the inspection, in one class pupils had spent two and a half terms in school. In another, they had been attending full-time for two weeks and in the third the 24 children who were all 4, in the rising 5 class had been attending for nine days in the mornings only. The varying amount of time that many children spend in the reception classes means that some children enter Year 1 and start their National Curriculum studies with very little experience of formal education.
- 2 At Key Stage 1, standards in English, as shown in the national tests in 1999 were well above the national averages in reading. Standards in writing were above the national average. The numbers of pupils attaining higher levels was well above the average nationally in reading and above the national level in writing. Standards in reading are above and in writing they are broadly in line when compared with similar schools. This anomaly, where the school compares favourably with all schools nationally but only matches similar schools can be explained. The explanation is that no pupils have a full year in the reception classes. More than half of the pupils have only one term full time experience in a reception class and approximately one third are introduced to the work of the National Curriculum in Year 1 with only one term part-time experience of teaching in the reception class. Children born after Christmas and those born in the summer months have limited experience of work and the routines of the school.
- 3 Inspection evidence supports the good results in English. Standards in reading and in speaking and listening are above those found in most schools nationally and are good overall with the standard for many pupils being very good. The work undertaken by the teachers following planning by the senior management team and the governors to raise standards in writing to higher levels is in the early stages of development. The inspection evidence indicates that the structured work in matched ability groups is proving to be a positive and successful way forward. For the last four years, overall standards have varied slightly with the different groups, depending on the varying numbers of pupils with special educational needs but have remained above the national average. In 1997 when the results appeared to be better the scoring system was different and each year since then a higher percentage of pupils has attained Level 2, the expected level in reading and writing. The percentage attaining the higher Level 3 fell slightly in 1999.

- 4 Pupils in Year 3 classes develop the skills established in the infant department. When pupils leave school at the end of Year 3 most are already working comfortably at Level 3 a level above national expectations or towards Level 4 which is well above expectations for eight year old pupils. More than one third, are already attaining the standards expected at the end of the key stage when pupils are 11. Inspection evidence indicates that the standards of work in the present Year 3 classes match those achieved in the past three years. Strategies to encourage pupils to develop independence in learning, develop their own ideas, extend work undertaken with the class group and to accept the challenge to attain high standards are being promoted successfully as part of the school's aims. Work in this area is achieving the improvement planned for through the implementation of the school developmental plan.
- 5 In mathematics at Key Stage 1, in the tests in 1999, the numbers of pupils attaining the expected level, Level 2 was, at 92 per cent close to the national average. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 was, at 24 per cent above that attained by pupils nationally. Standards in mathematics were close to those attained in similar schools. Inspection evidence gleaned by lesson observation, scrutiny of books and examination of the results of school based tests indicates that work undertaken in class is enabling the great majority of pupils to work at levels above those in most schools nationally. Pupils know and can manipulate numbers up to and beyond 100. They can calculate mentally the change one needs from 50p or £1 when undertaking shopping tasks by using multiplication, addition and subtraction quickly and accurately and recording their work clearly and neatly. They understand which process to select and know that repeated addition will help them to check simple multiplication.
- 6 The standards in English and mathematics were already high before the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies. However, these have both been incorporated successfully into the work of the school. Initially the changes in teaching methods following firstly the previous inspection and then the introduction of the literacy hour caused some difficulties for teachers and pupils but these have now been successfully resolved. The standards of spellings and the understanding of the content in reading have improved as is demonstrated by results of regular tests and through the pupils' confidence and enjoyment as well as by the demonstration of their skills in lessons. Pupils' knowledge and understanding demonstrated in mental mathematics sessions where a very brisk pace is achieved are impressive. Individual pupils are working well towards meeting their own targets and overall the school is meeting the appropriately high targets set with the local education authority.
- 7 Standards in science as indicated by teacher assessment at Key Stage 1 are close to the national average expected at Level 2 but are well above for pupils attaining Level 3. Inspection evidence indicates that teachers are concentrating on work to improve the pupils' experiences and that opportunities for experimentation and investigation in the classroom and in the environment are proving to be beneficial in raising standards. Pupils know about living things and life processes and they develop their skills in the school gardens where they conduct experiments about the environment. Work to investigate the properties of materials has been linked very successfully with studies in history and in designing and making of practical articles such as containers in which to carry money. Pupils question all things presented as facts and apply established knowledge to new learning in experiments. They set out questions and answer them in their written work in their books. Pupils examine records entered into a database by other classes, add their own results and compare their own personal work with that undertaken in other classes. They use the networked system in the informational technology suite, which is in the early stages of development to accomplish this work. All such activities observed during the inspection were thorough and stimulating.

- 8 Standards in science at Key Stage 2 in the Year 3 classes maintain the above average level established in the younger classes. The school's test results, from the optional standards and attainment tests, for these pupils indicate that some are already working towards Level 4, the standard expected for eleven-year-old pupils. Pupils at Key Stage 2 have good recall of work undertaken previously and are able to explain about solids, gasses and liquids and explain how gasses and liquids can change shape to fit any containers. They have good understanding and understanding of how light bends when it passes through prisms and the effect of filters on light. Pupils create patterns using coloured acetates and experiment to discover the colours from which white light is made.
- 9 Standards in information technology are well above those found in most schools nationally at the end of Key Stage 1. They are above those found in most schools nationally in the Year 3 classes where pupils have had fewer opportunities until recently. The increased skills are due in part to information technology being used to support other subjects across the curriculum. Since Easter there has been additional support and the regular class use of the new computer suite, which was brought into full use just two weeks prior to the inspection. Many but not all pupils have personal computers at home and are able to practice work done in school at other times. All pupils are able to access menus and load and retrieve their personal work from stored files or from work saved on disks. Pupils can access data put in from other classes to manipulate spreadsheets and import pictures. The use of remote controlled robots around the classroom and on the screen enables pupils to develop and display their understanding of control technology. There is a good selection of programs to support pupil's modelling skills and individuals delight in displaying their abilities. All pupils make very good progress towards the agreed targets in their personal development profiles in a purposeful way.
- 10 Pupils' attainment in religious education is better than that found in most schools nationally. The work planned in religious education is thorough and well organised and supports pupils' spiritual and cultural development. It is carefully planned to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and incorporates the suggestions within the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) recommendations. An effective programme of work for personal, social and health education complements this part of the curriculum very well.
- 11 The amount, quality and range of work in all other subjects are at least as good as and frequently better than those described at the time of the previous report. Attainment levels in history, geography, art and music are above those found in most schools nationally and are good. Attainment overall in design and technology and physical education are in line with national requirements but there are examples of very good work in classes in Year 2 and in dancing in all classes throughout the school. Attainments in music in Year 3 and in other classes when taught by a music specialist are well above the national average. In these instances attainment is well above the level found in most schools nationally. In all subjects pupils benefit from the shared expertise of the teaching and support staff who maintain a full rounded curriculum alongside the new national initiatives in literacy and numeracy. The use of computer skills to enhance learning in all subjects has enabled the staff to maintain and increase learning opportunities and to raise standards across the curriculum. In all subjects those pupils who have two terms full-time reception experience do very well and those with less time and even those with only ten weeks part-time experience do well by the end of Key Stage 1.
- 12 Pupils of all abilities including those with special educational needs and average and above average pupils learn very effectively, are supported well and never make less than good progress. In the 25% of lessons where the teaching is especially good or where earlier work has prepared pupils very well then, when new work is offered very good progress is made. During the inspection no difference was observed overall between the learning, attainment or progress of boys and girls. In lessons towards the end of the afternoon, learning was slowed on two days during the inspection by very hot and humid weather when pupils' became very tired towards the end of the day and classrooms became stuffy. Where it was practical teachers then continued their lessons under the trees in the shade but this was not always possible.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 13 The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good and contribute greatly to the positive learning environment that exists within the school. Pupils are keen to enter school and settle quickly into the daily routine without undue intervention from the class teacher. During lessons pupils concentrate well and show enthusiasm in response to the good quality of teaching that make the lessons interesting. This was particularly evident during a Year 2 literacy lesson where the children were very keen to complete work on speech and thought bubbles as homework.
- 14 Parents greatly appreciate the values and standards the school offers their children. The school's aims and values are reflected in the classroom rules that are clearly displayed and during the inspection there were very few occasions when children had to be reminded of the rules. The school is an orderly community, there is no evidence of vandalism or graffiti and schoolbooks, equipment and other pupils' personal property are treated with respect. Pupils relate well to each other and to all members of the teaching and non-teaching staff. No bullying or other unacceptable behaviour was observed though a teacher was observed dealing very effectively with the outcome of a minor altercation. Pupils are at ease expressing their feelings to the class teacher and in front of their fellow pupils, this was particularly evident in a religious education lesson which focussed on Yom Kippur when a pupil expressed the feeling of nervousness and of shame if owning up to a misdemeanour. During lessons and assemblies pupils frequently contribute from personal experience. Shared reading where the more able assist the less able is strong feature of most lessons and pupils were observed assisting pupils new to the school understand what was expected of them.
- 15 The Green Club focuses the children's attention on the local environment. Daily at lunchtime two children are provided with protective equipment and prominent vests before being allowed to patrol the school grounds and collect the very small amount litter. Pupils are eager to maintain the very high standard of care of the environment. This is in not in any way a sanction for unacceptable behaviour. Pupils are pleased to assist in clearing the hall after dinner and return the registers to the office after each registration. Lunchtime Activity Club and equipment provided in the playground fosters good social relations either by playing games together or quietly socialising on the picnic benches.
- 16 Attendance has been maintained at the level found in the previous inspection and is above the national average, unauthorised absence is negligible. Registration procedures are quickly undertaken and there are very few latecomers. Registers are maintained correctly using a computerised system and the office staff is competent at analysing the data. There have been no exclusions from the school for very many years.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 17 Teaching was observed in 59 lessons or parts of lessons during the inspection. In all of the lessons seen the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory. 33 per cent of lessons were very good, 57 per cent were good and seven per cent of lessons were judged to be excellent. Lessons in the reception classes and for children under five were predominantly very good. Teaching at both key stages was never less than satisfactory. Teaching was at least good in all of the core subjects, information technology and religious education. The quality of teaching has improved since the time of the last inspection as can be seen in the following table when although the quality of teaching was considered to be good 8 per cent of lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory.

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor
1997		8	48	92	8	0
2000	7	33	57	3	0	0

- 18 Since the previous inspection there have been changes in staffing and some teachers are new to the school including the deputy headteacher who joined the staff in January 2000. During the inspection some teachers were replacing staff who were absent or were short-term temporary appointments. This included job sharing in Year 3 and a one term temporary part-time appointment in the third reception class. These teachers had worked in the school for less than five days each at the time of the inspection. Teaching is of a very good quality in reception classes and at both key stages especially in literacy, numeracy, science and information technology. The very good teaching makes a strong contribution to pupils' effective learning and good and often very good progress all subjects. Learning is always at least good in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information technology.
- 19 The quality of teaching in the reception classes, in all the areas of learning, for children under five, is predominantly very good and in two lessons was judged to be excellent. The planning for work linked to the desirable learning outcomes leading towards the National Curriculum is well matched to individual needs. In these classes, teachers know the children well and relationships are very good.
- 20 Even where children attend only part-time during the mornings only in the third reception class the modified literacy and numeracy strategies are well established. In the reception classes all teachers take every opportunity to extend children's learning by good use of questioning and well-planned stimulating activities. Suitable sorting and matching activities as well as singing and counting rhymes effectively promote numeracy and mathematics. Management and organisation are invariably good. Planning and assessment are very well organised.
- 21 The school has introduced the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies successfully and this has had a beneficial impact on the overall quality of teaching. The training in planning and evaluating work undertaken in the preparation for the new initiatives has had a positive impact in other subjects particularly in information technology and science. Almost no weaknesses in teaching remain and there were no instances observed of teachers having too low expectations. Very occasionally there is a tendency for teachers to be over directive for small groups of pupils which did inhibit independent learning. This sometimes occurred in classes or groups where temporary teachers were working who did not know the pupils as well as the permanent staff. The overall picture of teaching is very good.
- 22 Teachers secure subject knowledge forms the firm foundation for the successful impact of teaching on pupils' learning. All teachers have a good understanding of literacy and numeracy and as a result they help pupils to develop these skills effectively. Literacy and numeracy lessons are well structured in accordance with the requirements of the relevant national strategies. Following the introductory session pupils are taught in ability sets to enable work to be matched to their individual needs. Teachers select appropriate methods to teach whole classes and groups
- 23 Teaching observed in subjects across the curriculum, such as in art, and design and technology was almost always good as it was in 2 lessons on geography and in games lessons in physical education. Where some teachers have special expertise such as in music it is very good and sometimes excellent. In these lessons pupils develop a deeper understanding of the subject and are encouraged to use the skills learned in mathematics for example, in geography, as when using tallying in Year 1 and developing work in geography and history by using information technology in Year 3. Systematic work over time, as seen in pupils' books, indicates that knowledge learned in one lesson is often transferred to another subject.

- 24 Teachers in classes across the school make clear in lessons exactly what they expect pupils to learn as when learning the use of adjectives. In a lesson in Year 2, for example, the objectives for the lesson were discussed with pupils and displayed on the board. During the lesson the teacher asked pupils to remember the objectives and together they read them again and at the end they checked whether they had all been accomplished. This focussed pupils' thinking and attention on what they were doing and why. This process was seen in other classes across the school at Key Stage 1 and in Year 3 during the inspection. Pupils benefited from reflecting on the purpose of the lesson and enabled them to be sure of what they had learned and how it fitted into the pattern of their work in other lessons.
- 25 This planning for shared learning objectives is a part of the best lesson preparation for all teachers. Where colleagues plan together it is an important feature to ensure equality of access for all pupils. The working together in preparation for teaching new and familiar work is essential with the parallel classes at all age groups throughout the school and it is done well. Planning is particularly effective in English mathematics and science but is also seen in physical education, history and geography. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn from lessons and how they are going to plan for success. This extends to good use of resources in many lessons including good use of support staff and the environment. Teachers have good procedures for assessing the gains in progress that pupils make. The vast majority use the information gathered on a day-to-day basis well to help them develop the next stage of the learning programme.
- 26 Teachers have realistically high expectations of the quantity and quality of work that each individual pupil should achieve. Classes contain a wide spread of attainment levels but all teachers plan effectively to provide every pupil, whatever their ability with the challenge to learn and do well. They make clear what they expect pupils to do and learn in lessons, and frequently remind pupils of the stated goals as the lesson progresses. The balance of boys and girls working together in groups is managed very well.
- 27 The relationships between pupils and teachers are very good. They form the basis of the relaxed but at the same time firm and secure control that enables learning to take place. There is regularly good-humoured interaction but at no time is there any poor behaviour, which would not be tolerated. Teachers manage lessons at a brisk and lively pace whilst still allowing pupils time to develop their thinking and learn by interacting with one another.
- 28 As pupils gain in knowledge and experience teachers expect them to take increasing responsibility for their own learning. Since the last inspection, teachers now offer increased opportunity for independent initiatives. Whilst there has been good improvement in this area of pupil management since the previous inspection, teachers recognise that there are still more opportunities for this aspect of pupils' work to be developed even further. Those pupils who are capable of higher attainment are enabled to work independently in most lessons after completing the shared task and the work identified is almost always more difficult not just more at the same level. The use of the extended range of computers and software programs made available this term is being exploited very well for just this purpose.
- 29 The school has responded successfully to the key issues from the last inspection related to teaching strategies. Teachers have extended the range and methods employed and planning for learning and assessment are now thorough and well matched to the pupils' needs. Teachers plan their work effectively, enabling all pupils to work at an appropriate level. The school monitors pupils' achievements by gender, attainment, and background to enable fairness of treatment. All teachers use the marking policy in a consistent and supportive way encouraging pupils by their helpful comments. This effective marking forms a valuable part of the day-to-day assessment of work that is used to inform planning for future lessons in all subjects. Teachers frequently mark work alongside pupils explaining how they might improve and where they have made mistakes. The impact of these changes is that lessons are always fast moving and pupils learn very well in interesting, stimulating and varied ways.

- 30 The schools policy for setting homework is clear; it has been explained to parents and is understood by the pupils. This includes taking home reading books regularly, as well as work to learn spellings and multiplication tables. Pupils sometimes have to find out things at home to prepare for future lessons and they also work to reinforce what has been learned in school with extra practice at home. A small minority of parents would like an increased amount of homework in classes in Year 3 but others would prefer pupils in classes for children in Years 1 and 2 to have less written homework.
- 31 Pupils are taught history and geography as part of a humanities programme which links with work undertaken in art, music and religious education at planned times each term when the areas of study match. This linking of subjects is undertaken very effectively. Throughout the school the support given by teachers one to another ensures that work undertaken promotes skills and continuity and that pupils' progress is at least satisfactory and is most frequently good. Work is planned to enable pupils to have a systematic build up of skills and knowledge.
- 32 Teachers make good use of the range of good quality resources. Teachers use the skilled support staff effectively and efficiently to assist in lessons. Those pupils with special educational needs are provided for in a supportive but challenging manner. In the classrooms, teachers set work that takes account of their needs, while still offering the challenge that will allow them to make good progress. Teachers always link their planning with colleagues working in the three parallel classes for each age group in order to monitor the rate of learning and the progress made by pupils. They offer support and encouragement to one another and make weekly and often, daily opportunities to check that work covered is indeed that planned.

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

- 33 The curriculum is broad and balanced and of good quality. It has been improved since the time of the last report. There are detailed policies in place for all areas of the curriculum, which cover all statutory requirements. The curriculum for pupils under five, in the reception classes, is based on the six areas of learning recommended by the Department for Education and Employment and more than meets statutory requirements. The staff are well prepared to introduce the early learning goals proposed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the next academic year.
- 34 The school promotes all areas of the curriculum well. Literacy, which is strength of the school, is well developed through English teaching and underpins work in subjects across the whole curriculum. The science curriculum, which was revised in 1999, effectively introduces pupils to all areas of science. In religious education the locally agreed syllabus is followed and provides a range of good opportunities for all pupils to develop an understanding of faith and belief from different world religions. The use of information and communications technology is another strength of the school and the use of the 'Computer Suite' in whole class lessons helps develop pupils' learning. The provision for special educational needs in the school is good. Curricular planning in literacy is very good and planning for numeracy is good. The school has introduced additional lessons to encourage long passages of writing for a wide range of audiences and purposes in response to its analysis of the National Curriculum testing in 1999. All pupils have equal access to all areas of the curriculum.
- 35 A good range of educational visits successfully adds breadth to the curriculum. These experiences include visits to places of local interest such as the Cowper Museum in Olney, the Shuttleworth Museum, and the Rural Life Museum in Milton Keynes. Pupils visit 'Hazard Alley' where they are made aware of health and safety issues. Visiting speakers from the police, the school nurse, theatre groups, visiting authors and sculptors contribute to this provision. The outcome is that pupils' first hand experiences help them to remember important facts and to increase their knowledge and understanding of the subjects they study.

- 36 Provision for extra-curricular activities is soundly developed in school and makes a useful contribution to the curriculum overall. The school promotes activities such as the Green Club in which pupils help to keep the school pond and the surrounding area clean, reading and recorder clubs and an indoor club. The latter is organised at lunchtimes for those pupils not wishing to be outside. This opportunity to be supervised indoors includes computer games and activities using construction toys as well as a wide range of board games and quieter activities. The provision for additional sporting activities is appropriate for the age-range of pupils in school. The school participates in the local community with pupils' country dancing at local events, the annual pancake race and the fiesta day. Pupils, staff and parents also share in the 'walk to school day' event each year.
- 37 The school has a very well developed programme for personal, health and social education in place. Circle time, when pupils take turns to explain their feelings to the class and the teacher, is used effectively to discuss and explore relationships and pupils' responses to dealing with what they have found to be difficult situations. The school has clear detailed policies for sex education and drug awareness. The curriculum is monitored regularly by the senior management team and governing body. Overall, the school's curricular provision is good, offering a broad range of learning opportunities to all its pupils. The impact of the good curricular provision is that pupils of all ages and abilities learn well and in the best lessons they learn very well.
- 38 The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is very good. A number of visitors come into school to support and enhance learning in the classroom. For instance, a hot air balloon enthusiast visited a classroom to talk to pupils about his activities during the inspection. The school has also developed a very good working relationship with its feeder nurseries, and the middle school to which pupils on leaving the school transfer when they are eight.
- 39 Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school has continued to develop its existing good provision and make improvements since the last inspection.
- 40 The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. The quality of assemblies is good and time for collective worship provides good opportunities for pupils to reflect on the themes and issues raised in them. For instance, pupils were asked to think about caring for the world and when a globe was lit pupils gasped with amazement adding a sense of 'awe and wonder' to their thoughts and reflections about caring for the environment. Opportunities are also planned through the curriculum for pupils to reflect and develop a respect and sense of awe of the world in which they live. The presence of most of the staff in assemblies and the lighting of a candle creates a focus and adds to the sense of importance and occasion. In religious education lessons pupils gain an understanding and perception of some of the beliefs and precepts of major world faiths including Christianity.
- 41 The provision for pupils' moral development is also very good. The whole ethos of the school is directed towards pupils understanding what is morally right from that which is wrong. In all classes there is evidence of the way that positive rules for behaviour are consistently reinforced. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils were reminded by the teacher of how to sit sensibly on the carpet when she was explaining a particular point in a mathematics lesson to the whole class. Pupils show high levels of respect for everyone in school. All of the adults in school who work with pupils act as good role models. They approach problems and issues even-handedly and show fairness, for example, by listening carefully to both sides of a disagreement, as was seen in one physical education lesson.

- 42 The social development of pupils is another strength of the school. The careful organisation of the school's systems and the care of the staff ensure that all pupils are made welcome and can fit easily into the school's routines and ethos. The school provides a high level of opportunities for all pupils to develop their social skills across the curriculum and school life in general. Co-operation between pupils is very good and they work well together in pairs or small groups, for example, in a games lesson. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 accept a range of responsibilities such as putting chairs away at lunchtime and in lessons they are encouraged to take responsibilities clearing away books and equipment after being used. A noticeable feature of classroom behaviour is the way in which pupils listen with respect to others and appreciate their point of view. The very good relationships in all classes are major features of the school and contribute significantly to the social development of pupils. The involvement of the school in the town and in activities with other schools adds to the highly developed social awareness of the pupils.
- 43 The cultural development of pupils in school is good, with some very good features contained in its provision. Pupils have opportunities of learning about their own culture through their work in history and geography, including Olney and the surrounding environment. Pupils also participate in local events such as country dancing which deepens their cultural understanding. Displays around the school also provide pupils with insights into other cultures beside their own. The work developed by a group of parents, working through the Open University, which reflects the shoe industry around Olney and includes shoes and footwear from different countries and cultures adds to pupils' awareness of the local links with shoemaking over many years and the methods used. Pupils' ongoing observation and interest in this developing work has helped to deepen their knowledge and understanding of other cultures. This web site will enable pupils to link their work with other schools across the globe. Work on African dance in physical education, traditional pottery, visits by authors and poets and the study of the work of work of great artists such as Lowry, Van Gogh and Monet in art also contribute to pupils' cultural development in school. Pupils' experience and knowledge of music from countries where they have lived or their parents work deepens the awareness of their rich cultural heritage.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 44 The school provides a very good level of care for its pupils. The school has maintained the supportive and caring environment found in the previous inspection where the teaching and non-teaching staff know the pupils and their families well. This detailed knowledge ensures that communications concerning pupil's welfare can be by letter, telephone or personal visit. Parents are very appreciative of the open access to teachers and the detail they receive on their children's academic and personal performance.
- 45 The school has a clearly defined personal, social and health education policy that features as part of the timetable in its own right as well as being integrated into other areas of the curriculum. During the inspection a particular aspect of this policy was evident when large numbers of pupils were observed wearing protective sun hats. Pupils visit Hazard Alley as part of their overall awareness of their personal health and safety, and a number of children knew the name of the community police officer. The school maintains a safe environment for its staff and pupils and no serious hazards were identified during the inspection though consideration should be given to providing better storage for less frequently used resources. The headteacher and caretaker meet regularly and make regular risk assessments of which records are maintained. The standard of cleanliness around the school is of a high order and pupils are aware of the need for personal hygiene. The school overcomes the lack of water and drainage in the once temporary but now permanent additional classrooms very well but the governors should consider how best to improve this situation. Physical and procedural security measures are operated in a practical manner and all the staff are very conscious of their responsibilities.

- 46 Pupils of all abilities are assessed and monitored very well by the teachers to measure their attainment and record their progress. There is careful analysis of the results of assessment and individual records and the teachers and the management team make good use of them to plan future work and make any improvements to the curriculum that they find to be necessary. Records are comprehensive including those of individuals, and groups. The monitoring by gender and age is an important part of the process each half term. The annual report to parents is detailed and informative and makes provision for parents and pupils to add their comments. Individual targets are set for different subjects and sometimes for behaviour such as working to concentrate more or to write more neatly. Pupils and parents are given good guidance as to how future work might be improved. Teaching in ability groups is organised to match individual and groups of pupils' needs so that all pupils are sufficiently challenged. Individual targets are regularly reviewed and progress books are maintained. The school's policies on all aspects of behaviour, including bullying, are well balanced but rarely have to be applied due to the very good levels of behaviour seen both in and out of the classroom. Lunchtime supervision is adequate and the supervisors and other non-teaching staff are valued as an essential part of school life. The headteacher is responsible for child protection. The headteacher's detailed knowledge of his pupils and their backgrounds together with clear guidance for all staff provide a good level protection. Communication at all levels within the school is very good and contact is maintained with outside specialists but their services are seldom required.
- 47 Attendance is above the national average; procedures are in place to identify and follow up any poor punctuality and absence at an individual pupil level. The importance the school places on good time keeping and attendance and the high level of personal support and guidance is reflected in the overall performance of pupils in the school. This is an important factor in enabling overall good standards to be maintained.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 48 The school has continued to build on the very good relationship with parents that were identified at the last inspection and has now developed the relationship to an extremely effective level. Parents benefit from regular written communications covering formal, social and practical matters. Newsletters are prepared for every year group each term, which provide information about what is happening in the school. Each one contain details of that terms' work across the curriculum, the exact nature of help that can be given at home and the sort of assistance that would be appreciated in the classroom. Help in the classroom is identified as sometimes a need for specialist knowledge for a particular subject or topic or it can be as little as 20 minutes of help each week. Parents respond very positively to this approach and the school benefits greatly from their involvement. The school accepts communication is a two way process and listens to parents and sympathetically and promptly responds to their concerns. The relationship the school has with parents is such that a number of parents could not see the need for a home/school agreement as they were willingly already doing more than what the agreement involved.
- 49 Parents are very active on the governing body chairing a number of committees. The expertise that different individuals bring to the school is recognised and effectively used. One example is the training of some governors and staff in interview and selection techniques that they practice when selecting staff for new appointments. Another example is the design of the new information and communication technology suite that was undertaken as a joint project involving a parent who is an architect, staff and pupils. The parents on the governing body adopt a proactive approach and frequently present initiatives for the school to consider.

- 50 Parents were instrumental in the renovation of the school pond that involved not only expertise but also manual labour. Following renovation the pupils benefited from use of some under water video equipment loaned by a parent. A joint parent and staff project is nearing completion in conjunction with the Open University, CLUTCH (Computer literacy understanding through community history). When completed the project will have its own web site on which details of the town's historic manufacturing industry will be available. Aspects of this project are already being used to add many positive elements to the curriculum. As a result the majority of pupils recognise most of the interesting range of creatures and mini-beasts living around the pond as well as the breeding habits of frogs and newts. They can identify water boatmen, snails and dragon fly larvae and match their findings to the illustrated display stands that contain pictures and informative text.
- 51 The majority of parents describe the annual report they receive on their children's progress as interesting. The reports contain elements about each individual that represent the child the parents know. There is an active Friends of Olney First School (FOOFS) which organises well-attended social events and profitable fund raising activities. Parents accompany children on school visits and actively encourage children to partake in community events. The vast majority of parents are very happy with the rounded education their children receive; an education that they consider is driven by more than just good academic results.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 52 The quality of leadership of the headteacher is clear and purposeful. He has a very clear sense of educational direction derived from the analysis of monitoring results and initiatives. His firm leadership has enabled the school to move from being a good to a very good school. His clear vision for ensuring that the high standards and challenging work have been maintained over a number of years has set a tremendous example to the entire school. This has been maintained despite significant changes in staff and the introduction of new methods and national initiatives with a level of funding at the bottom end of the national averages. The support of the dedicated team of teachers and support staff, as well as the skills and encouragement of the new deputy headteacher who joined the school in January this year is total. This high commitment for improvement has enabled work in all classrooms to remain focussed on the work in hand as well as on longer-term challenging goals, and high standards have been maintained.
- 53 The governing body has reviewed, analysed and rectified all of the issues raised at the time of the previous inspection with a very high degree of success. There is a well-organised and effective committee structure. Members have undertaken relevant and useful training in order to help them carry out their duties in an efficient and beneficial way for the well being of the school and the pupils. The adopted committee systems and the knowledge of the vast majority of the experienced governors enable all statutory responsibilities to be met. Governors work very effectively together with the senior management team and readily bring their professional skills to bear on all the planning and monitoring of the work of the school. The collective skills and the effective partnership have enabled the development of a shared purpose, which has had a positive effect on the direction of the school. Where the governors see an area for development they take positive action and discuss remedies with the headteacher in their role as critical friend.

- 54 The curriculum committee of the governing body, which includes the teacher governors, works closely with all of the subject co-ordinators to review their work and monitors the effectiveness of the teachers and the schemes of work in preparing pupils for the tests at the end of the key stage. The results of statutory and voluntary tests are scrutinised carefully and analysed purposefully. There are established strategies in place to evaluate the effect of spending decisions on standards attained. Governors support teachers in their efforts to improve the work of the school and when reviewing work use the data prepared for schools by the government officials each autumn. They have highlighted areas for further improvement, such as the accommodation for reception class children and the mobile classrooms, which the local education authority has now deemed permanent, even in the light of a very pleasing pattern of results. Governors have been appointed to support initiatives in literacy and numeracy. There is also a governor who is involved in work to support pupils with special educational needs. All of these designated governors have undertaken additional specialist training and provide effective liaison between parents, governors and the school.
- 55 The governors have managed the low budget allocation very well in a positive and practical way and have welcomed the additional financial support provided by FOOFs. This monitoring and meticulous management of the budget has enabled standards of work and additional stimulating activities to be maintained. The quality and commitment of the classroom assistants and learning support staff matches that of the teaching staff. The school finance is ordered very efficiently. The school has developed very effective financial procedures and with the support of the local education authority has learned to seek out all possible grants and financial support in a drive to ensure that the principles of best value are always applied.
- 56 The allowances for supporting pupils with special educational needs are managed carefully and the school allocates additional money from its delegated budget to increase the support for pupils with special educational needs. The impact on standards achieved by this spending is monitored carefully and this care enables pupils to learn effectively and make good progress in line with that of their classmates. Many attain nationally expected levels alongside their classmates. This is a major factor in the school attaining above average results for many years. Grants for staff training including training for the National Grid for Learning are used efficiently and the staff appraisal system along with the process of personal interviews with the headteacher is used to identify any teacher's specific training needs and then to provide the best possible additional in-service training.
- 57 Parents, teachers and governors are keen to keep the fabric and decoration of the building to a high standard. The school is kept bright and clean through this help and through the committed hard work of the site manager. Parents, friends and governors work hard to maintain the grounds as a stimulating learning resource and willingly devote hours of their own time to maintenance and restoration. Recently the working party that restored the pond area to being a high quality resource for science and environmental study gave hours of their time to the project for the benefit of the school community. Since the previous inspection the library facilities have been expanded and many good quality books have been added to the stock. The library provision is still rather cramped with limited room available for private study. The catalogue system is not yet as well developed as it could be in light of the school's competence in information technology.
- 58 Play facilities for children under five are not ideal, as they are some distance from those used by the other reception classes. The facilities for those children who attend only part-time in the summer term in the third reception class need to be improved with better play opportunities provided. There are at present detailed plans in place designed to improve these facilities which are to be implemented in the very near future. The governors are seeking the advice of the local education authority and an architect to consider affordable ways of enhancing the accommodation for the youngest children. Some money has been set aside from the budget to address this identified problem. Storage space is at a premium, although staff and children alike care for all resources some are stored along the corridors and are difficult to access without thought and planning. This detracts from the learning environment in places and belies all the other very good work of the school in aiming to create an interesting and attractive learning environment for all.

- 59 The school views the governing body as a critical friend. The high percentage of parents on the governing body ensures that the needs of pupils are the school's first priority. The skills knowledge and experience of many governors, many of whom are professionals, are seen as a tremendous bonus as each has different specialist skills, such as those of the architect or the accountant when looking for best value when making purchases or when monitoring the work of the school. Their involvement in creating the strategic management plan, the school development plan and the detailed supportive action plans which are used when setting the budget and deciding the priorities for new work alongside the teachers and the management team is very effective. Evidence for this is seen in the new draft documents being prepared for 2001/2 set against the emerging development plan for the coming year. The governing body is confident that the more detailed action plans, prepared by them with headteacher and senior managers will deliver their intentions. The action plans contain much more detail than was available at the time of the last inspection including sources of finance, staged progress reviews over time, success criteria and responsible personnel. The entire management team's understanding of processes of monitoring are now well developed and very well understood. Governors are frequently in the school supporting and encouraging developments and regularly take stock of progress to date. Taking into consideration the well below average cost for each child, the very good behaviour, relationships and attitudes that prevail, the very well ordered and efficient management process as well as the overwhelmingly good teaching and the above average standards attained, the school provides very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60 There are no significant weaknesses but in order to maintain the existing high standards and develop the school further the headteacher, staff and governors should consider the following recommendations when preparing their action plan:

- (1) review the library facilities and, building on the existing skills in information technology, introduce a computerised catalogue system and involve pupils more in the management of the loans system;

paragraphs 57, 71

- (2) liaise fully with the local education authority to investigate all possible ways of raising the standard of the classrooms formerly deemed temporary to those found in the rest of the school by adding a water supply and toilets

paragraph 54

- (3) improve the provision for the youngest children who attend only part-time in the third reception class to provide a full range of structured play facilities as outlined in the school development plans for 2000/2001;

paragraphs 58, 70

- (4) investigate ways of improving storage facilities for resources and equipment not in current use

paragraphs 45, 58

- (5) Although outside their direct control, the governors and headteacher should consult with the local education authority to consider ways in which the admission policy might be reviewed so as to provide more equal opportunities for learning for those children under five who are admitted late in the academic year.

paragraphs 1,61, 67, 70

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	59
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7	33	57	3	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y3
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	292
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR– Y3
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	25

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	41	30	71

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	37	36	37
	Girls	28	27	28
	Total	65	63	65
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (91)	89 (92)	92 (92)
	National	82 (81)	83 (82)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	35	37	37
	Girls	28	25	29
	Total	63	62	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (86)	87 (83)	93 (88)
	National	82 (80)	86 (84)	87 (86)

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

These figures have been verified with the school and are not exactly as shown in the PICS1.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	229
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y3

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.4
Average class size	24.3

Education support staff: YR – Y3

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	77

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0

Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0

Number of pupils per FTE adult	0
--------------------------------	---

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	425,527
Total expenditure	426,864
Expenditure per pupil	1,447
Balance brought forward from previous year	8,058
Balance carried forward to next year	6,721

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	290
Number of questionnaires returned	161

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	32	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	44	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	43	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	47	7	0	2
The teaching is good.	57	40	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	48	5	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	27	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	35	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	55	40	2	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	70	27	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	40	2	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	11	34	25	9	21

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- 61 The previous inspection found that the children under five were interested, enthusiastic, made good progress and some achieved standards generally beyond the desirable learning outcomes for children of their age. The curriculum was broad and balanced. Teaching was good or very good, and set high expectations. The report suggested that the school develop an Under Fives policy and give children opportunities to become more independent learners. The school has undertaken these suggestions enthusiastically and successfully.
- 62 Children are admitted to full time school in the term following their fifth birthday. Before that, they attend on a part-time basis in the mornings only. For the youngest children in the year group, this means that they have only one term part-time in the rising 5 group before they move to full-time education in Year 1 and begin National Curriculum work. The children come from a variety of pre-school placements. Their attainment on entry is carefully assessed using a recognised commercially produced process for base-line assessment. Whilst most achieve at the level normally found in children of the same age nationally, there is variation across the areas assessed. Oral and reading skills are good, whilst the practical use of number skills, listening, the children's attention span, and some personal and social skills are below the national averages. For all of the children that have had at least one terms full-time education they are likely to reach the expected standards close to the time of their fifth birthday. For those children who have no full-time education before entry into Year 1 some but not all attain the expected standards in all of the six areas of learning. Where children do not reach the expected level it is in areas of listening, writing, creativity and knowledge and understanding of the world where they need additional help with their studies in the National Curriculum. The difficulties are for no other reason than lack of time and experience but they do have a small negative effect when working in lessons in Year 1.

Language and literacy

- 63 When teaching skills in literacy to all children every member of staff places great emphasis on developing children's language skills. Most children have a wide vocabulary, which they use well in class discussion when they sample and describe the taste and texture of different foods. Although they know many words a high percentage of children are not used to listening and need to be encouraged to listen carefully to teachers and to each other. Many have early reading experiences and know that pictures and words convey meaning. Most are beginning to learn how to make marks and start letter formation to support their developing writing skills. To give a sense of purpose to their writing, the children are encouraged to send letters to a teddy bear, who leaves the classroom to make imaginary journeys, and then sends postcards back through the Royal Mail. They enjoy taking books home in their reading folders each day. They retell the main points of stories. By the time they are five the majority have attained the expected standards in reading and speaking and standards on writing are developing well. Teachers prepare children for the literacy hour by using Big Books for shared reading. Children understand and identify the parts of a book: the title, author's name, the spine, and the blurb. The quality of teaching in speaking and listening, reading and writing is predominantly very good.

Mathematics and numeracy

- 64 When learning mathematics most children recognise numbers and can count to 10, and some beyond. By the age of five most can count on and back, and use different starting points from 1 to 100. Well-targeted questions encourage children to think, calculate, question and reason. Children have good opportunities to apply their number skills to practical problem solving. They can name and identify shapes. Work on two and three-dimensional shapes developed into comparisons, larger, smaller, the same as and bigger than. When the children were given a variety of interesting items to sort by size they made a collection of 'large' things, many brought from home, and enjoyed wearing the extra large sunglasses and wristwatch. Children are taught well and learn to use correct mathematical vocabulary. They are able to copy and extend repeating patterns. Teachers' maintain a very good quality of teaching in all classes and the great majority of children reach expected standards by the time they are five.

Creative development

- 65 As part of their creative development the children participate in musical activities with real enthusiasm and enjoyment. They can sing, adapt their voices to different types of song, follow and repeat a rhythm, and create their own sounds. They use the vocabulary of music, and the names of instruments. The temporary teacher is a very skilled practitioner and she adds an additional exciting element to the teaching of this subject. In art, children use a wide range of media and different techniques in their work. They used charcoal to draw a double bass. They used wet sand to create a 'dinosaur world', and illustrated the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. Children write their own labels for displays of their work. There are opportunities for role-play in the house area, and the giant's castle. Teaching is never less than good and is most often very good. All of the children who had been in school for more than one term had reached expected levels of attainment. It was impossible to make a firm judgement for children with only nine half-days experience in school some of whom would not be five for three months.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- 66 As part of the work planned to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world children plant a variety of beans and mustard and cress seeds. They are delighted when they observe the results. They are able to describe the conditions that plants need for growth. Older children can describe the life cycle of a frog and a butterfly. They use the school wildlife and pond area, and make visits to a forest. Teachers use a good range of computer programs very well to support learning. Children learn about the world around them through local studies. They looked at a map of Olney to find where they live and locate the homes of their friends. Visits are made to the town, to the church and to study local buildings. A display of 'precious things' in the class for the older children contained artefacts such as old photographs, books, a teapot, and stimulated discussion about how people lived in the past. Children in the youngest class had been in school for just 10 mornings at the time of the inspection and had not shared in this exciting detailed work. Teaching in all of the lessons seen was good and where it was possible to make a judgement the majority of children reach or will reach the expected levels by the time they are five.
- 67 Physical education lessons are enjoyed each week. Children are taught to use and develop a range of skills using large and small apparatus, indoors and outside. They are taught to use all the apparatus and equipment safely. They learn how to play team and co-operative games. When using scissors, tools, jigsaws and small equipment, the children refine their manipulative skills. They develop their finger control by using pencils and crayons for careful letter formation and to create detailed drawing. Those children close to their fifth birthday have skills that match expected levels but the children who have had little time in school have not all gained full control of their fine manipulative skills although many will not be five for several weeks. Teaching and the understanding of how young children develop and learn in small steps is very well understood by teachers and the quality of teaching is usually very good.

Children's personal and social development

- 68 In order to develop and enhance children's personal and social skills teachers set a good example to the children by demonstrating good manners, respect and encouraging them to speak politely to one another. They are encouraged to discuss the activities with adults and each other, and to take messages to help boost their confidence. Children are taught to tidy up after using equipment. They all learn to care for each other, and for the world around. New babies were brought in to school to show the children how they needed looking after. One boy brought in his baby rabbits. Those children who have already been admitted in the winter terms feed the birds and record the names of the birds coming to the food table. By the time they are five almost all children where it was possible to make a judgement have attained the expected levels. Teaching is very good and those children with less time in school look set to reach the expected levels before they are admitted to school full-time in Year 1.
- 69 In the reception classes the quality of teaching is most often very good in all areas of learning and during the inspection teaching in music was seen to be excellent. The teachers are very skilled, very knowledgeable and very well organised. They have very good understanding of the curriculum for children under five prior to introduction to the National Curriculum and of how young children learn. Planning is very good, and teachers set clear learning objectives, which they share with the children. Teachers provide an interesting range of activities such as cooking, planting seeds and sharing and making books to support learning. There is an obvious commitment to raising achievement in all areas. Staff ensure that all children, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to all activities. They make the children feel valued and important, and seek to prepare them all to develop into independent learners.
- 70 The early years co-ordinator is knowledgeable and skilful and prepared the early years policy, and an interesting, informative and useful information booklet for parents. She gives good leadership to all staff. Children's progress is very well monitored. Good resources are well distributed amongst the classes. Classroom assistants and volunteer helpers are very well used to support the children's learning and personal and social development. All the reception classes provide a happy, secure and stimulating environment for the youngest children, one of the stated aims of the school.
- 71 The classrooms used for the youngest children are brought into use as the year progresses and more children are eligible for places. The school is beginning to implement exciting plans intended to improve access and to increase the structured play opportunities and facilities for the children under five throughout almost all of the summer term. Those admitted in September and in January enjoy spacious classrooms and airy play facilities but at present those children who enter for part-time education for the summer term have only limited play space. Teachers readily collaborate to enable these youngest children to have full access to outdoor play facilities. However, ideally, these children, who have such a short time prior to entry to the National Curriculum, need to have their own improved facilities and the governing body and the senior management team of the school are working to provide this by the summer of 2001.

ENGLISH

- 72 The previous inspection found that attainment in English throughout the school was above average in comparison with national standards. Pupils made good progress, including those with special educational needs, and were interested and enthusiastic. Teaching was generally good, and teachers had good subject knowledge. The broad and balanced English curriculum met the requirements of the National Curriculum. There were good resources, and a well-stocked library. Areas for improvement were the provision of drama and role play, greater use of information technology, the organisation of multi-subject teaching in some classes, and the use of monitoring and evaluation. The previous inspection was held prior to the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. The school has addressed each of these issues in turn and has now reached a stage where all of them have been successfully rectified.
- 73 The results of the attainment tests at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999 showed pupils achieved very good standards in reading when compared with national results and good results in writing. When results are compared with similar schools, standards are in line for reading and writing. On entry to Key Stage 1, the majority of pupils are meeting the desirable learning outcomes for their age and about one third exceed the expected level. However, one third of pupils only have one term part-time in school before they begin National Curriculum work. Their opportunities to develop the necessary skills for writing have therefore been limited which causes the overall standard to be in line with expectations. During the inspection attainment levels observed in lessons indicated that standards were above expected levels in reading and for more than two thirds of the pupils they were also above expected levels in writing. In all of the Year 2 classes there were groups of pupils working at well above the expected level, Level 2.
- 74 In Key Stage 2, about half of the pupils are working at Level 3, and many are already working at Level 4. The number still working below Level 3 matches the number of pupils identified as having special educational needs. All groups of pupils progress well, including those with special educational needs. The inspection found no differences between the achievements of boys and girls.
- 75 In speaking and listening, the great majority of pupils have a good vocabulary. They are very articulate, express their ideas and opinions confidently, and can give good reasons for their ideas and opinions. At the beginning of Key Stage 1, pupils listening and attention skills are not so well developed. Teachers create a range of opportunities to develop these skills. Pupils are given oral messages to deliver to encourage them to listen carefully. They retell stories they have heard. Standards in speaking and listening at the end of Year 2 and in Year 3 are almost always above those found in schools nationally and for a significant percentage they are very good.
- 76 Standards of reading throughout the school are good and for more than one third of pupils they are very good. Pupils enjoy a range of books, and most, including those with special educational needs, have many books of their own. They can identify author, illustrator, the title, and enjoy discussing the story, plot and characters. Pupils develop a range of strategies and cues to help them read unfamiliar words. Most pupils read accurately, respond to punctuation and learn to put expression into their voices when reading aloud. In Year 3, pupils build on these skills and most are fluent readers, achieving well above national averages. All pupils know how to use the school library, and can use the catalogue to locate books. As yet the library does not have a computerised catalogue system although many pupils can describe using one at the public library. Pupils take reading books home daily, and are encouraged to select two books from the library to read at home. Many use the local library in the town. The emphasis placed on teaching phonics and letter sounds and blends during the literacy hour is showing benefits in both reading and spelling. Pupils learn to spell new words each week both in school and also at home. They enjoy games where they demonstrate how good they are getting.

- 77 The teachers have looked closely at ways to improving pupil's writing. A carefully structured programme has been devised to work with the literacy strategy. During the inspection children in the reception classes wrote their own story of Jack and the Beanstalk, completing a part of the story on each day through the week. Year 1 pupils write separate elements for their story, the beginning, the middle and the end. In Year 2, pupils are organised into sets, by ability, across the year group for lessons to develop sustained passages of writing each week. The purpose of these lessons is to improve pupils' creative writing skills. The evidence at the time of the inspection indicated that the strategy was proving to be successful. Pupils wrote a story using as a stimulus discussion about a picture by Monet that they had studied in art. Some of the language such as that describing 'stately golden throated lilies, floating on a magic pool' showed sensitivity and good imagery. By the end of Key Stage 1, and in Year 3, many pupils spontaneously refine and redraft their ideas. Pupils make good progress in grammar and have developed good skills in punctuation. The standard of handwriting is good, it is taught systematically to all pupils and the great majority of develop a neat, legible style. Written work in books is always presented well. Good use is made of information and communication technology to encourage pupils to experiment with the way they present their text for different readers. The teachers make good use of computers to support pupils with special educational needs who may have difficulty writing.
- 78 The quality of teaching was good or very good in ninety percent of all lessons observed. All teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject, and National Curriculum requirements. They have worked hard to implement the literacy hour, and are beginning to see good results from their hard work. Planning is very good. Teachers set high expectations to challenge the pupils. Medium and long-term plans are drawn up in line with pupils' prior attainment. Short-term plans may be adapted in response to day-to-day assessment of pupil's achievements. Plenary sessions are used well to reinforce what has been learned during the lesson Pupils work is marked carefully often alongside pupils and teachers then give directions to help pupils improve and refine their work. There is a clear policy for English, which includes arrangements for pupil assessment. Samples of pupils' work are kept in portfolios. These are marked with precise notes and are then used to assess the standard of work across the classes set against expected National Curriculum levels.
- 79 Pupils are given good opportunities to develop their literacy skills through other areas of the curriculum. Reading skills are used to research for science, history and geography. Extended writing is used to record information. Speaking and listening skills are well used in music, religious education or in lessons to support pupils' personal social and health education when individuals and groups discuss their ideas and emotions.
- 80 Very good use is made of classroom assistants and volunteer helpers. Pupils with special educational needs are enabled to work in class by well-targeted help, and good use of resources. Adults are given plans of the literacy lesson, with clear instructions, to enable them to support a group of pupils.
- 81 The co-ordinator has worked hard to lead the implementation of the literacy hour. She has maintained and even raised the high profile of English throughout the school by her careful monitoring and insistence on working to higher standards. National Curriculum requirements are fully met. The co-ordinator and members of the curriculum committee of the governing body regularly monitor teachers' planning and schemes of work. The governor with responsibility for literacy comes regularly to observe and share in lessons. There is a generous stock of good quality resources, which are used effectively to benefit pupil's learning. The library has been extended since the previous inspection, and holds a comprehensive range of books which pupils are encouraged to take home regularly.

MATHEMATICS

- 82 The percentage of pupils' in Year 2 at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999 who attained the expected level, Level 2 in the National Curriculum tests was close to the national average. The percentage achieving the above average, Level 3 was above the national average and overall the performance of pupils in mathematics in 1999 was above the national average and was graded as good in the comparative scores for national achievement in 1999. The test results reflected the teachers' assessments. Over the last four years, pupils' performances in tests have been consistently above the national average although there was a peak in 1997 when the standard achieved was very good and was well above that in schools nationally. Pupils' performance in 1999 was broadly in line when compared with results in schools with a similar context. Performances over the last four years indicate that girls achieve slightly better than boys, although during the inspection no such differences could be identified. A similar pattern was identified at the time of the last inspection. Inspection findings show that attainment overall is above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and that for more than one quarter of pupils it is well above. When pupils leave the school at the end of Year 3 the majority are working above the expected level. The good standards identified in the last report have been maintained and the number of pupils attaining at higher levels has increased.
- 83 At the end of Key Stage 1, attainment is above average in all aspects of mathematics. Pupils in Key Stage 1, get off to a good start in learning their mathematics through lively teaching that presents a high level of challenge and high expectations. Pupils are constantly required to explain their thinking and reasoning; for example, in a Year 1 lesson pupils knew how to double up to 20, and to chose the right numbers to double within a practical activity. In Year 1, pupils are able to use addition and subtraction facts when dealing with large numbers that they break down into smaller numbers which they can manage more easily. By the end of the key stage, most pupils have a good understanding of tens and units, ordering and rounding numbers. They can count on and back in 1's, 5's and 10's successfully, and most recognise and can explain odd and even numbers. This was imaginatively taught and reinforced in a practical activity in the hall where Year 2 pupils had to find other pupils who had attributes that were either 'odd' or 'even'. Pupils are able to self-correct their own mistakes. Pupils recognise and correctly identify three-dimensional shapes, such as a cube, cuboid, sphere, cylinder and pyramid. They can state the two-dimensional shape to which each of the solid shapes is related. Most pupils can gather information systematically and record their findings in simple block graphs and tables. One set of bar graphs showed how groups of pupils spend their days both in school and in the holidays and pupils drew inferences from comparing the presented results.
- 84 When pupils leave the school at the end of Year 3 their overall attainment is above average and for a significant percentage it is well above average and they are already working towards Level 4, the expected level for the end of Key Stage 2. All pupils have built and developed their knowledge and understanding of tens and units and of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. For example, in one Year 3 class pupils were using rows of numbers in a line such as on a ruler to support work in addition and subtraction counting forwards and backwards with speed and confidence. All pupils work comfortably with simple fractions and use their knowledge of time and money in their oral and written work with a high level of accuracy. Pupils can measure in centimetres and find the area of regular and irregular shapes. They can extract information from graphs and use co-ordinates to plan journeys. Pupils have a good mental recall of number facts, which they use well in oral activities in lessons.

- 85 The rate of learning for pupils of all abilities is never less than good and impressive progress towards all of the attainment targets is made systematically. Throughout the school there has been a particular emphasis on pupils' growing skills and understanding of number, which is closely linked to the development in school of the numeracy strategy. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematical language and symbols, which is noticeable in all lessons. Pupils in all classes are given daily opportunities to practice mental arithmetic. Pupils enjoy working against the clock to increase their speed of recall and their rate of learning in lessons. Groups and classes are delighted to find they have improved not only on their previous time but that they have also beaten their agreed target. Pupils are encouraged to find different ways of working out problems and to explain their thinking. This was seen in a Year 3 lesson when pupils explained their different strategies at arriving at an answer to a number problem. All the teachers have high expectations of their pupils and ensure they are challenged with work well matched to meet their specific needs. Teachers' use of graded questioning that matches different pupils' abilities ensures that all pupils are actively involved in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs usually work with their peers on similar topics with additional support from skilled assistants.
- 86 In the lessons seen 80 per cent of the teaching was good with 20 per cent judged to be very good. Teachers' planning and subject knowledge is good. All teachers have undertaken thorough training for the numeracy strategy and more is scheduled as part of a planned review and evaluation process. Teachers identify what is to be learnt in lessons very clearly and they plan interesting activities to enable the aims and objectives to be realised and lessons proceed at a good pace. Teachers manage pupils very well, and promote very positive relationships throughout the school. Teachers' have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve and communicate these very well. Lessons are well structured and achieve a good balance between direct class teaching and pupils being actively engaged in purposeful and meaningful tasks well matched to their capabilities. This is clearly having a positive impact on pupils' rate of learning and progress as they move through the school. Teachers are working to provide increased opportunities to enable pupils to develop independent strategies for learning. However, during the inspection, some work was revision work in preparation for the coming National Curriculum tests and some of the pupils' new personal ideas were not always fully exploited.
- 87 The co-ordinator has been in post since January 2000 and has made a significant impact on the management of the subject in school. Teachers have observed her teaching and this practice has been shared and disseminated to improve teaching of the subject across the school. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning, work in the classroom and samples of pupils' work on a regular basis. There are well-established systems in place to assess pupils' rate of learning and progress as they move up through the school. The governors and the management team have addressed all the suggestions from the previous report and resolved the minor problems. Teachers now evaluate pupils' work at the end of lessons, and include many more investigative and problem solving approaches in planning their work for pupils. The school has been successful in raising the quality of pupils' number skills and applying this to other subjects across the curriculum. The work to implement the newly introduced numeracy strategy has had a beneficial impact on this strand of school improvement. There is an adequate range of good quality resources to support the subject. These are often shared between classes but are kept very well and are easily accessible for teachers and pupils. The present policy is clear and is supported very well by the revised scheme of work, introduced last September. Taking into account the successful introduction of the new strategy, improvements since the last inspection have been good. However, the school is not complacent and time has been allocated, in the school development plan, to review the scheme as part of its scheduled evaluation of the implementation of the new numeracy initiative.

SCIENCE

- 88 At the time of the previous inspection attainment was judged to be above the national average both at the end of Key Stage 1 and when pupils left the school at the age of 8. Teacher assessment in 1999 indicated that standards overall were in line with national averages but that a third of the pupils attained higher standards with an above average number attaining Level 3 which is above the expected level. School tests reflected this spread with a high percentage of the pupils in Year 3 attaining far higher than average levels in optional tests. This is a clear reflection on the limited time that summer born pupils have allocated for formal education before they are five. The numbers in the third class vary each year and in turn this affects the overall standards.
- 89 During the inspection, work seen in lessons and in the scrutiny of their work indicates that at the end of Key Stage 1 overall standards now are above the national average for pupils of this age. The vast majority of pupils has a sound vocabulary and understands the processes of investigation and experimentation to find out how the world around them works. They understand the conditions required to promote and sustain growth in plants, can explain the life cycles of butterflies and frogs and have a detailed knowledge of the habitats of a wide range of mini beasts. Pupils understand the different properties of materials and their suitability for various jobs such as carrying weights or building waterproof liners for ponds. They understand how electrical circuits function and are pleased to show how the solar powered water fountain performs. Pupils in Year 3 can plan and carry out experiments using coloured filters, lights, shadows and prisms and present clearly argued reasons for their findings. They enter their results into the computer and compare their work with that of other classes. Attainment is not affected by gender and pupils with special educational needs attain well, reaching the targets set for them. Attainment levels for almost all pupils are above those found in most schools nationally in Year 3. For the older third of pupils attainment is frequently well above that found nationally. Pupils are enjoying the increased emphasis on experimental and investigational work and their recorded findings; both in books and on computer disks reflect their interest and enthusiasm.
- 90 The learning over the two years of Key Stage 1 is good, based on first hand learning through doing things. By growing plants from seed to flower they learn the terms to apply to plants such as stem, leaf, flower and root. Using materials and objects familiar to them, most know how to identify and label, for instance, wood as hard, jelly as sweet, bricks as rough and arrive at a simple classification accordingly.
- 91 Pupils work hard and follow the clear instructions of the teachers, and as a result learn at a very good rate often above the expected level. All pupils respond very well to the school's well-known set of rules and gain new skills and knowledge in every lesson as they benefit from the imaginatively presented resources and the skills of the teachers.
- 92 Teaching throughout the school is almost always at least good and in most lessons seen was very good and is never less than satisfactory. In the lessons where teaching was particularly good children undertook stimulating and exciting work independently in pairs and small groups as well as in the whole class when instructed by the teacher. All of the teaching is based on clear planning which enables the pupils to understand the content and intent of the lesson. Good questioning testing pupils' thinking and responses ensures that knowledge and understanding are extended, and a brisk pace pushes learning along in a positive and exciting way. Where the teacher's enthusiasm is conveyed, as in the lessons about mini beasts very good learning is achieved enjoyably and knowledge is retained for use in subsequent enquiries as was seen in follow-up work when using the information technology suite. Information and communication technology is used very effectively throughout both key stages. Pupils demonstrate a good standard of scientific report writing using the skills learned in the literacy and numeracy sessions and the growing use of information technology enhances the finished product.

- 93 The comprehensive scheme of work ensures that all the required elements of the National Curriculum are covered. Records are accurately maintained and day-to-day assessment of learning is used effectively to ensure that all work is built systematically on what has gone before and that progress is recorded and tracked. This tracking of individual pupils' progress and the longer-term assessment strategies are well developed and are maintained in well organised progress books where work is compared with marked samples at different attainment levels and annotated each half-term. The very knowledgeable co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning and reviews pupils' work and has had time allocated to monitor science being taught by other teachers throughout the school. During the present year she has shared her own lessons with colleagues who have observed her techniques and methods as part of their own personal development.
- 94 In the past year greater rigour has been applied to promoting scientific terms and methods of work. This is successfully raising standards in all of the areas of the science curriculum. The revised and enhanced curriculum, with the good quality of teaching has produced higher levels of attainment. This attention to detail has enabled standards to rise to the present levels of attainment where the majority of pupils are consistently attaining above and about one third well above the expected levels. The improvement in teachers' understanding of how to teach all the required areas of science as enjoyable experiences has been good and for some teachers who were unsure of experimental methods the improvement has been very good. Resources are good and there are good links with partner schools that enable special items to be borrowed. The school makes very good use of the grounds for the development of work in science as shown by the work in the development of the pond and the natural wild area to support investigations.

ART

- 95 The previous inspection found that some pupil's attainments in art exceeded national standards. Pupils made good progress, showed increasing levels of skill, and responded well to their art lessons. Teaching was satisfactory overall. Areas for improvement included giving younger pupils more opportunity to make choices about their art work, to broaden first hand experiences of the work of artists, to keep more evidence of pupil's work and to improve monitoring and evaluation. The school has worked hard to remedy all of the areas of weakness and has done this successfully.
- 96 Pupils attain well throughout the school, with the majority achieving standards that are above those found in most schools nationally. A small group of pupils attain standards that are much higher than average and they are well supported and their talents challenged effectively. All pupils, including those who have special educational needs, make good progress and enjoy learning in their art lessons. Careful and detailed joint planning across the year groups ensures that all pupils participate in a wide range of creative activities. They are taught to use a variety of different tools and experience working with a range of media such as paint, clay, fabrics or pastels. They study the work of famous artists, and learn to identify the distinct features of their work. The artists' style is appraised and pupils then apply these in their own responses. A Year 2 class carefully studied the work of Monet and used paint, pastels and collage to create pictures of gardens and water in his style. Year 3 pupils were working in the style of LS Lowry, using a mixture of watercolour and pastels. They looked at Lowry's work and discussed his choice of colours and subjects.
- 97 Lively displays of art around the school demonstrate the wide range of activities undertaken by the pupils, and show links with other areas of the curriculum. Information and control technology is used for design, a collage of 'moon buggies' was made to display the work in design and technology in Year 2, and, pupils in the reception classes used their skills to create collages of light sources in Science. The work of Monet was used in English as a stimulus for extended writing in Year 2, and pupils stitched pictures of Celtic and Christian crosses for Religious Education in Year 3.

- 98 Teaching is good in art lessons and the teachers have good knowledge of the subject and National Curriculum requirements. Pupils are stimulated and excited by their teachers' great enthusiasm. Lesson planning is good, and is part of an ongoing programme of shared planning to develop a bank of well-supported teaching aids. Teachers set high expectations of the standards that they want their pupils to achieve. Very good assessments and evaluations of pupil's progress are made regularly which are used to ascertain the levels of attainment of pupils, their rate of progress and the quality of their completed work.
- 99 Very good use is made of additional adult helpers. In lessons, they work with particular groups of pupils, assisting with skills, materials or tools and techniques. The school is fortunate in being able to draw on the various talents of many parents and local artists, giving pupils opportunities for first hand experience of artists at work. One parent is particularly skilled at drawing in pastels, and helped the pupils working in the style of L S Lowry. A local potter had worked in clay with pupils, and fired their work in her kiln.
- 100 The co-ordinator has attended courses on the development of skills and subject management. She has implemented the skills learned to promote the development of the subject throughout the school. A comprehensive new policy has been prepared and implemented and the co-ordinator monitors her colleagues' teaching, teachers' planning, pupils working in class and displays of art each term. The co-ordinator is able to lead staff meetings, and provides good support for colleagues. Plentiful resources are of good quality, with a wide selection of materials, and a range of books. The co-ordinator manages a large budget, with careful links to the school development plan. There is systematic photographic evidence recording pupil's achievements in art and set against National Curriculum expected levels. Some of this is now entered onto computer disks to be used in the future for lesson planning and for checking pupils' attainment.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 101 It was possible to observe only a small number of design and technology lessons during the inspection. Additional evidence was obtained from examining pupils' work, photographs and planning books, wall displays, teachers' planning and discussions with staff and pupils. Overall standards of work are above the standards found in most schools for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and are also above when they leave the school at the end of Year 3. This is an improvement on the standards identified in the last report.
- 102 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils know the importance of designing a model before starting its construction. This was seen in planning and progress books as well as in a large display outside the Year 2 classrooms in which the pupils had carefully designed moon buggies. Pupils had used a variety of materials in the construction of their models and were developing their measuring, cutting, and fitting skills. Pupils realise that in the construction of a model they have to amend and modify their construction. This was seen in Year 1 work in which pupils had designed and made 'Houses', and had enjoyed using wood to make furniture for their houses. They had to measure carefully in order to make their furniture fit their particular house. Pupils also are developing the important skill of reviewing their design against their actual model and discussing how it could have been improved. They record their work carefully and review past designs when considering a new project using their own past experiences and the work of others in their class to inform the planning stage.
- 103 Pupils worked with teachers and one of the governors to design and plan the construction of the new computer suite. They understood the need for a clear evaluation of the purpose and requirements for their work before moving from the planning to the construction phase. Pupils evaluated more than one proposal before adding detail to the selected plan and working out exactly where each bank of machines, sockets and printers should be placed. They considered factors such as available natural light, security and accessibility in their planning before any orders for construction or any materials were placed. The written and photographic record of this work is proudly displayed in school.

- 104 By the time the pupils leave the school they have a very clear understanding of the importance of planning their design and selecting appropriate materials. Pupils of all abilities are able to evaluate and modify their model during its construction. For example, pupils in Year 3 have designed packages, which had to fulfil a particular purpose, such as holding Roman jewellery or keeping money in a portable container using fabrics and ceramics. Pupils in Year 3 also are developing their skills in listing the different materials needed in the construction of their projects. This was seen in their designs for playground equipment and the planning for the proposed play area for the children under five.
- 105 All of the teaching observed was judged to be good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and an understanding of the processes involved in the subject, which are passed successfully on to the pupils. The planning for design and technology ensures that pupils receive a wide range of experiences as they move up through the school. Pupils recall previous activities and they apply this knowledge and understanding in new situations. Pupils' pay appropriate attention to planning products carefully and are encouraged to review and modify their constructions. This ensures pupils are making good rates of learning in lessons and produce quality models in their lessons. Assessment strategies are practical and effective. Where it is impossible to keep models planning is retained and is filed with photographs of the completed work or display along with a teacher's record of the success or difficulties of the project. This method ensures that records are manageable and informative but pupils are able to take their completed work home.
- 106 The subject co-ordinator is knowledgeable and leads and manages the subject well. Since the last inspection she has worked hard to ensure that all the recommendations from the previous report were fully implemented with great success. She has worked with colleagues in their classrooms and they have worked with her, when she was teaching, in order to share expertise and build confidence. An important change has been to enable the subject to be taught as a whole class activity. There is a clear and effective policy and scheme of work for the subject and the resources for the subject are good.

GEOGRAPHY

- 107 Only a small amount of geography was seen during the week of the inspection although work in a number of information technology lessons was following up data collection undertaken in geography lessons and was part of the combined programme of study. Additional evidence was obtained from a careful scrutiny of pupils' work, wall displays, teachers' planning and in discussions with staff and pupils. The quality and range of work in books, in the assessment portfolios and knowledge and understanding explained and described by groups of pupils indicates that attainments and progress by the end of Year 2 and in Year 3 are overall above those expected at the end of Key Stage 1. They are also above those found in Year 3 in most schools when pupils move on to the middle school. This maintains the standards identified at the time of the previous inspection.

- 108 In Key Stage 1 pupils develop an awareness of the local area by naming places they passed on their way to school. They can contrast the differences between a quiet road and a busy one. For example, pupils in a Year 1 class undertook a traffic survey outside school and identified that the zigzag lines outside the school gates are there for safety reasons. Pupils are articulate when discussing reasons for high or lower traffic levels at different times of the day. Pupils also know how to use single figure co-ordinates to identify features on map, and can name the countries of the British Isles. They know the cardinal points of the compass and that there are different transport systems, such as the motorway system. By the time pupils leave the school they progress to a more advanced study of their local area. In Year 3 pupils can plan routes to a particular destination in Olney on a large-scale map. They can use a key to help make the choice of route easier to plan. Pupils know that the United Kingdom is part of Europe, and Europe is a continent. Pupils also have an understanding of the different seasons of the year and the weather associated with it. This was reinforced in lessons in Year 3, when pupils were entering data from a weather survey in geography as part of their work in an information technology and communication lesson. In the course of this work they compared observed and recorded conditions near to the school with other towns in England, Europe and the world using the Internet.
- 109 In the two geography lessons seen and in the linked work in information technology following up geography lessons, the teaching seen was judged to be of very good quality overall. Lessons are well planned, with good pace and work is well matched to pupils' abilities. This good teaching helps pupils learn quickly and purposefully as they progress through the school. It also helps pupils develop positive attitudes towards the subject. They enjoy discussing their work and explaining what they know about Olney and the wider environment. The subject makes a significant contribution to the development of literacy and numeracy in the school and is well supported by pupils' use of information technology. Pupils are encouraged to develop their speaking and listening skills, along with vocabulary associated with human and physical geography. The use of co-ordinates in Year 2 also makes a significant contribution to the development of mathematics in the school. Use is also made of information and communication technology to enhance learning in the subject. For example, in a Year 2 class pupils were researching different parts of the world whilst gathering information from different menus. Teachers assess pupils' work by collecting work and comparing it with marked samples that have agreed attainment levels. The agreed samples were collected from a group of schools where teachers worked together. The process is manageable and is a useful guide as to how pupils are progressing towards their set goals.
- 110 Geography makes a positive contribution to the pupils' moral, social and cultural development. For example, in a Year 2 class pupils were discussing the issues raised by the use of the motorcar and the need for no parking outside the school gate when pupils entered and left school, along with issues raised by pollution and damage to the ozone layer.
- 111 The subject is very well led and managed by a very enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator who has had some time allocated to support the work of colleagues in their classrooms. She has helped to maintain the profile of geography around school at a time of change when some foundation subjects have been given reduced status in some place. Her skills and ability to enthuse pupils are evident in the great number of displays, related to the subject in corridors and most classrooms. There is a clear policy and a comprehensive scheme of work for the subject, which are currently being updated to match the QCA guidelines. The resources for the subject, to support teaching and learning are good and are regularly supplemented by loans from local museums.

HISTORY

- 112 At the time of the last inspection attainment was judged to be above that expected nationally at both key stages and much was considered to be of a high standard. No history was being taught in the term in which the most recent inspection took place but there was considerable evidence available in displays around the school and in pupils' books. Additional information was gathered by scrutiny of teachers' planning and discussion with the co-ordinator, teachers and pupils. From the collected evidence the judgement is that standards at the end of Years 2 and 3 have been maintained at the same high level, above the national average that was seen at the time of the last inspection.
- 113 Pupils at Key Stage 1 are able to pose and answer historical questions about visits to a local museum where they used the artefacts of the past for baking and wash day activities. They understand the passage of time and are able to relate events to periods of history with accurate chronology. They are able to place in order photographs of artefacts from a range of historical periods. They are able to explain the dress and customs of times past. They know a wide range of useful strategies to use for seeking and recording evidence such as primary evidence gained from out of school visits and handling artefacts and examining secondary evidence from videos, research programs on the computer and books. Throughout all classes progress in pupils' knowledge and understanding of historical facts is good.
- 114 Pupils at Key Stage 2 maintain these effective learning strategies and make equally good progress over time. Pupils develop a deep knowledge about the past gained from a range of sources of evidence. They enjoy the visits of actors portraying Roman soldiers and people who invaded Britain in the past and whose clothes and menus the pupils have experienced. The study of the history of flight from the Mongolfier brothers' balloon to space flight is particularly well researched. All the pupils involved can explain the sequence and demonstrate how they obtained the relevant information from encyclopaedias, the Internet, research from books and photographs and their friendship with a local balloonist who visits the school regularly. Pupils enjoy history and consider themselves to be historians. When describing their work they handle artefacts carefully and they behave very thoughtfully.
- 115 The quality of teaching and learning in history was good at the time of the previous inspection and though no judgement can be made this time the pupils' knowledge displayed through conversation, discussion and written work indicates that they have been taught sensitively and thoroughly during the past term.
- 116 The history co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and knowledgeable and leads and monitors the subject very well. She has time allocated each year to monitor work in the classroom, supervise the planning and teaching of the subject and check the work produced by pupils in books and through displays. Colleagues state that they know she will be able to provide the answers to any of their questions about the subject. She readily provides advice and disseminates information from courses. Teaching, planning and learning are monitored systematically and assessment strategies are similar to those in other subjects and are manageable and effective.
- 117 The co-ordinator's particular skills, knowledge and enthusiasm have ensured that history is considered to be an important part of every child's heritage in the school. While the school has concentrated on literacy and numeracy she has devised a number of ways to maintain the position of history such as using it as a vehicle for longer passages of narrative or dialogue and for critical or evaluative writing. Pupils have written historical plays, kept diaries as if they were Roman soldiers and written exciting, if unappetising, menus filled with foods that we do not now enjoy. She has a personal interest in the subject and is developing ways in which the policy and scheme of work can be implemented even more effectively, wherever possible through first hand experiences linked to a range of visits or visitors.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 118 Information technology is an integral part of everyday life in the school and is not always taught as merely as a separate subject but throughout and alongside other work as required to support learning. Evidence was gleaned not only in information technology lessons but also through discussions with the subject co-ordinator, pupils and other teachers when they used information technology in lessons. At the time of the previous inspection attainment across the school was judged to be in line with that found in most schools nationally. Since then the standards in the school have improved.
- 119 At both key stages pupils attainments are above those expected nationally and many pupils at Key Stage 1 are working well above the standard found in most schools nationally. The computer suite was completed during the Easter holidays in 2000 and only put into full use at the start of the present term.
- 120 All pupils are able to use computers and tape-recorders to support their learning and increase their independence throughout the day with minimal support. The vast majority of pupils use information and communication technology to help communicate ideas. They use word-processors to convey their ideas in English and change font and print sizes to enhance their work. They can almost all edit their own work, save and print. Pupils in all classes can make choices from a wide selection of programs and menus and know where to find what they need to use. They know about information technology in the home and society such as microchips in washing machines, video recorders, fax machines and bar code readers. They can explain how computers and other technological discoveries are used in the home to make life easier. In Year 2 most pupils can import pictures into their own text with only very little prompting or help. They can collate data and enter it into tables, displaying bar graphs and pie charts. They can program remote vehicles and program a robotic vehicle to draw shapes and travel to specified areas of the workspace. By the end of the key stage almost all pupils can enter 10 or more instructions accurately to send the robot vehicle over distances to park in 'garages' wait and then continue its journey. Pupils can use programs to model imaginary situations and work out how to make changes. Pupils interrogate information using well organised structures and procedures as when organising their work and learning such as when in investigating the habitats of mini-beasts in Year 2.
- 121 In addition, at Key Stage 2, pupils are beginning to use a digital camera and import appropriate pictures into their work such as when helping to compile the school newsletter for their age or preparing work for their personal profiles. Pupils in Year 3 used stored information to compare data from a recent weather survey with similar information from other classes at other times. Many pupils are familiar with the Internet and some can use e-mail although the school's secure server system is not yet as well known as the ones they use at home.
- 122 Pupils at both key stages automatically look for evidence in the range of research programs available to them to support history, geography, mathematics, art, science, English, mathematics and music. Besides this they regularly use their understanding of the subject in order to developing their skills and awareness of its possibilities. It is this confident use of their skills, understanding and knowledge to support all learning that makes their achievements in the subject above expectations and well above those found in most other schools.
- 123 Learning and progress is very good in the reception classes and throughout the school. All pupils make good gains initially and build on these incrementally over the years. The relatively recent increase in facilities means that although pupils in Year 3 have good skills they have not had as so many good opportunities during their entire time in school as are now available to the younger pupils. Learning the wide range of possibilities and making good progress by pupils of all abilities by regular use and increasingly demanding programs presents an enjoyable challenge for all teachers and involved adults.

- 124 The policy and the scheme of work ensure that all procedures are thoroughly grounded in the classes for younger pupils before they move on. The organisation and planning for teaching skills in order, with increasing difficulty, has been built up over the past two or three years and all knowledge is consolidated through use and sometimes through well-organised play. These new steps were not fully in place when pupils now in Year 3 were still only 4 or 5. Some pupils do better than might be expected because the ethos of the school expects everyone to succeed and work is staged and planned to ensure that they do. Pupils with special educational needs make progress alongside other pupils.
- 125 The quality of teaching of information technology itself was never less than good for all pupils at both key stages. Supplementary evidence of good teaching was obtained as teachers and pupils used information technology and not as purely information technology lessons. All teachers have at least good knowledge and understanding of the power of information technology and their expectations for pupils' using it to support work across the curriculum was high. Planning for information and communication technology to support other work and planning to increase pupils' skills and understanding is equally high across the school. The methods and organisation are common in all classes and result from high quality in-service training recent years.
- 126 The curriculum fully meets and regularly exceeds requirements. The scheme of work follows the policy guidelines and is planned very effectively to provide organised steps to build on skills and ensure steady progress. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are thorough and detailed and list skills taught how knowledge and understanding is checked and includes annotated examples of pupils' work. Individual and group/class assessment is used both on a weekly and half-termly basis to inform all curriculum planning, both on the whole class level and to amend the work planned. Included in the schemes of work are opportunities for whole class sessions in the new computer suite to extend use of the networked system and to get more use of the World Wide Web for learning.
- 127 The collaboration of pupils within groups sharing listening centres and the computers is good. Pupils always behave well and enjoy the independence of working at their own speed in a socially harmonious way. They discuss options and even when they disagree about an answer use the system well to come to an agreed decision in the end. The use of the subject to extend learning in art, music, geography, religious education and history adds to pupils' cultural awareness.
- 128 The leadership of the subject is excellent. It is well organised and the co-ordinator shares a wealth of personal knowledge and understanding with colleagues and encourages a commitment to use information technology to promote learning across the curriculum. Her skills are valued not only in the school but also in the wider community of schools in the authority. Monitoring of the subject in classes throughout the school has been carefully managed over recent years and there has been good support for other teachers to improve their teaching and to develop their personal skills, knowledge, understanding and confidence. Curriculum development and planning is ongoing. Monitoring to ensure the full implementation of the scheme of work and work in cross-curriculum development is good. The implementation of planned work is consistent across the school and the co-ordinator and all teachers evaluate pupil's work to check that everyone is achieving targets. The present priority is to extend the effectiveness of the new computer suite, funded by the National Grid for Learning. The scheme of work, manuals for guidance prepared by the co-ordinator and the ethos for the subject are very good and totally reflect the school's aims. There is a strong commitment to high achievement within an effective learning environment. There are very good relationships and equality of opportunity for all pupils. All statutory requirements are being met.
- 129 Teachers and classroom assistants have good knowledge of the subject and their skills and confidence to use it across the curriculum are high. Plans are already in place to provide additional training for the professional development of teachers now that the newly purchased equipment is in place. The accommodation and learning resources already allow a good standard of work to be achieved and resources to support the curriculum using information technology are very good. The resources are good overall.

MUSIC

- 130 At the time of the last report music was judged to be above the national average both at the end of Key Stage 1 and when pupils left the school at the end of Year 3. The attainment levels at the present time maintain this high level. They are good at the end of Year 2 and very good at the end of Year 3 where there is more specialist music teaching. Pupils receive a good musical education, particularly in performance skills. Groups of pupils learn to play the recorder to a high standard and give public performances. Pupils listen intently when the opportunity is provided to listen to music from composers from different cultures.
- 131 Pupils, including those with special educational needs learn effectively and overall make good progress in music at Key Stage1 and very good progress in Year 3 where there is more specialised teaching. At Key Stage 1,pupils clap rhythmically calling out their name in time. They listen quietly, eyes closed, to the sounds in the room and then describe them. Pupils are aware that music creates a mood and, in their singing and dancing to of an African folk songs, they demonstrate their awareness of mood. They carefully select and play percussion instruments to accompany their singing, which is expressive and shows an understanding of loud and soft.
- 132 Pupils in Year 3 at Key Stage 2, correctly identify the instruments of the orchestra. Pupils know that they can be used to create different effects. Pupils are familiar with the elements of music and, for example, recognise and talk about pitch and texture. They clap and sing complex rhythms and sing answering phrases for the rhythms of others.
- 133 When presented with any opportunity pupils at both key stages sing well. They enjoy vigorous action songs as well as gentle more reflective songs. In their part singing and their demonstration of ostinati they convey a strong sense of meaning. They sing in tune, with good expression and phrasing. Each year the pupils in Year 3 visit the elderly people of the town and sing and dance for their pleasure and entertainment. Pupils have many opportunities to compose their own music using a program on the computers and many write down what they know, and therefore find ways of recording and securing their learning.
- 134 The teaching observed was always at least good and, during the inspection when music specialists led some lessons, supported by other class teachers, it was very good or excellent. Teaching is shared between a temporary specialist teacher and the classroom teachers. This is a good working arrangement that ensures a satisfactory balance in the range of musical activities and the specialist's skills are used as valuable in-service training for all the other teachers. Teachers are confident in their musical knowledge and plan lessons well. They successfully balance creativity and control, and allow some scope for pupils in Year 3 to develop ideas independently. Lessons begin promptly and are activity based, which stimulates the creative impulse. Teachers have a good working knowledge of what the pupils know, understand and can do and use this to plan the music programme. Teachers use the resources well and pupils have many opportunities to make music using the instruments. Relationships are good. Pupils behave very well and with the teachers enjoy making music together. In the absence of a music co-ordinator the post has been covered by a non-specialist who has maintained the work begun by the teacher who has recently left the school. The previous co-ordinator monitored teaching and planning and left sufficient notes to enable the subject to be well managed until a new appointment is made by the governors before the next academic year.
- 135 Pupils regularly demonstrate their prowess at events such as Christmas concerts and summer shows. All kinds of music and dance are welcome elements in the curriculum and adequately reflect a wide cultural diversity. Pupils enjoy singing in the hall and in larger groups outside under the trees.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 136 During the week of the inspection, the physical education lessons observed were dance, gymnastics and games activities. Discussions with pupils indicate that the school provides a balanced programme of physical education, which fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils learn skills for games, participate in gymnastics activities, and respond to music through dance. All pupils in the school have swimming lessons during the summer term in the school's outdoor pool, which is subsidised by the organization of friends of the school.
- 137 Pupils of all abilities learn very well as they move up through the school. All pupils make satisfactory progress overall with good progress observed in some lessons in dance and in games. Pupils develop and refine their skills and perform with increasing confidence and competence. They also began to develop an understanding of the effects of exercise on the body. By the end of Key Stage 1, and when pupils leave the school their overall attainment is in line with expectations for the respective age groups although attainment in dance is above that found in most schools nationally. The standards attained in Year 3 are similar to those in Key Stage 1 overall but records indicate that their attainment in swimming is better than for pupils at Key Stage 1. The standards identified in the last report have been maintained.
- 138 In Key Stage 1, pupils learn to move and control their actions in various ways, using space effectively. In Year 1, pupils explore different ways of using wide and short shapes and then changing to thin and tall shapes when travelling round the hall. In Year 2, pupils become more adept at planning and controlling their movements with increasing awareness of responding to teachers' instructions and suggestions to improve and refine their performances. For example, in a Year 2 lesson pupils were creating curved movements when travelling, and with practice and teacher intervention learnt that better curved movements were achieved by leading with a shoulder into their movement. Pupils also learn that individual skill and competence is required in games. Pupils in a Year 2 lesson were developing their hand and eye co-ordination using a racket and beanbag, which progressed into working with a partner to improve their passing and striking skills. During the key stage pupils develop awareness that exercise has an effect on their bodies and they must practise on a regular basis to become more accomplished and successful. All teachers and pupils dress appropriately for physical education lessons.
- 139 By the time the pupils leave the school, pupils develop, refine and modify their skills in games and dance. Teachers encourage them to evaluate their performance with appropriate interventions and suggestions. This was observed in a Year 3 games lesson, in which pupils were encouraged to keep the ball under control whilst striking it with a racket tennis. Due emphasis was placed on the pupils developing their hand and eye co-ordination. Pupils are also able to practise, improve and refine their performance in dance using expressive movements. This was seen in a Year 3 lesson, when pupils worked together in a group to create a sequence of movements linked to a theme on African dance.
- 140 The subject makes a positive contribution to the pupils' social development in school. Speaking and listening skills are also well developed which helps promote literacy in the school.

- 141 The quality of teaching observed was good with 1 lesson judged to be very good when in games the teacher used his own skills and enthusiasm to good effect motivating pupils to perform very well. All lessons begin and end in an orderly manner and contain appropriate warm-up and cool down activities. All teachers have good subject knowledge, and lessons are well-planned, organised and structured to enable pupils to build up skills in a safe working situation. Teachers set challenges that make pupils think and expand their imagination and extend their physical abilities, provide clear instruction and explanations and encourage pupils to refine and improve their skills. Lessons have a good pace and teachers' management of pupils in lessons is good. Teachers effectively encourage all pupils to participate in every aspect of the subject. Questioning and pupil demonstration is used well and pupils are encouraged to improve their personal performances, for example, in gymnastics. Teachers assess pupils' abilities and progress by means of a set of simple evaluation sheets from a commercial scheme. It is practical and works well.
- 142 At the present time the headteacher is acting as co-ordinator and the school has appointed a new teacher who will lead this subject from the autumn term. There is a suitable range of good quality resources and apparatus and the school there is a spacious hall as well as grassed and hard-surfaced areas. There is a clear policy and scheme of work, which are scheduled in the school development plan for review during this year. A strong feature of the subject is the school's country dancing in which pupils participate in local community events in Olney. Pupils participate in dances from a wide range of other countries and learn of the culture and dress of the traditional dancers.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 143 The previous inspection found that religious education had a high profile in the school. Pupil's attainment was above average, and they made good progress. The teaching was good and skilled use of sensitive questioning encouraged discussion and reflection in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Pupils showed an increasing maturity in their responses, and listened to each other's ideas. The school was recommended to adopt the Year 2 method of assessment, and to improve the stock of resources and artefacts. The assessment strategies have proved to be successful in all classes and the range of materials has been extended. The subject is still managed well and the improvements have all been effective.
- 144 All of the work in classes across the school follows the recommendations contained in the locally agreed syllabus for pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. Pupils attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in Year 2 and in classes in Year 3 is above the level found in most schools nationally and progress is good.
- 145 In the religious education lessons observed in the reception classes and at both key stages during the inspection, the teaching was predominantly good. Lessons were carefully planned, and learning objectives shared with the pupils. Teachers establish an atmosphere where pupils feel secure and where they are able explore their feelings and responses. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their experiences or even on a particular object as a focus for their thinking. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subject and receive good support from the co-ordinator who is always willing to help with lesson planning. Themes in assembly, whilst not part of the religious education curriculum, are deliberately linked with the content of each week's planned lessons to establish a whole school awareness of what pupils are learning.
- 146 The scheme of work presently follows the Local Agreed Syllabus for religious education and the guidelines in the QCA documentation and there are plans to develop this further. Pupils study Christianity, and several major world religions. Pupils in Year 3 classes know about many traditions of the Jewish faith in particular Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. They have learned how this links with rules for behaviour and asking for forgiveness. Pupils studied how Hindus celebrate Diwali and can explain how different traditions all have different festivals of light.

- 147 Assessments of pupil's work are made regularly each term, using a well-organised process and a set of criteria agreed by the staff and governors. The co-ordinator attends all suitable courses, leads staff training very effectively and monitors teaching in a regular but infrequent pattern. Religious education has not been a focus subject since the introduction of the new national initiatives but all new teachers are visited by the co-ordinator. The school has a good range of artefacts available to all staff to support pupil's learning in religious education. These are regularly supplemented by loans of extra material from a local study centre.
- 148 Religious education continues to play a very important role in the school, and makes a significant contribution to the pupil's personal and social development. 'Spirituality across the curriculum' is a current focus on the School Development Plan. Staff aim to develop the spiritual elements of life. Good work is already in evidence in the sensitive way pupils are encouraged to reflect and think about their actions, and their world. They willingly discuss and share their ideas with each other.