

INSPECTION REPORT

MEADOWSIDE INFANT SCHOOL

Burton Latimer

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121901

Headteacher: Mrs D Perry

Reporting inspector: Kevin Hodge
18466

Dates of inspection: 11-13 June 2002

Inspection number: 196191

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant school
School category:	County
Age range of pupils:	4 to 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Meadowside Infant School Park Road Burton Latimer Kettering Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN15 5QY
Telephone number:	01536 723985
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Melville Smith
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18466	Kevin Hodge	Registered inspector	Science Information and communication technology Music Physical education English as an additional language	How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed? What the school should do to improve further?
15181	Meg Hackney	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes and values How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20596	Martin Lester	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Mathematics Design and technology History.	How well are the pupils taught?
23566	John Iles	Team inspector	English Art and design Geography Religious education Special educational needs	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Meadowside Infant School is situated within the town of Burton Latimer, near Kettering. It mainly serves the local town, although some children come from a wider area. The pupils come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, and enter the school with a wide range of ability. At present, there are 146 pupils on roll arranged in six classes. During the past year, three children left the school and three arrived. There are 21 children on the special needs register, and two who have statements of special educational needs. No children have free school meals, but a significant number are entitled to them. None of the pupils come from ethnic minorities or speak English as an additional language. The school has spacious grounds, which it shares with the junior school next door.

The school improvement plan and other documents highlight the various aims of the school. They include the encouragement of positive attitudes to life, acknowledgement of the different strengths of the individual, promotion of good relationships and the development of good links with the community.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a good education for its pupils in a very caring environment, where each child is valued highly. The headteacher, appointed since the last inspection, gives good direction to the work of the school. The governing body is supportive and knowledgeable about the school and gives a clear steer to its work. The Foundation Stage curriculum and teaching give the children a good start to their education, particularly in number, reading and their personal and social development. By the time the pupils are seven, they reach the expected standards in all subjects, and make particularly good progress in mathematics where higher than expected standards are attained. The pupils have a sound range of speaking and listening skills, and good scientific knowledge. They behave very well and are eager to learn. Taking into account the standards reached by the pupils, the quality of teaching and the curriculum provided, the school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The reception pupils attain above average standards in reading, early mathematics and their personal and social development.
- By the time they are seven, the pupils attain above average standards in mathematics and reading.
- The teaching is good throughout and often very good in the reception classes.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership for the staff, pupils and governors.
- The governors support the school well.
- It provides a very good social and moral education and elicits high standards of behaviour and attitudes from the pupils.
- It cares for the pupils and develops their relationships with each other very well.

What could be improved

- The planning to promote the pupils' writing skills.
- Some assessment procedures.
- The presentation of the pupils' work.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1997. The key issues highlighted the need to improve the planning of subjects and the teaching, and to raise the pupils' attainment. The teaching has improved in quality and is now good throughout the school. Improvements have been made in subjects such as information and communication technology and mathematics. In the last report, the behaviour of the pupils was identified as sound overall. The headteacher, appointed since the last inspection, has improved the overall leadership of the school, and the pupils' behaviour and relationships are now very good. Overall the school has made good improvement since the last inspection.

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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	C	B	A	C
Writing	A	D	C	E
Mathematics	C	D	A	B

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The youngest pupils in the school make sound progress in their learning. In their mathematical, physical, and reading activities they make particularly good progress, and exceed the levels expected. There was some variation of attainment between the girls' and boys' writing in last year's test results. The school recognised this and has taken action to raise the pupils' attainment in writing generally. The results in last year's national tests were well above expectations in reading and mathematics, and in line with expectations in writing. In the teachers' assessment of science, the pupils' achievements were very high in comparison to the results nationally. When compared to similar schools, the pupils did well in mathematics, were average in reading, but were well below average in their writing. The inspection evidence indicates that the pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected in English and science, and higher standards are attained in mathematics. Early indications from this year's test results suggest that the results are broadly similar to last year's.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The pupils have very good attitudes to each other and to the staff of the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The pupils play together well on the playground. They are sensible in the hall at lunchtimes and work quietly during lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The school promotes the personal development of the pupils very well.
Attendance	Good. The pupils arrive punctually for school, and move quickly and quietly to lessons.

The pupils develop very good relationships with each other and the staff and work together very well. This contributes to the quiet and hardworking ethos found in the school. The pupils are very attentive, hard working and can be trusted to work alone. The daily routines are well established and enable the pupils to settle down quickly to their activities.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	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 teaching is good overall and is a strength of the school. In well over three-quarters of lessons seen during the inspection, the teaching was either good or better. It was consistent in nearly all classes, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The teachers have appropriate expectations and manage the pupils very well throughout the school. There is some variation in the way the pupils' work is marked and good presentation is not consistently promoted in all classes. Nearly all teachers are confident in the subjects that they teach, the planning of their lessons and organization of the activities. This contributes to the good levels of behaviour found within lessons and the above average standards reached in mathematics and reading.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school successfully provides a broad and balanced curriculum, enhanced by some extra-curricular clubs. There are insufficient opportunities to develop the pupils' writing within other subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The arrangements for identifying the pupils with special educational needs are good. These pupils are given close support and help both individually and within groups.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Currently, there are no pupils who have English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The caring ethos is promoted effectively throughout the school, and there are very good arrangements to promote the pupils' social and moral development. The school develops the pupils' spiritual and cultural skills satisfactorily.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school carefully monitors the well-being of its pupils, both academically and pastorally. The members of staff know the pupils very well and provide good levels of care. There are weaknesses in the way the school collects and uses assessment information.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and gives the pupils a wide experience in the statutory subjects of the National Curriculum. It is enhanced with a suitable range of extra-curricular clubs, such as the 'jump rope', computer, mathematics and art and craft clubs. The lack of planning for information and communication technology and music noted in the last inspection has been addressed well. However, the pupils have insufficient opportunities to use their writing skills in other subjects.

There is good equality of opportunity for all pupils, and the school has an ‘inclusive’ ethos in which visitors feel valued and welcomed. Assessment information is not always recorded in the most helpful ways or well used, but the school is aware of this and the procedures are under review. The links with the parents are good, and the majority of them support the school with little reservation. The school provides the parents with a range of information and the arrangements for open evenings are generally satisfactory. The parents regularly contribute to the life of the school by helping within school and at special events.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides very clear and decisive leadership. She has given the staff greater responsibility for development of their subjects and enabled them to contribute more effectively to the management of the school. Consequently, the long term planning is good and gives clear priorities for action. This is leading to improvements.
How well the governors fulfill their responsibilities	Good. Their links with the school are well established and their committee structures are particularly well organised. They fulfil their ‘critical friend’ role well.
The school’s evaluation of its performance	Good. The analysis of the test results to discover specific areas of weakness in the pupils’ work, such as the boys’ writing, is leading to improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The use of resources is good. The decision to improve the office area and replace windows is appropriate. The school has implemented the principles of ‘best value’ in its financial and planning activities. It gives good value for money.

The school is very well led by the headteacher, and the various members of staff now work as a team in running the school. Since her appointment, the headteacher has reviewed the priorities of the school carefully and sensitively. She has involved both staff and governors effectively. The day-to-day and the longer-term finances of the school are managed effectively. The playground and playing fields provide a pleasant and useful environment.

PARENTS’ AND CARERS’ VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children like school and are making good progress. • The good behaviour and the values that the school promotes. • The strong leadership and management of the school. • They are welcomed into school and are well informed by good quality newsletters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A better range of activities outside of lessons to include pupils in the reception and Year 1 classes. • A more structured approach towards hearing pupils read and choosing books to ensure progression. • Opportunity to change clubs more frequently.

The majority of parents feel welcome, well informed and involved in a positive partnership in their children’s learning. The range of after-school clubs for Year 2 pupils is good and the inspectors do not agree with the parents’ views. The school makes good provision for hearing pupils read and assists them well in the

selection of books. Many parents use the home/school reading records as a means of communication between home and school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 When the children enter school, their attainment covers a wide range, but is broadly average. However, their attainment in writing is slightly lower than average. The children make good progress in the reception classes and when they enter Year 1 standards exceed expectations in reading and early mathematics and in their personal, social, emotional and physical development. In all areas of learning, their attainment is at least in line with expectations. When involved in role-play groups, for example in the hard hat area, the children interact very sociably. They develop their knowledge of number well, and many can read simple texts. The children develop their agility in floor work and their hand to eye co-ordination when using small equipment. Their investigations using the school's environmental areas and the local play areas develop their curiosity well.
- 2 At the time of the last inspection, the standards in key stage 1 were in line with the national expectation in all subjects, but in information and communications technology the pupils made unsatisfactory progress and did not reach the expected levels. There have been improvements since then, particularly in teaching the use of computers, which have been increased in number. The pupils now reach the expected standards by the time they are seven.
- 3 In the national tests for seven-year-olds last year, the results were average in reading, below average in writing, but in the top five percent of schools in mathematics. This was an advance in mathematics and writing from the below-average levels obtained the previous year. In reading, the results also improved from above average to well above average, and were in the top five percent of schools nationally. Until last year, the trends in improvement had generally matched the national picture for seven-year-olds. However, the results in writing dipped significantly in 2000, before rising again last year. In reading and mathematics, the school has remained above the national trend. The boys fare less well in their writing, falling consistently behind the girls. The school has recognised this, and has tackled the issue this year. In the teachers' assessments of science, they reached very high levels and were in the top five percent of schools nationally.
- 4 Comparisons with similar schools show a positive picture in most areas, but the results reached were well below average in the pupils' writing. The school has evidence to indicate that these pupils entered the school with lower than average attainment and that group of pupils suffered disruption because of staffing changes in the year leading up to the tests. The school's focus was also on other curriculum areas. This dip in attainment comes after two years where it compared favourably with other schools.
- 5 The inspection findings indicate a positive picture of attainment by present pupils throughout the school. They are reaching higher than expected standards in mathematics, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The pupils are reaching a satisfactory level in their speaking, listening and reading skills. In their writing, the pupils' attainment is also generally satisfactory, but their skills are not utilised and developed well in other subjects. By the time they are seven the pupils respond confidently to questions, and put forward their ideas well in discussions. The national literacy strategy has had a significant effect on improving standards attained, along with good teaching evident throughout the school. The school's concentration on improving the boys' confidence and skills in their writing is beginning to be evident in their work and in their willingness to write more readily.

- 6 In mathematics, the pupils attain the standards that are above those expected nationally for pupils aged seven. Most pupils have a secure grasp of mental arithmetic techniques and can count on and back in tens from any two-digit number. They know what each figure in a two-digit number represents, and most work confidently with numbers up to 100. The higher attaining pupils count on or back in hundreds from three-digit numbers and work securely in thousands. In both mental and written calculations, they recognise number sequences involving odd and even numbers and are clearly aware that subtraction is the inverse of addition.
- 7 In science, the pupils attain standards in line with national expectations throughout the school, but the work seen does not reflect the standards assessed by the teachers. There is some evidence to indicate the assessments may be over generous and the school is developing collections of work to assist teachers in moderating and judging the standards. By the time they are seven, the pupils know the simple effects of magnets, the properties of simple circuits and the conditions needed for plant growth.
- 8 In the remaining subjects of the curriculum, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, music, physical education, and religious education, the pupils attain standards that are in line with the national expectation by the time they are seven. In art and design, the pupils attain well and good examples of painting and work with three-dimensional materials were in evidence. In design and technology, the pupils generate good ideas, and know different ways to join various materials. In geography, have a good understanding of distant places, such as Australia, and attain sound standards throughout the school. Their attainment in information and communication technology has also improved since the last inspection and they apply these skills in other subjects, such as English and geography. In history, the pupils attain sound standards throughout the school. They learn about important historical events and people such as Captain Cook, and their studies are linked effectively to their work in geography. In music, the pupils attain expected standards throughout the school. They sing appropriately in assemblies and within class activities. In physical education, the pupils reach appropriate standards; they develop good ball skills, and in gymnastics they move carefully between different heights in a controlled way. In religious education, the pupils reach the expected standards outlined in the locally agreed syllabus.
- 9 The pupils with special educational needs make good progress by the age of seven. The special needs coordinator, in consultation with class teachers, sets appropriate targets for them. Consequently, the pupils work well within the lessons helped by the teaching assistants and the quality of the teachers' planning. Very good provision to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils is also a contributory factor to the pupils' achievements in their reading and mathematical work. All pupils have sufficient, readily available materials to help them progress.
- 10 There are clear signs that the higher expectations in regard to standards of writing are beginning to raise attainment, particularly for the boys.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 11 In all classes, the pupils have very good attitudes towards learning. Their behaviour and attitudes have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now strengths of the school. The parents are very positive in their view that pupils behave well. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and children who are under five, are enthusiastic and eager to be involved. During lessons most pupils concentrate well on their work, and develop an independent approach towards their learning. They work well together in groups and share resources sensibly and willingly. The pupils know what is expected of them and they respond well to the school's code of conduct. The vast majority demonstrate good self-discipline, and they are polite, very friendly and co-operative. In the

Foundation Stage, the children settle quickly into the very well organised routines of the reception class and are happy and secure.

- 12 The school is a very pleasant and orderly environment where the pupils are caring and supportive of each other. During lessons, the pupils are keen to answer questions and to share their own ideas and opinions. They listen attentively to their teachers during lessons, assemblies and other activities, but they are also confident to ask questions and to share their own experiences. For example, during a geography lesson about Australia in Year 2, the pupils became very excited as the teacher read an account of a governor's visit to Australia accompanied by their teddy bear known as 'Suitcase Sam'. They were very keen and confident in sharing their previous knowledge of the Sydney Opera House, Harbour Bridge and the Great Barrier Reef and in using the globe to locate the major cities.
- 13 The pupils' behaviour is very good throughout the school. They respond very well to the school's positive system of reward and celebration of achievement for everyone. They value the reward of stickers and certificates and are keen to get their name in the 'Smiley Book' for academic and personal success. During the weekly celebration assembly, selected pupils receive certificates from the headteacher and speak confidently about their successful work. They respond well and with growing self-esteem to the spontaneous applause from the rest of the school. Through the good provision for personal and social education, the pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and the effects of their actions on others. The pupils' behaviour and good manners are particularly impressive at lunchtime when they sit in groups at tables in the hall to eat their packed lunches. In the playground, pupils of all ages play very well together and enjoy the good range of games that have recently been marked out for them. No incidents of either bullying or harassment were seen during the inspection, and the pupils are confident that any problems are dealt with promptly by staff. There have been no recent exclusions.
- 14 Relationships throughout the school are very good. In all classes, the pupils have a happy relationship with their teachers and support assistants who listen carefully to what they have to say. The pupils are caring and supportive of each other during lessons and outside in the playground. They are well aware of the school's policy for inclusion and those with special educational needs are very well supported and integrated into all activities. These very good relationships make a strong contribution to the pupils' personal and academic progress.
- 15 The pupils' personal development is very good and is closely linked to opportunities for independence and the development of initiative and responsibility. This has also improved since the last inspection. The pupils in all classes act confidently and willingly as monitors. For example, they take responsibility for tidying the library, delivering registers to the office, watering plants, filling the bird bath, setting out chairs for assemblies and putting away resources. During a physical education lesson, the children in a reception class worked well as a group when getting out the apparatus, and supported each other well in taking turns to use the equipment. The older pupils confidently take responsibility for some aspects of their own learning, such as researching additional information at home and at school. The pupils respond positively when visiting places of educational and cultural interest within the local environment. This also has a beneficial effect on their personal and social development.
- 16 Attendance at 96.1 per cent is very good and is above the national average. Unauthorised absence is low. The vast majority of the pupils come eagerly and punctually to school. Registration and lessons start on time, and there is an efficient and well-ordered beginning to the day with pupils settling quickly into well-established routines. This has a very positive effect on their attitude towards school and on their achievements and progress.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 17 The quality of teaching observed was good throughout the school, particularly in the Foundation Stage. Approximately one fifth of lessons were satisfactory and just over a further half were good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The remaining lessons were very good, indicating a significant improvement since the last inspection when only a very few lessons (3%) were judged to be very good or better, and nearly 20% were unsatisfactory.
- 18 The headteacher, appointed since the last inspection, has worked very hard to ensure that the children consistently experience good quality teaching that promotes high standards. For example, consistently good teaching in both the Foundation Stage and in mathematics throughout the school is raising standards. Furthermore, standards in information and communication technology have improved from unsatisfactory to satisfactory as a result of better teaching. The headteacher is supported by the senior teachers as they seek to raise standards in other subjects and areas of learning, such as writing. Although there is clear evidence of good teaching in many subjects across the curriculum, this has yet to fully influence standards in general.
- 19 The teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum. Similarly, the Foundation Stage teachers have a good knowledge of the needs of the youngest pupils. The overall effect is that the teachers show confidence and enthusiasm in most of their teaching. At the time of the previous inspection, some teachers were judged to lack confidence in several subjects. Furthermore, the teachers manage their pupils very well and have established a productive ethos for learning in the classrooms. The effective deployment of the teaching assistants supports the pupils' learning to good effect, particularly those with special educational needs. They are included well in the lessons, and usually have help from one of the adults in the class. They do well in relation to their prior attainment, and are making up ground as they move through the school. Another positive feature of the teaching is the way in which the teachers use the school's resources well to enhance the learning potential of many of the lessons.
- 20 The school has successfully embraced the guidance offered by the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. Consequently, the teaching of the basic skills of reading and numeracy is frequently good. The co-ordinator for mathematics, along with the headteacher, has carried out a thorough analysis of the pupils' performance in the subject and has used this to help to determine the content and focus of lessons. As a result, the lessons are carefully planned and briskly paced. It is clear that throughout the school the teachers are successfully developing the pupils' ability to read. In particular, they are effective in providing the pupils with the knowledge of the sounds of letters that help them to tackle unfamiliar words in print. This is particularly so in the reception classes. The coordinator for English has only been in post for one term. However, she has identified the need to provide the pupils in Key Stage 1 with more opportunities to write both at length and within other subjects. Although the teachers generate meaningful opportunities to write across a wide range of subjects they do not consistently develop them. For example, an exciting and effective lesson in Year 1 involving scrutiny of historical photographs of seaside resorts did not result in any recording of the pupils' very thoughtful interpretations of the evidence. The presentation of work is not always consistently good and varies between classes. In addition, there is general recognition amongst the staff that the teaching of handwriting is an area in need of review in order to raise standards. **(These issues are both key issues for action.)**
- 21 The consistent application of the school behaviour policy contributes positively to the effective management of the pupils. For example, all the adults in the Foundation Stage work well together and offer good models of courtesy for the children to emulate. They have consistent approaches to behaviour management and this helps the children to understand what is expected of them and how to

behave well. The teachers in Years 1 and 2 manage their pupils very well and have established a productive ethos for learning. Throughout the school, the pupils are pleased to contribute their ideas, opinions and feelings and enjoy responding to challenging questions within a secure environment.

- 22 The teachers often make good links between subjects. This usually results in exciting learning that provides genuine opportunities for the pupils to apply their basic skills in reading, numeracy and computing in other subjects. Tasks involving reading, research and the learning of spellings and tables are all used appropriately as homework to support the learning in school. For example, in Year 2 the pupils applied their reading and computing skills to good effect as they carried out research about Captain Cook as homework. They then compared different sources of information and agreed some common facts about Captain Cook in a follow-up history lesson. This topic was also carefully planned to include geographical study. In a similar way, the Year 1 pupils compared their own weather recording charts with pictograms they had produced using a computer program in order to identify the most effective method for showing the data.
- 23 The teachers use the school's resources well. For example, in all mathematics lessons observed, a range of simple, helpful equipment was always readily available to provide practical support for the pupils. Similarly, the computers are well used to support learning across most subjects. The teachers also make good use of resources available in the local area and further a field. For example, when studying play structures the pupils in Year 1 visited the adjoining play park in order to identify the materials used and to determine how the apparatus had been constructed. This brought the design and technology lesson to life and enabled the pupils to apply their scientific and artistic knowledge as they closely observed and drew the structures. Similarly, visits are made to places of educational interest such as museums.
- 24 On occasions, very good teaching was observed in all year groups, but most frequently in the reception classes. These lessons were characterised by very thoughtfully planned learning objectives that met the needs of all pupils and built appropriately upon their previous learning. For example, in reception sessions listening to music, discussing a bible story and investigating shape and rhyming text, the children were enthralled by the teacher's carefully chosen demonstrations and the practical activities provided. Likewise, in lessons in science and ICT in Year 1 and mathematics in Year 2 there was a real purpose to the learning that built systematically upon the pupils' prior attainment. Very good use was also made of the pupils' ability to gather and record data in a variety of ways including charts and graphs in both written and computer-generated form.
- 25 All pupils, irrespective of gender, are involved well in the teaching, show positive attitudes and are keen to learn. Although most of the pupils are now making reasonable progress and achieving satisfactorily, there are some differences across subjects. For example, progress is good in mathematics, but in history and geography it is less marked. Although the quality of the teaching in the history and geography lessons observed was often good, both subjects are taught too infrequently and it is this that restricts the pupils' progress. In addition, although the teachers regularly mark the pupils' work across the curriculum they do not consistently provide clear advice about how to improve the work. In several subjects, their written comments offer general praise but do not help the pupils to know how well they have met the aims of that particular lesson. **(This is part of a key issue for action.)**

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

- 26 The school provides an interesting and varied curriculum that is suitably broad and in the main well balanced. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of experiences that help to stimulate the pupils' interest in subjects such as history and science. The curriculum has a good effect on the pupils'

learning. Since the previous inspection, the school has worked hard to improve areas of the curriculum. The planning for the subjects is linked to the appropriate local schemes of work, some of which are under further review. They provide satisfactory guidance for teachers. The school has adopted the national strategies for literacy and numeracy and has been involved in effective staff training that has enabled the teachers to become competent in these aspects of the school's work. Although literacy and numeracy skills are taught and applied in other subjects the pupils have insufficient opportunities for writing across the curriculum and this limits their achievements, for example, in history and geography. **(This is a key issue for action)**

- 27 The school's curriculum meets the statutory requirements and includes all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. The school uses the syllabus followed by most schools in Northamptonshire for religious education. It places a heavy emphasis on English as a basis for learning and the local education authority provides good support for the school in its efforts to improve standards in this subject. However, the increased allocation of time for English does not disadvantage other subjects of the curriculum. The provision for information and communication technology has been improved and the pupils now have appropriate access to good quality computers and suitable opportunities to develop their basic skills. Their improved skills in ICT support their work in other subjects. This was evident in English, for example, when the Year 2 pupils used drop down menus to choose synonyms when composing magic spells and in geography to graph the results of traffic surveys.
- 28 History and geography are presented in units of work that result in long gaps between the teaching, and the pupils forget what they have already learned. This slows down their progress because elements of the curriculum have to be revised before new learning can take place.
- 29 All pupils receive an appropriate curriculum. Those with special educational needs take a full part in all activities offered by the school including the extra-curricular programme. The level of support is good and is planned to meet the targets identified in pupils' individual education plans. The good support of the learning assistants in many lessons enhances the teaching and learning. The school's inclusive approach enables the pupils with physical and learning difficulties to take part in the full range of activities that are planned. This is a strength of the school's provision. The school has an appropriate policy for equal opportunities that is implemented very well and supports staff in meeting the needs of different groups of pupils.
- 30 The school makes appropriate provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE). An appropriate programme for drugs and sex education is linked to the teaching of science. Parents are fully informed of these arrangements. The school provides opportunities for the pupils to discuss social and personal issues in the class discussion time. The issues include raising awareness of the medical needs of others and the importance of sharing and taking turns. The pupils respond positively to these initiatives and this is reflected in the caring ethos of the school and pupils' very good behaviour.
- 31 The range of extra-curricular activities is good and appropriate for pupils aged 4 to 7. The clubs that take place after school include computer, craft, mathematics and jump rope. All clubs take place at the same time, which limits the opportunities for pupils to attend more than one. In addition, the pupils benefit from educational visits to places such as Rutland Water and the Toy Museum. Visitors to school also enrich the learning, for example, local music and theatre groups. Community members too make a valuable contribution; for instance the local Baptist Minister and Rector lead school assemblies. The pupils are enthusiastic about these opportunities that bring learning to life. In addition the pupils contribute to local charities by raising funds to support children in Bosnia and the National Society for the Protection of Birds. This enriches their understanding of how their learning in subjects such as geography and science is relevant to every day life.

- 32 The school enjoys good liaison with other local schools. This is another good improvement since the last report. Members of staff work together effectively to provide curriculum continuity from one stage of learning to another. There are good links with the local church and playgroups and the school is an important part of community life. Liaison with a local Beacon School is supporting curriculum development in literacy.
- 33 Overall, the quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and has been maintained at this level since the last inspection. In all classes, the teachers make a good contribution to this area of the pupils' personal development through different aspects of the curriculum.
- 34 The spiritual development of the pupils is satisfactory, and is enhanced through areas of the curriculum such as religious education, art, music and science. For example, in a Year 1 science lesson, the pupils observe and describe the different properties of a variety of materials. They enjoyed handling a large seashell and describing to their classmates their impressions of the rough surface and shiny interior. Other pupils examined a shiny piece of card and wrote independently 'This is shiny and reflective'. The recently introduced 'circle discussion time' is well organised and is encouraging the pupils to share their feelings and to think more deeply about a range of issues. During assemblies, many pupils show a sense of well being when they sing with enthusiasm and enjoyment. The Baptist Minister leads assembly regularly and this provides the pupils with good spiritual development through prayer and a Bible story. In the other assemblies, there are opportunities to recognise the Christian belief through worship. The pupils are encouraged to think about behaviour and relationships, being a good friend, being patient and taking time to wait. Although a candle is lit during assembly, it is not used as an important central focus to promote quiet reflection and spiritual development.
- 35 The provision for the pupils' moral education is very good. The school promotes a clear moral code for behaviour and respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. All adults in the school act as very good role models, and they listen with genuine interest to what pupils have to say. The pupils' very good behaviour in class and around the school demonstrates how well they have been taught right from wrong. Through stories and other activities, the pupils are given the opportunity to explore moral concepts and values such as truth, justice and equality of opportunity. All members of the staff have high expectations of the pupils, both in and out of the classroom. The pupils support a number of national charities, and their recent activities included a UNICEF Day on the theme of 'Children's Rights Around The World'.
- 36 The provision for the pupils' social development is also very good. The school is a very inclusive community where every individual is made to feel valued. The teachers give pupils of all ages many activities in which to practise and develop their social skills. For example, in the Reception class the pupils respond very well to 'snack time' which provides an opportunity for good social interaction. Social development is also very good at lunchtime when the pupils sit together in small groups to eat their packed lunches in a very calm and quiet environment. They are encouraged to work together in pairs and groups during lessons such as literacy, information and communication technology and physical education. In Year 2, the pupils benefit from taking part in after school clubs such as computer, art and craft, mathematics and jump rope. This contributes very positively to their social development. Opportunities are provided for as many pupils as possible to help and to take on special responsibilities for jobs around the school.
- 37 The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. They gain an insight into their own culture through a range of music, stories, paintings and artefacts. Regular visitors to school, such as representatives from the Toy Museum and the British Legion, a puppeteer, a theatre group and musicians enrich the curriculum and the pupils' cultural development. The pupils also go out on a range

of visits to places of educational and cultural interest. Satisfactory provision is made for multi-cultural education through music and art and the pupils are encouraged to appreciate the richness and value of other cultures. They learn about other faiths and cultures during religious education and geography lessons and a number of visitors from different ethnic groups visit to lead assemblies. The school is currently arranging for pupils in Year 2 to visit the Hindu Temple in Wellingborough.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 38 As at the time of the last inspection, the provision for the pupils' welfare and pastoral care is good. The children are safe and happy in the well-organised learning environment. The parents feel that the school is caring for all its pupils. All members of staff know the pupils well and are alert to their individual, physical and emotional needs. This makes a strong contribution to the pupils' progress and achievements. The children with special educational needs are quickly identified and supported well by individual education plans. This enables them to be involved in the full range of educational opportunities and to make good progress. The children at the Foundation Stage are very well cared for in the reception class through good induction arrangements that help them to settle quickly and to develop in independence and confidence. The close links with the adjacent junior school ensures that pupils in Year 2 are very well supported during their transition into Year 3.
- 39 The Health and Safety policy is well implemented. The governors are committed to their responsibilities and a risk assessment is conducted each term. Good attention is paid to potential hazards that are dealt with promptly and efficiently. The staff are vigilant in ensuring that any safety issues are reported and appropriately followed up. Good provision is made for First Aid by a number of qualified staff on site. An accident book is kept up to date and the school has a well-organised designated First Aid room. Regular fire drills are held when the building is evacuated.
- 40 The Child Protection procedures are good and any issues of concern are well monitored and recorded. The headteacher is the trained designated person with overall responsibility. All staff, including the lunchtime supervisors, are aware of the procedures to follow in the case of concerns. Good up-to-date personal and medical records are kept for all pupils and are used well to support their personal needs.
- 41 There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. The registers are completed accurately and consistently. Parents and pupils are reminded regularly of the importance of good attendance and punctuality and their effect on pupils' progress. The school is supported well by regular visits from the education welfare officer. The procedures for monitoring and promoting behaviour are very good and consistently applied throughout the school. There is a good system of reward and affirmation with a weekly celebration assembly that contributes well to raising the pupils' self-esteem and sense of well-being. The procedures for monitoring and eliminating bullying and harassment are very good and closely followed. There is a correspondingly effective system for tracking the pupils' educational and personal development. The members of staff know pupils well and their personal achievements are well recorded both formally and informally.
- 42 The assessment arrangements are generally satisfactory, but are appropriately under review. In the core subjects of English, science and mathematics, there are well-developed systems for monitoring the pupils' progress. These comprise weekly assessment sheets that the teachers complete to judge which key areas of learning have been understood by the pupils and which need revision. In English and mathematics, for example, the school sets targets for the pupils that are made known to the parents on a regular basis. The school is about to develop the use of computer software to record and analyse in more detail the pupils' progress. In information and communication technology, a series of tick sheets record which key concepts the pupils know, but this information is not sufficiently coherent to give a clear picture of overall progress. In other subjects, the assessment information is also collected, but is not yet systematically used in the production of the end-of-year reports. The subject coordinators have a more developed role in reviewing assessment information, but this is at an early stage. For example the school is assembling collections of the pupils' work to give all staff consistent examples of different levels of work. Additional testing is carried out during the year, particularly in mathematics and English, and the annual schedule of assessments to be carried out is a useful feature. The day-to-day

work is regularly marked, but the quality of this varies between classes and is not sufficiently helpful in giving the pupils guidance about how to improve. Verbal comments and guidance, particularly in the youngest classes, are good and are leading to improved levels of attainment.

- 43 Despite numerous good features, there are still weaknesses in the way information is collected and used. **(This is a key issue for action)**

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 44 The school has maintained and improved its good partnership with parents since the last inspection. The headteacher works hard to establish and extend the involvement of parents in the life of the school. The majority of parents are very satisfied with their children's progress and are very positive in their views about the school. Most feel that the school works closely with them and they are comfortable to ask questions and to discuss any concerns. The headteacher and staff are readily available to speak to parents informally at the start and end of the day. The school is very welcoming to parents and during the inspection many were seen bringing children into classrooms and helping them to change library books. Most parents support the work of the school well and assist their children at home by listening to reading and helping with homework topics. This makes a strong contribution to pupils' progress and the standards they achieve. A small minority of parents find it difficult to sustain a partnership and feel unable to support their children's learning at home.
- 45 Some parents are concerned about the school's arrangements for homework, and feel that there is sometimes too much and that the tasks are not always appropriate. The inspection finds that the school's policy for homework is appropriate and well organised. The pupils are encouraged to take home reading books, spellings to learn and mathematics games to play; helpful hints are provided for parents to enable them to assist positively with these activities. All pupils have home/school reading records, which are taken home with reading books, and many parents use these as a means of communication with the teachers. The school values the regular presence in all classrooms of a number of parents, grandparents and members of the community who help with groups and support activities. More volunteers help when the pupils are taken out on visits. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about their children's individual education plans and progress. They are invited to attend review and assessment meetings and most are interested and support their children well. The Parents and Friends Association is an active group of parents and members of the community who organise regular events to raise funds for the school. Their activities are well supported and enable the Friends to provide a range of additional learning resources.
- 46 The quality of information for parents is good and has been well maintained since the last inspection. However, a significant number of parents would like to receive more information about their children's progress. A large notice board for parents located at the main entrance contains a good variety of school news, guidelines and activities within the community as well as a range of informative leaflets. The headteacher sends out regular friendly letters to parents containing helpful information about organisation and the topics to be taught within the curriculum. Each term, the parents receive the 'Meadowside Matters' newsletter that encourages them to be involved. The headteacher has introduced a very helpful and informative 'Welcome Pack' for new parents containing very clear guidelines about the school and its induction arrangements. The majority of parents have signed the home/school agreement. Regular consultation evenings are organised and these are usually well attended. Parents are invited to curriculum evenings and the most recent one, which provided guidance on helping children with reading at home, was well attended. A small number of parents attend courses in school organised by the 'Lifelong Learning Project', and these have included literacy, numeracy and ICT. The parents speak very positively about the skills this has given them and the resultant improvement in their children's progress.

- 47 The annual, written reports to parents are satisfactory and cover all subjects of the National Curriculum and the Foundation Stage. The parents like the fact that the reports are handwritten and are individual and personalised. Helpful information is provided about what has been taught and the pupils' response in English, mathematics and science, but the information about the foundation subjects is more limited. Clear information is provided about the children's general progress and social development with targets set for improvement. The school has identified the need to provide more concise information about progress in all subjects and has improved the format of the report for the end of this academic year. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents meet the statutory requirements and provide a good amount of helpful information about organisation and the curriculum.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 48 The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides the clear and determined leadership that has ensured the on-going improvement of the school. The governors share the headteacher's very positive commitment to the development of the school and raising standards. There is a clear sense of direction and purpose from all members of the school community.
- 49 The school's aims and values are well known and shared by parents, staff and governors. They seek to encourage positive attitudes to life by acknowledging the different strengths of the individual, by promoting good relationships and by developing good links with the community. The school meets nearly all of the aims it sets and is particularly successful in generating very good relationships and promoting the good behaviour of its pupils.
- 50 The headteacher, deputy headteacher and the key subject coordinators monitor the quality of the teachers' planning and to a lesser extent the teaching in classrooms. This is usually by observation and by evaluation of the work of pupils. The school has benefited from guidance from the local authority adviser to confirm judgments on teaching. The monitoring has improved since the last inspection and the information about the teaching and planning is used more effectively. The school evaluates the performance data produced by national tests, but the use of on-going assessment data is less well developed. The analysis of the national test results has ensured that realistic performance targets are set. These targets have been met in nearly all the areas identified. The early indications are that the test results this year have been broadly maintained at previous levels.
- 51 The day-to-day management of the school is very good. All members of staff have job descriptions that establish their roles and responsibilities. For instance, the recently appointed deputy has clearly defined areas of responsibility and supports the headteacher very well. Several aspects of the school are under review and the recently developed team approach to management is increasing the pace of change and improvement. There is good delegation of responsibility to the subject coordinators, enabling them to manage and develop their own areas of operation. They are beginning to develop the monitoring of the standards of work in their subjects, but this process is not yet fully effective. The programme of performance management for the teaching and non-teaching staff is in place and effectively organised. Targets are agreed and regularly reviewed, and training needs are identified with regard to both the individual and the school's needs.
- 52 The governing body is effective and hardworking. The governors play an active part in school life and provide strong and highly committed support. The committee structure is logical and well organised with clear terms of reference. The governors have a clear vision for the development of the school and make an appropriate contribution in guiding priorities. A day has been set aside at the beginning of the spring term to bring staff and governors together to discuss the phases of development for the next three years. The governors receive very good information about the school's performance and have a

realistic appreciation of its current strengths and weaknesses. The current and short-term priorities are supported by the prudent use of funds. The school has clear plans for spending any additional funds, such as the replacement of windows and the refurbishment of the premises managers house. The finance committee and school bursar administer the finances of the school well and apply the principles of best value well, particularly when comparing the costs of different services and resources. Taking into account the quality of the teaching, the behaviour of the pupils and the standards achieved in some subjects, the school gives good value for money.

- 53 The school is satisfactorily staffed with experienced teachers who are suitably qualified to teach the National Curriculum and the Foundation Stage. There have been a number of recent staff changes that have had a very positive effect on the quality of the teaching. All teachers, except the headteacher and the special needs co-ordinator, have responsibility for a class and act as subject co-ordinators. All members of staff attend regular training courses that are well matched to their needs and linked to the school development plan. The provision of learning support assistants is satisfactory and sufficient to provide good support for groups in classrooms and for individual pupils. Their role has improved since the last inspection and good use is made of their knowledge and expertise. The school has good procedures to ensure that new members of staff are well supported and mentored. The commitment and efficiency of the secretary, lunchtime supervisors and site supervisor ensure the effective day-to-day running of the school.
- 54 The accommodation is good and well maintained internally. The large site is attractively laid out with grassed areas, trees and shrubs and adjoins the Meadowside Junior School. Externally, the building is about to undergo some essential repairs and maintenance work. Throughout the school, colourful and attractive displays of the pupils' work, pictures and artefacts present a very pleasant, stimulating and interesting environment in which to learn. The school makes good use of all available space, and has plans to explore the possibility of using the recently acquired bungalow on the site as additional teaching and storage space. The classrooms and central areas are of sufficient size to accommodate the number of pupils on roll. There is an attractive library and large hall that provides a good amount of space for physical education, assemblies and dining. Two computer areas are conveniently located in the central areas outside classrooms for Years 1 and 2. The outside hard and grassed play facilities are good, and recent improvements to the playground have produced an exciting and stimulating environment. Since the last inspection, one of the reception classrooms has been provided with a good secure outdoor play space, which is well used to develop the children's physical skills with a range of large wheeled toys.
- 55 The learning resources to support the curriculum are generally good and have also improved since the last inspection. There is a sufficient range of resources for the teaching of all subjects, and many of these are of good quality. All are accessible to staff and to pupils and are used effectively. The resources to support the learning of the youngest children are good and include a sufficient range of large play equipment. The range and quality of fiction and non-fiction books in the library has been recently improved and extended. The stock now has a number of books with a multi-cultural flavour and dual language.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56 In order to improve the school further, the headteacher, staff and governors should seek to:

(1) Improve the pupils' writing skills by:

- a. Extending the use of writing in other subjects.
- b. Giving the pupils more opportunities to write.
- c. Providing more guidance and training for staff.

Paragraphs 20, 26, 86

(2) Improve assessment procedures by:

- a. Determining what is the essential information required.
- b. Agreeing a whole school approach to the collection and use of the information
- c. Seeking models of good practice.
- d. Using technology to aid the collection and analysis of information.

Paragraphs 42, 43

(3) Improve the pupils' presentation of work by:

- a. Agreeing a common standard for the presentation of work.
- b. Encouraging the pupils to have more responsibility for presenting their work.
- c. Monitoring the standards of presentation more rigorously.

Paragraphs 20, 25

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	42
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	31

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	10	22	9	0	0	0
Percentage	0	24	53	23	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR- Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	146
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0*

FTE means full-time equivalent.
authority

* Hot mid-day meals are not provided in this local

Special educational needs	YR- Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	26

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.7
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	23	34	57

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	17	23
	Girls	31	32	34
	Total	50	49	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (88)	86 (77)	100 (92)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	23	23
	Girls	33	34	34
	Total	50	57	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (83)	100 (87)	100 (82)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	0
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 – Y2**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.5
Average class size	24.3

Education support staff: YR– Y2

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	112

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	369640
Total expenditure	350724
Expenditure per pupil	2220
Balance brought forward from previous year	23530
Balance carried forward to next year	42454

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	146
Number of questionnaires returned	38

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	42	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	45	8	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	37	3	3	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	55	18	5	3
The teaching is good.	47	47	0	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	16	50	34	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	42	8	0	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	42	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	21	66	11	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	32	58	3	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	53	8	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	42	24	3	8

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The majority of parents are very satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. They feel welcome, well informed and involved in a positive partnership in their children's learning. Some thought that the reading books did not go home sufficiently frequently. At the parents' meeting, there was general agreement that the school was effective and the headteacher provides good leadership. Some parents thought the timing of some meetings to discuss their child's progress was not convenient.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- 57 The children start school in the September after their fourth birthday. All Foundation Stage pupils have the opportunity to attend for three terms prior to entering Year 1. The children are initially admitted on a part-time basis and then transfer to full-time education after the autumn half-term holiday. At the time of the inspection, there were 48 children being taught in the two reception classes. Ten of these pupils were still four years of age. Most children have had some pre-school playgroup experience.
- 58 When the children enter school, their attainment covers a wide range, but is broadly in line with that of similar aged children. However, their attainment in writing is slightly lower than average. The children make good progress in the reception classes and when they enter Year 1, standards exceed expectations in reading and early mathematics, and in their personal, social, emotional and physical development. In all other areas of learning, their attainment is at least in line with expectations. The teaching is consistently either good or better. One of the strengths is the teamwork approach of the teachers and the learning support assistant who works in both classes. All the adults work well together, valuing each other's contributions and offering good models of courtesy for the children to copy. They have consistent approaches to behaviour management, which helps the children to understand what is expected of them and to behave and work well. In addition, the school provides a relevant and interesting curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils and enables them to achieve well overall. The last report had few specific references to pupils who were under five, but it suggests that the pupils reached appropriate standards by the time they entered Year 1. This represents an improvement since the last inspection.
- 59 The school has drawn up an early year's action plan as part of the school improvement plan and this clearly indicates appropriate development priorities for each year. For example, currently there is one secure outdoor learning area shared by both classes, but there are plans to develop a complementary area in the near future.

Personal Social and Emotional Development

- 60 The attitudes and behaviour of the youngest pupils are very good and have a beneficial influence on their learning across all areas. The children enjoy a positive start to their lives at school because the teaching is most successful in fostering their development in this area. Before the children start school, the teachers have already amassed a good deal of useful information about them through the well-considered induction process carried out with parents and the local playgroups.
- 61 The staff promote independent learning and encourage the children to ask questions, seek answers and solve problems. Consequently, the children learn at a good pace and display increasing involvement in their activities as they grow older. They are given an appropriate mixture of self-chosen and adult-directed activities and this effectively encourages them to persist for extended periods of time.
- 62 The teaching encourages the children to play and work together harmoniously. For example, at snack time they enjoy good social interaction, show confidence in the routines and behave sensibly. When involved in role-play in small groups, for example in the 'hard hat area', the children interact very sociably. Appropriate, sensitive adult intervention ensures that everybody has equally important roles and that the children work together well, taking turns and sharing the equipment. They get on with things by themselves, like putting a sequence of pictures in order or arranging toy animals in pairs, and show enjoyment and pride in their achievements. The children respond well to questions, and realise

that in some instances they have a correct answer and in others they can only express an opinion. When playing outside, they join noisily in the chasing games with the other children, but at other times, like assembly, know that they have to sit quietly.

Communication, Language and Literacy

- 63 By the time the children move into Year 1, their attainment is broadly as expected with the exception of reading in which standards are good. The adults provide a wide range of activities that encourage the children to develop their competency in talking listening, reading and writing. The children enjoy both the formal literacy sessions that focus upon reading and writing and the more informal opportunities, such as role-play, that are carefully planned and structured to support their learning.
- 64 The children listen attentively and are keen to talk about their experiences. Most have a secure understanding of the nature of conversation and enjoy participating. Their speech is developed soundly through question and answer sessions when they are encouraged to reply using a complete sentence. The adults also place a strong emphasis on encouraging the children to listen to direct instructions, stories and songs, as well as to each other, during the more formal whole class activities. In both classes, they listen well and most of the older children can be attentive for twenty minutes or so. In the whole-class sessions, the teachers give considerable attention to the use of appropriate language with which to impart feelings, actions and information. For example, the children are taught and can recall the correct words for naming shapes and describing patterns. As a result, the range of their vocabulary is developing well.
- 65 It is evident that the children enjoy books and reading. They find listening to and sharing stories a source of pleasure and have a good understanding of the written word. The teachers understand the vital importance of reading and successfully help the children to acquire new skills and learn more about books. In particular, they are effective in establishing the pupils' knowledge of the sounds of letters that help them to tackle unfamiliar words in print. Many of the children also use their knowledge of letter sounds to read their own writing accurately. The teachers are most effective in acting as good role models in the reading of a range of texts.
- 66 The children's writing skills are in line with expected levels. The teachers demonstrate that writing has an important purpose, for example, in recording thoughts and ideas. By the time they enter Year 1, most of the children hold their pencil in an appropriate grip and form letters well. They know that letters have to be written in a certain order to have a particular meaning, and that writing is linear in form. The higher attaining children put together a simple story of three or four sentences and show an understanding of the use of full stops. The teachers provide regular opportunities for them to develop a good understanding of sequencing, often supported by the use of computers, and this helps the children to develop their own writing in a logical way.

Mathematical development

- 67 The children make good gains in their mathematical learning and, by the time they reach the end of the reception year, most are likely to achieve the goals described in the national foundation guidelines. The majority will exceed these expectations. The teachers provide a wide range of interesting activities that engage the interest of the children. This helps them to develop the confidence to tackle practical activities and to acquire a good understanding of simple mathematical vocabulary and concepts.
- 68 The children enjoy both the formal numeracy sessions and the self-chosen activities that contain a mathematical element. The teachers plan carefully so that the children can develop mathematical concepts through direct teaching and through more informal structured play activities. For example, the

concept of two-dimensional shape and elementary tessellation was taught directly and developed through artwork, including drawing in the office and building in the 'hard hat area'.

- 69 The children enjoy the singing of number rhymes, like 'Five little Speckled Frogs', and this helps them to remember how to count back from five to zero. They know how to count to ten by the time they leave the reception class, and many handle larger numbers confidently. By the time they enter Year 1, the children recognise common shapes, like circles, triangles, squares and rectangles, and the more able children can name a few three-dimensional shapes. When studying objects, they can compare their size by reference to length and weight. They have an appropriate mathematical vocabulary and are starting to learn the language of comparison, such as 'taller' and 'shorter'. This is all a result of successful teaching that builds on their prior knowledge.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- 70 The pupils' attainment reaches the expected levels. They have a secure knowledge and understanding of other people, their environment and features of the natural and made world. They make sound progress as they develop their historical, geographical, scientific and technological learning. Although there is only one computer per classroom at the moment, the teachers make good use of this resource to support learning across the curriculum.
- 71 The children know their way around the school and the different features they will encounter as they travel around the site. They also recognise differences in the materials they find there and can describe some of their basic properties by using words like hard, soft, smooth and bumpy. They are aware of the different people who work in the school, can name occupations such as teacher, secretary and site supervisor and have a reasonable understanding of what these people do.
- 72 The teachers provide exciting opportunities for the children to learn about the natural world. For instance, the sharing of the story 'The very hungry caterpillar' helped to develop the children's understanding of minibeasts and food. They also use their ability to observe accurately to draw and name features of common plants, and can sequence pictures to show the growth of a bean.
- 73 The children use the computers confidently and are eager to learn more about them. They use the mouse to move an icon around the screen to operate simple programmes.
- 74 The children are becoming aware of the nature of belief and join in prayers appropriately. They can listen to and understand Bible stories such as, 'The wise man built his house upon the rocks.' A very good lesson based on this story showed how effectively the teachers combine several areas of learning in one activity. The pupils recreated the situation by placing one house on a rock and the other on sand. They were in awe and wonder as they poured water on the model houses and sang the words of the story.

Physical development

- 75 The children show considerable confidence in this area of learning and their attainment exceeds the expectations. The curriculum provides a good range of activities both indoors and outside that develops the pupils' physical control, mobility, awareness of space, and manipulative skills.
- 76 When preparing for physical education lessons, the children are encouraged to manage their own fastenings and only to seek help as a last resort. This is successful, and at the end of the lessons most of them got dressed unaided. The lessons enable the children to improve their balance and agility in floor work and on the apparatus, and enhance their hand-eye co-ordination when using small

equipment, such as ropes, bats and balls. The teachers concentrated on key factors, like getting the children to take big steps by really stretching their legs in warm up activities and to consider which part of their body will support their weight when balancing. The children move with good awareness of space and of each other, and clearly love the opportunity to be physically active. They show good co-ordination and mobility, and are able to keep still when required. In both lessons, the children got out and put away equipment and apparatus most sensibly and with the minimum of teacher intervention. When using the ride-on toys in the secure outdoor area, the children show a good awareness of obstacles and the space available.

- 77 In both classes, the teaching helps the children to use small tools like scissors and to hold pencils. They are also given ample opportunity to handle different textures and improve their dexterity. For example, the children were able to print shapes in play dough and compare this with printing in sand. The members of staff consistently emphasise to the children the importance of a healthy lifestyle and simple rules of hygiene, such as washing their hands after going to the toilet.

Creative development

- 78 Attainment is within expected levels. Ample opportunities, both planned and incidental, help the children to make steady progress in developing their imagination and their ability to communicate and express ideas in creative ways.
- 79 The children's paintings are typical of their age group and clear progression can be seen over the course of the Foundation Stage. They develop from broad swathes of colour into much finer detail, including recognisable representations of what the children imagine and remember. For example, they produce paintings of a garden in the style of Monet and recognisable prints of minibeasts using polystyrene blocks. They explore materials and texture as they make rubbings of man-made surfaces around the school. When joining items such as paper in collage work, they know that it would be wasteful to use too much of the adhesive.
- 80 Regular singing sessions help the children to improve their musical understanding. In one lesson, for example, the children improved their understanding of tempo as the teacher read the story of 'The Train Ride'. They then performed the same story by tapping their knees in response to the tempo. They also enjoy performing the actions to accompany songs such as 'The Wise Man Built his House upon the Rock' and 'Incy Wincy Spider'.
- 81 The children build creatively with the large and small construction kits, and are aware of basic principles in design. For example, they know that their models will need to be sturdy if they are to sit on them. The children enjoy playing pretend games in their role-play areas, for example, acting as building site workers in the 'hard hat area' inspired by 'Bob the Builder'. They show the ability to act in different roles, for example as the foreman telephoning his workers.

ENGLISH

- 82 By the time the pupils are seven, their attainment levels are broadly in line with the national expectation. The unconfirmed results of the national tests for 2002 indicate that standards in all aspects of English are broadly in line with the national average and are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection. The inspection evidence confirms these results and shows an improvement in writing when compared with last year's national tests. The pupils are improving their use of their literacy skills to support their work in other subjects, but this is an area that still requires further development. All pupils, including those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. These improvements since the last inspection are the result of more precise planning, monitoring and

evaluation of the teaching and learning. The teachers have visited other schools to observe good practice and purposeful links have developed with the local beacon school in order to improve writing. The local education authority has provided valuable support in raising standards, particularly by increasing the teachers' confidence. The rate of improvement since the previous inspection has been broadly in line with the national trend. Boys and girls perform equally well in English.

- 83 By the end of Year 2, the pupils make sound progress in speaking and listening and achieve satisfactory results. Most are interested in discussing their work, and they speak well in a range of situations. They listen carefully to their teachers and to their friends and politely wait their turn before making any comments. The teachers' comments are often framed as questions that require the pupils to provide further explanation of their initial responses. The pupils are aware of this and are prepared to develop their points of view. This was apparent in Year 2 when the pupils justified the ingredients they chose to make spells. They also showed awareness that words can be hurtful and on no occasion were the spells used to distress any class member. On one occasion, an adult referred to dinosaurs as prehistoric monsters and was politely taken to task by a pupil who explained that, 'They are not prehistoric because evidence has been found, and they are not monsters, they are dinosaurs!' The teachers create good opportunities for the pupils to express themselves verbally and this is enhancing their confidence in the use of language. It is also making a significant contribution to improvement in writing when the pupils rehearse their ideas in speech before committing them to paper.
- 84 By the end of Year 2, the pupils achieve standards in reading that are above average overall. The good development of techniques for word building introduced in the Foundation Stage is extended in Years 1 and 2. The pupils show determination when sounding out words and experiment by removing some letters order to discover the root of the word. The teachers are quick to exploit their efforts and offer good guidance that many remember and use to improve their word building strategies. The quality of the reading material in the school library has been improved with the help of the local authority and has provided a wide range of texts to motivate young readers. The pupils with special educational needs receive very good support from informed teaching assistants. The very good response of parents and grandparents ensures that support and guidance is plentiful and makes a major contribution to the raising of standards.
- 85 In discussion, pupils are pleased to talk about their preferences in books. A girl in Year 2 was so impressed with characters in the Harry Potter books that she mimicked the gestures and speech of Hermione Granger accurately and with great style. Good reading logs include perceptive comments by teachers and parents on the progress being made by the pupils and set high expectations. This enthusiasm for books provides a very good foundation for learning that is gradually being reflected in the pupils' writing skills. A high proportion of pupils in Year 2 can explain how to use the index and contents pages in non-fiction books. They enjoy reading aloud and add interest by changing the pitch of their voices to represent different characters.
- 86 Standards in writing are improving and are average by the end of Year 2. The quality of handwriting is inconsistent. Letters are clearly of different proportion and often there is little evidence of the pupils joining letters together. This detracts from the quality of the writing and it is an area requiring further development. Recently, however, there has been good improvement in the pupils writing of letters and accounts of holidays showing a greater degree of independence in these skills. In this work, the pupils show imagination in choosing the vocabulary they use and greater urgency in maintaining the reader's interest. In contrast, there are insufficient examples of the purposeful use and development of their literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, there are very few accounts of events in history and factual descriptions in geography. This is not helped by the gaps in the teaching that result from the blocking arrangements for those subjects. The pupils have very good attitudes, work hard and produce good quantity and improving quality of work. They want to be successful learners and listen carefully

to their teachers. There has been inconsistency in the staffing with teachers leaving the school and being replaced by new staff. Relationships need time to be established and there is good evidence that these are developing well. Consequently, behaviour in lessons is good and sometimes very good. **(Writing is a key issue for action)**

- 87 The quality of teaching is mainly good, and the teaching assistants and parents are well briefed to help the pupils. The teachers employ a range of methods to ensure that pupils of all abilities know what they are going to learn in the lesson and how long they have to complete their tasks. The activities are well designed to meet their individual needs. For instance, the higher achieving pupils are introduced to the thesaurus to help them find alternative words. The teachers also recognise the importance of providing good models of writing for those pupils experiencing difficulty. For example, with the help of the class one teacher they built up 'a spell' on the whiteboard in order to give the pupils a structure from which to work. The support of parent helpers is invaluable as they monitor the efforts of pupils, intervening when appropriate and offering guidance where necessary. Consequently, the classrooms often have a family ethos with very good conditions for learning. At the end of the lessons, the teachers assess how well the pupils have achieved the objectives and the progress they have made.
- 88 Weaknesses are evident in the quality of marking and there are inconsistencies between classes. There are some good examples of marking, but in most cases there is insufficient guidance to help the pupils to improve their work. The school sets targets for the pupils, but these are often imprecise and are not usually reflected in the teachers' marking.
- 89 The subject is well led and managed by the deputy headteacher, who has been in post for only a short time, but is keen to make improvements to standards. The assessment procedures are improving with the teachers testing the pupils in a variety of skills. Records are well kept and the school makes good use of the analysis of the results of the national tests in order to inform the planning and to make the teaching more precise. An additional feature of the good provision for the subject is the organisation of a course for parents entitled 'Keeping up with the children in Literacy'. There is a suitable range of resources to support the teaching of literacy and a sufficient variety of reading books. However, the use of ICT to support the teaching of English is under-developed and is an area for further development.

MATHEMATICS

- 90 Standards in mathematics are above the national average at the end of Year 2. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when standards were judged to be broadly average. The pupils show very positive attitudes to the subject and generally work well to make good progress. The rise in standards is directly linked to improvements made in the curriculum and the teaching since the last inspection.
- 91 The school's results in the national tests for pupils in Year 2 fell significantly following the previous inspection in 1997. However, the results last year improved considerably and were well above the national average and when compared with similar schools were above average. The indications for this year are that the test results will remain high.
- 92 An analysis of the national test results over several years shows that there is no consistent relationship between the performance of girls and boys. In the lessons seen during the inspection, all pupils, irrespective of gender, were involved well in the teaching, were keen to learn and had very positive attitudes to the subject.

- 93 Several factors have contributed to this recent picture of rising standards. The very good analysis of the pupils' performance in mathematics following the run of disappointing test result is a significant development. In addition, the school has successfully implemented the National Numeracy Strategy and most of the teachers have attended extended training about the teaching of mathematics. Taken together this has resulted in the teachers enthusiastically and confidently drawing upon their increased subject knowledge to provide a good teaching in mathematics. In all the lessons seen, there was a good balance of mental calculation and written work. There were also good opportunities for all groups of pupils to consolidate and extend their mathematical knowledge and understanding through direct teaching and individual and group activities. Most pupils are making good progress as a result of interesting and challenging work. The school also makes good use of the available funding to deploy teaching assistants in all classes to support the pupils' learning, particularly of those with special educational needs.
- 94 The teaching has improved since the previous inspection and now is consistently good. A particular strength is the way that the teachers manage their pupils and establish a productive ethos for learning in their classrooms. The teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and set precise objectives that are explained clearly to the pupils. The teaching is characterised by sharp, well targeted questioning and the effective use of technical vocabulary. The children respond positively and are eager to answer questions and to explain their methods of calculation. For example, when asked to divide 20 by 4 a Year 2 pupil confidently explained that one could, 'halve it and then halve it again'. The teachers use the time spent on mental calculations productively and maintain a good pace in these activities. Frequently, the mental arithmetic activity blends almost seamlessly into the main theme of the lesson, thereby giving even greater continuity and purpose to the children's learning. This was seen to good effect in a Year 2 lesson that began with recall of the two times table and developed into sharing and division drawing upon this knowledge. The teachers' subject knowledge is well developed and they often identify and link different mathematical concepts. A good example was provided in Year 2 lessons in which the concept of doubling was linked with the inverse operation of halving in order to aid learning about division. Similarly, Year 1 work on multiples of three was enhanced through links with odd numbers and the concept of diagonal line patterns on a hundred square. In most lessons, the teachers are quick to assess accurately what the pupils understand and this allows them to intervene appropriately when a child has problems. The teaching assistants play an important role in maintaining the pupils' concentration, and their clear explanations and probing questions contribute to the pupils' good progress. This is particularly noticeable of the pupils with special educational needs. All lessons observed were brought to an appropriate finish with a well organised class discussion that enabled the children to consolidate their learning and in some cases to begin thinking about the next steps.
- 95 By the end of Year 2, the vast majority of the pupils have securely attained the standards expected for their age, and approximately one-third of the year group exceeds the expectations. Most pupils have a secure grasp of mental arithmetic techniques and can count on and back in tens from any two-digit number. They know what each figure in a two-digit number represents and most work confidently with numbers up to 100. The higher attaining pupils count on or back in hundreds from three-digit numbers and work securely with thousands. In both mental and written calculations, they recognise number sequences involving odd and even numbers and are clearly aware that subtraction is the inverse of addition. They are beginning to appreciate the concept of multiples and multiplication as repeated addition. The higher attaining pupils are secure with the concept of division and recognise that it is the inverse of multiplication. Most pupils are aware of the standard units of measurement and can measure length, mass and volume with increasing accuracy. When working with time, most pupils are secure with quarter hours, and several work confidently to an accuracy of five minutes. They also have a good understanding of the properties of common two- and three-dimensional shapes. Using their knowledge of shape, they can describe position, direction and movement, and the higher attaining pupils are able to identify right angles.

- 96 The co-ordinator works conscientiously to support the staff in improving the quality of education provided. She has led staff training, scrutinised planning and test results, and observed teaching in order to identify the action required to raise standards in mathematics. The issues identified for development are presented within a succinct, pertinent action plan that is part of the school improvement plan. In particular, the detailed analysis of the pupils' performance in mathematics has resulted in effective changes to the curriculum provided and the quality of teaching. These procedures provide an effective model that might be considered for application in other subjects.
- 97 An additional feature of the good provision for mathematics in the school is the organisation of a course for parents entitled, 'Keeping up with the Children in Numeracy'. This is part of a lifelong learning initiative and currently seven parents are enrolled for the weekly sessions. They are very positive about this course and report that they find it useful in helping their children with homework. For example, the tutor effectively explained a common difficulty with the concept of metric and imperial measures. This initiative reflects the overall enthusiasm of the school for mathematics.

SCIENCE

- 98 By the time they are seven, the pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected nationally. This is a similar picture to the one reported at the last inspection.
- 99 The pupils gain a range of skills by the time they reach Year 2. They investigate and experiment appropriately, and handle materials carefully. Their knowledge outlined in the different national attainment targets is developed satisfactorily as they progress through the school. Within the lessons, the pupils are attentive and generally learn well. They know the differences between animals from different continents. In a topic on Australia for example, the pupils in Year 2 correctly identify obvious and less obvious features of the kangaroo and koala, and are keen to find out more. For example, when one child learned that koalas do not drink, he kept on researching until he discovered that they get their water from what they eat. The teachers use good questioning techniques. This helps the pupils to learn, particularly when the purpose of the lesson is to draw on the pupils' existing knowledge and to impart information. This was highlighted during the introduction to their new topic on Australian animals. The pupils' investigative skills are also developed effectively. In Year 1, the pupils investigate the properties of different materials and objects. The teacher's use of a 'feely' bag to arouse the pupils' curiosity works well and they enjoy describing what they can feel. They use a good range of language to describe the objects, and others read out their descriptions well. In a similar lesson in another Year 1 class, the teaching was good and helped the pupils think of words such as 'bendy,' 'shiny' and 'dull'. There are good links with other subjects such as English, particularly when the teacher emphasizes the use of good speaking skills by the pupils. The use of writing is less frequent and, therefore, not so well developed in this subject, and the way the work is marked does not give the pupils sufficient guidance to improve. The pupils' past work shows that they write out their observations and investigations, but their writing tends to be quite brief and does not fully utilise and extend their skills.
- 100 The pupils' cover a sufficient range of work. In Year 1, for example, they find out about parts of the body, for instance, the way our tongues register taste, and have experimented with magnetism. In Year 2, they build upon this work well. They experiment with growing seeds, seeing how they can be nurtured and how it affects growth. Their knowledge of materials is extended well by seeing, for example, what happens when water freezes and thaws. The pupils' natural curiosity is developed well within the activities and they have appropriate levels of understanding of what makes a test fair. The children with special educational needs learn well, often with additional adult help and activities that are well planned at their level. The teachers assess their pupils well during lessons with verbal comments

and guidance about how to improve, but these comments are not frequently reinforced in the marking of the pupils' written work. Moreover, some teachers tend to over praise pieces that are not laid out well.

- 101 The co-ordination of the subject is good overall. The recently appointed co-ordinator has made a good impact in evaluating the current scheme of work and policy, and has a clear idea about the priorities for action. For example, the assembly of work samples to show different levels and to give the staff clearer indicators for assessment is an urgent need that is being addressed. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and there are good links with other subjects such as English and geography. The level of resources is satisfactory overall, and they are used well. There are some links with the adjoining junior school and the co-ordinator is part of a 'cluster' that provides useful contact with science co-ordinators from other schools.

ART AND DESIGN

- 102 Standards in art are in line with the expectations of seven-year-olds and similar to those found at the time of the previous inspection. From the small sample of work scrutinised, it is clear that the pupils' painting in the style of various artists is a strong feature of the provision, and the progression in their learning is evident across the year groups. There are useful links to subjects such as history and geography as the pupils make portraits of the Queen and the crown and detailed drawings of landmarks and buildings in Australia.
- 103 In Year 1, the pupils learn about colour mixing and how the quantity of paint influences the shades of colour. They know the dangers of using too much water for mixing paints and their work demonstrates good progress in understanding basic painting techniques. There were good links with history when pupils designed a bonfire collage as result of their work about Guy Fawkes. In Year 2, the pupils develop their skills using wax crayons and experiment with coloured, sticky squared paper to make patterns. This work is extended to include the design of symmetrical patterns, thus achieving good links with mathematics. The early stages of printing repeat patterns show the care and attention taken by the pupils to ensure the correct mixture of paint and water in order to achieve good quality prints.
- 104 The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The pupils in Year 1 used colour, pattern and texture to create sea backgrounds. The teacher introduced the lesson well, creating an atmosphere to excite the pupils about the different appearances of the sea. This developed into how artists had interpreted the different moods of the sea using a variety of techniques and materials. The teacher used good illustrations to show the pupils what was needed. In this way, the pupils were challenged in their work to make pictures using a wide range of materials to reflect what they observed. Different textures were successfully applied using a selection of materials. For example, the pupils cut bubble wrap and lightly pressed on painted surfaces to make an attractive effect in their sea pictures. Other groups tore and stuck materials to build up a collage. They also developed their sewing skills by using plastic needles and wool to record seascapes in the form of scrim pictures. Good teamwork between the class teacher and the learning support assistant ensures that there are sufficient quantities of materials strategically placed for the pupils' use and the work surfaces are kept clean. The pupils receive regular, verbal comments about the quality of their work, and in response to questions they suggest ways in which they could make improvements. In Year 2, the pupils were set a difficult challenge of making sketches of famous landmarks in Australia. The teacher provided a good range of books from which they could choose a subject. The pupils demonstrated very good observational skills and produced satisfactory sketches, though some included too much detail in their pictures and this lessened the visual impact. Others, however, achieved very good results using crayons lightly to create attractive effects.

105 There are plans for an artist to visit the school and work alongside the pupils to develop skills. The headteacher is the art coordinator and has reviewed the provision for the subject. She has acquired an overview of progression in the subject throughout and has used the information to emphasise the key skills to be taught to the pupils. Currently, the assessment procedures are merely informal. However, a portfolio containing examples of work at different levels is being built up and this will enable the teachers to assess their pupils' work more accurately. The resources are of good quality and quantity overall.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

106 The standards reached by the pupils are in line with expected levels. This is a similar judgement to that made at the time of the previous inspection. Across the school the pupils apply their knowledge and skills in other subjects, such as art, mathematics and science, to design, make and evaluate products of sound quality using a range of materials and techniques.

107 The pupils have positive attitudes to work in this subject and understand the importance of finishing their products to a suitable standard. The curriculum includes a suitable range of activities and is supported well through links with other subjects. For example, the visit to the Oakham Museum linked to work in history has been used well as a stimulus for the children to make their own moving toys. The finished articles show that the pupils have thought carefully about their designs and have produced some pleasing results. The way that the toys are displayed in the school is especially effective and demonstrates that the work of pupils of all abilities is valued equally. Other displays of work in this subject, such as coronation crowns and wooden pictures, also help to provide a pleasing aesthetic environment that contributes to the ethos of the school.

108 The teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. A strong, common feature is that the pupils are well managed, which enables the teachers to focus on the lesson objectives. The teachers are also good at encouraging all pupils to take a full part in the lessons and their inclusive style ensures that boys and girls play an equal part. Another good feature of the teaching is that sufficient emphasis is placed on designing and evaluating elements, as well as the making of products. For example, when studying play structures, the pupils in Year 1 visited the adjoining park in order to identify the materials used in the play apparatus and determine how the various items had been constructed. The work in their books also shows that the pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own products and to suggest ways in which they may be improved.

109 The teachers make good links with other subjects and this reinforces the learning and application of key skills. For example, basic skills developed in art and mathematics, such as observation, drawing and measuring, are effectively applied when designing and making products. This was seen to good effect in the use of nets of three-dimensional shapes to make a Jack-in-the-box. Likewise, knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts, such as the properties of everyday materials, was applied to good effect when studying play structures. The work on toys and coronation crowns was appropriately linked to study in history and added purpose to the exercise.

110 The coordinator has only been in post since January. Currently, there is little recorded evidence of the pupils' progress over time. The new coordinator has identified the need to produce a portfolio of work to show the context of the work, the level that it illustrates and the skills used to complete it.

GEOGRAPHY

111 Standards in geography are in line with those expected nationally for pupils aged seven and similar to those at the previous inspection. Geography alternates with history in blocks of time lasting for several

weeks, and this means there are long periods when each subject is sidelined. The pupils have satisfactory levels of knowledge and geography skills.

- 112 The pupils in Year 1 contrasted life in Norway with their own in Burton Latimer. They know that in Norway the summer days are longer and the winter days are shorter than in Britain and that these differences affect the way people live. The journeys of 'Suitcase Sam', a toy bear, extend the pupils' knowledge of the world. Year 2 pupils know that Australia is a big country and has a wide range of weather conditions. They know that life is hard in the deserts of Australia and can name many creatures that live in those areas. They can find the big cities on a map and talk about some of the outstanding features to be found in them. For example, in discussion they talked about walking over the Sydney Harbour Bridge and referred to a publication that gave details of the conditions for making this exciting journey. For example, travellers are not allowed to carry objects with them in case they fall to the ground and injure people. They were especially fascinated to learn that travellers over the bridge were linked together and that it takes three hours to complete the crossing.
- 113 The pupils are well managed and the quality of the teaching is satisfactory. In a lesson in Year 1, the pupils discussed places they have visited and spoke confidently about natural features. They described the main features of cities and, with the teacher's support, they contrasted life in the countryside. The teacher has high expectations of them and this had a good effect upon the quality of their learning. The presentation and the marking of the work are not always consistent in quality. The teacher gives good encouragement to pupils through praise when promoting speaking and listening skills. In a Year 2 lesson, the pupils found additional information about Australia. They made good use of globes, and the teacher encouraged them to use exciting new words, for example, hemisphere and equator. The pupils enjoyed exploring these new words and applying them in their work. They were particularly interested to learn that during our summertime Australia is having its wintertime, and that there are ten sheep for every human living in the country.
- 114 The pupils clearly enjoy their geography lessons. 'Suitcase Sam' is a very good motivating factor and the pupils look forward to hearing about his latest adventures. They are pleased to share what they have learned with adults and readily refer to books to support their opinions and the facts they offer.
- 115 The subject leader is an enthusiastic geographer. The planning indicates that no geography is taught between the middle of the autumn term and the middle of the summer term. This period is too long and the pupils forget what they have been taught. This means that the teachers have to revise previous work before new work can be introduced. The coordinator rightly makes a strong case for the subject to have sufficient time to enable the pupils to benefit from widening their knowledge of the world and improving their skills. The resources are good and pupils have easy access to good quality atlases to support their learning.

HISTORY

- 116 The pupils achieve standards that are in line with expected levels for children of their age. This matches the findings of the previous inspection.
- 117 The current teaching arrangements for history and geography have been reviewed. Some pupils for example, have a term with no history specifically timetabled. As in geography, this makes it difficult for them to recall some of their previous learning, to build upon this systematically and to make good progress. However, a strength of the provision is the meaningful links made with work in other subjects. For example, when studying Captain Cook, the pupils also study Australia thereby linking history and geography. Similarly, when studying the Victorian seaside strong links are made with geography and science. When studying toys in days gone by, the pupils produced their own toys as

part of their design and technology project. The pupils enjoy the range of interesting topics that they study. Accordingly, they apply themselves well to their learning and make satisfactory progress in history.

- 118 By the end of Year 2, the pupils show a secure ability in using information sources to answer questions about the past. As homework, for example, they carry out effectively their own research into the life of Captain Cook. They identify the different sources they use, such as the Internet, CD ROMs, books, and videos. The teaching supports the pupils well in developing their appreciation of different interpretations of the same facts. In addition, they discuss the range of information gathered and agree the common facts that seem reasonably accurate. Similarly, the pupils in Year 1 successfully scrutinise photographs of seaside resorts over the last hundred years to identify differences in clothing, transport and leisure activities. The teacher's skilful questioning enables them to identify differences over time and to sequence the photographs chronologically. It is through activities such as these that the pupils have developed their knowledge and understanding of differences between life now and in the past. For example, the Year 2 pupils have a secure appreciation of the changes in the nature of toys over the last hundred years or so. They are also aware of famous people from different periods in time and show an increasing sense of chronology. For example, they show a keen appreciation of the British monarchy and in particular the life and times of the present Queen. The pupils with special educational needs make good progress within the lessons, and have good adult support in some lessons.
- 119 The quality of the teaching observed was good. The teachers' subject knowledge is extensive and is utilised to good effect to provide interesting lessons that motivate the pupils to work hard. The teachers show a good awareness of the importance of developing the skills of historical enquiry and offer meaningful opportunities for this activity. Their very good management of the pupils and their good questioning techniques support this process effectively.
- 120 The history coordinator has recently contributed to a review of the current arrangements for the organisation of the different subjects. She is well aware that the current arrangements mean that history is taught too infrequently. A recent staff development day dealt with this issue and new plans are in place for September to ensure that the subject is taught on a far more regular basis. Currently, there is little recorded evidence of pupils' progress over their time. Visits to places of historical interest such as, Oakham County Museum enhance the pupils' learning. On other occasions visitors are welcomed into the school. For example, a member of the British Legion supported the pupils' learning about Remembrance Day.
- 121 The coordinator has identified the need to produce a collection of samples that shows the context of the work, the level that it illustrates and the skills employed in its execution. The intention is that these initiatives will enable the pupils to make better progress and reach higher standards. They should also provide the school with clearer assessment information.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 122 By the time they are seven, the pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected nationally. This is an improvement since the last inspection where the standards that the pupils attained were below average and progress they made was unsatisfactory.
- 123 The oldest pupils in the school know the different features of the computer such as mouse, keyboard and CD-ROM that they quickly load and use. In discussion, they identify which of the features displayed are useful and which of them control the programs. The higher attaining pupils know how to 'drag and drop' items on screen by using the mouse. The Year 1 pupils are confident in using the computers to draw pictograms using the weather data that they have collected. The teaching in this

Year 1 lesson was satisfactory and had good features such as the use of a projector to involve more pupils in the class introduction to the topic. In another similar lesson in Year 1, the teaching was particularly good, as the teacher involved the pupils in the deciding which features were useful and which were not. The conclusion to the lesson was also very effective in outlining the special features of the program, such as the printing commands. The pupils in Year 2 use the computer to help them in other subjects. For example, in a science lesson, they used a program to find out about different features of Australia, such as animals and physical landmarks. The pupils also use the computers in their English work. In a Year 2 lesson, for instance, the pupils created a 'spells' and 'results' page very effectively, although their past work does not indicate that they use the word processing features frequently. Other areas are covered appropriately, such as the drawing and paint functions of an art program and the work produced by the pupils reaches the expected levels. Overall, the teaching is good in that the weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been addressed well. Informal discussion with the pupils gives an insight into their knowledge of how technology is used in everyday items such as toys, telephones and video recorders. This is generally appropriate for their age. The pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall as they move through the school. They have good adult assistance in many lessons and the work is planned well at the appropriate level.

- 124 The coordination of the subject is good overall. The policy has been reviewed and updated and includes guidance on the use of the Internet. Currently, the scheme of work is being updated to include more nationally produced guidance in support of the published scheme that is used. The teachers' planning has been monitored and evaluated across the school to see how links are made with the youngest classes. The assessment arrangements are appropriate overall; the recording sheets are helpful, but the information is not always used effectively to gain a clear picture of the pupils' progress. Overall, the resources are satisfactory, and the use of a projector enhances the quality of lessons and makes the best use of the resources available. All staff have had their nationally funded training. Some links are developed with the community, and life long learning in partnership with the school run courses for adults.

MUSIC

- 125 By the time they leave the school, the pupils reach standards that are in line with those expected nationally. This is a similar picture to that found at the time of the last inspection.
- 126 On the basis of the two lessons seen and evidence from assemblies and discussion with the pupils, it is evident that the pupils reach the standards expected. In Year 1, the pupils learn to appreciate the styles of different composers, and are confident in expressing their views about the music they are listening to. The teaching encourages the pupils to listen well, and to ponder on their feelings. On occasions, however, the pupils are given too much guidance about the piece of music they are hearing, and this limits the use of their imagination. The change from listening to audio compact discs to listening to musical instruments is planned effectively for example. The pupils also enjoy learning the graphic aspect of the subject, using cutout shapes of fish to illustrate where the music goes up and down in pitch. By the time the pupils are seven, they build effectively upon their previous learning. In Year 2, the pupils enjoy listening to the 'Flight of the bumblebee' and are skilful in using their hands to show quick and slow tempo. They also develop their singing skills appropriately, and learn new songs quite quickly, despite having unclear words on the overhead projector to learn from. Rhythm and tempo activities develop the pupils' understanding of timing and beat using simple clapping games and rhymes. The pupils with special educational needs learn well, supported by the special needs assistant who sensitively guides them during these activities. Informal discussion with the pupils indicates that they have a variety of opportunities to sing within assemblies and on special occasions. In the assemblies, they sing in tune and keep to the beat of the music, although they are a little quiet.

- 127 The coordination of the subject is satisfactory, and the policy and scheme of work provide an appropriate range of activities. The co-ordinator has a good overview of the work that is taking place to ensure continuity and progression from class to class. The appointment of a part-time music specialist has enhanced the provision, and the quality of teaching is now satisfactory overall. The school now plans to provide more staff with guidance by the music specialist and further in-service training. There is some assessment of pupils' progress, but this is not always recorded and used effectively. The school has developed some links with the junior school next door, where the pupils have listened to live musical performances.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 128 The standards reached by pupils at the age of seven are similar to those expected nationally and in line with those found at the last inspection.
- 129 During the inspection, outside games, gymnastics and country dancing were observed. In Year 1, the pupils reach good standards in their outside activities. They throw a ball accurately to each other, and measure their progress by keeping account of the number of times they throw the ball into a hoop. The pupils have a good understanding of their own learning, work together well and are keen to improve their skills. Their ball dribbling skills are generally good and they perform at appropriate levels in their gymnastic activities. For example, they are aware of the own safety and that of others as they jump carefully off a bench and land softly. The higher attaining pupils make different shapes with their bodies as they jump, such as star jumps, and some can change the way they land. The teachers pay good attention to health and safety issues and they have good relationships with their pupils. This helps to develop positive attitudes and enhances the learning that is taking place. However, there is little evidence of a problem solving approach when the pupils are using the apparatus. This would add challenge to the activities and further enhance the pupils' learning.
- 130 The pupils enjoy these activities and take part willingly. They take care when moving around the hall and listen to the teacher giving instructions. In Year 2, the pupils learn simple steps and routines in country dancing. They move in different directions to the call of the teacher and the beat of the music. They learn a routine quickly and after a short time they can follow a series of steps and the sequence of a dance. The pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons, benefiting from well planned activities that both challenge and support them.
- 131 The co-ordination of the subject is good overall. The policy has recently been updated, and there is now guidance about how large apparatus should be moved in gymnastics. The scheme of work follows a published outline for gymnastics, dance, and games. It has recently been modified to the needs and aims of the school. The teachers' planning has been monitored and suitable evaluations made of its quality. There is one after school club called 'jump rope' involving physical activity. It is related to a charity fundraising activity. The resources, which are stored centrally, are good in terms of quality and quantity. There are some links with other schools, such as the junior school next door, but these are not extensive.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 132 Standards in religious education are in line with those expected of pupils aged seven and are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection. Only one lesson was observed. Therefore, discussions with pupils and the subject leader, and scrutiny of the pupils' work and the teachers' planning have also been used in framing the following judgements.

- 133 The pupils in Year 1 visit churches in Burton Latimer and can describe the important features of the buildings. They know about festivals and celebrate them in school as part of the Christian calendar. They increasingly become aware that not all people attend the same church or worship in the same way. In their work on Judaism, the family aspect is emphasised. The pupils in Year 2 enthusiastically recall the story of Noah and accurately describe significant events in the story. They also enjoy retelling other bible events such as the story of Joseph and offer points of view in defence of the actions taken by the main characters. The symbolism of weddings and christenings attracted much attention and discussion. The enthusiastic responses from pupils indicate a high level of interest in religious education.
- 134 The school follows the Northamptonshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education. It also benefits from the facility to borrow artefacts from the local education authority to supplement its own resources for teaching about other religions. The teachers' planning indicates good cross-curricular links.
- 135 The quality of the teaching in the one lesson observed was good. It was an introduction to the diversity of the expression of religious belief, and the teacher was imaginative in dealing with the ways that people show they belong to different groups. A range of football shirts was an appropriate reminder during the World Cup week of how people share aspirations and allegiance. Through discussion, the teacher identified other institutions to which the children and their parents belonged. The work exercised the pupils' speaking and listening skills purposefully as they shared their interests. It also drew upon their literacy skills as they wrote about their feelings towards the groups to which they belong. A learning support assistant helped the lower achieving pupils with their work, quietly encouraging them through focused questions and support with their writing. The pupils enjoy religious education partly because it presents a forum for them to discuss their feelings. They are interested in the different ways people from different parts of the world express their beliefs.
- 136 The subject is well led. The co-ordinator is preparing a portfolio of assessed work to enable the staff to identify more easily the levels of their pupils' attainment. There have been no opportunities to monitor the teaching, though the teachers' planning and the pupils' work have been scrutinised for some time.