

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTON-IN-HALES C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

Norton-in-Hales, Market Drayton

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123491

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Judy Udale

Reporting inspector: Hugh Protherough
8339

Dates of inspection: 18th – 20th February 2002.

Inspection number: 196389

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior school

School category: Voluntary Controlled

Age range of pupils: 4-11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Main Road
Norton-in-Hales
Market Drayton
Shropshire

Postcode: TF9 4AT

Telephone number: 01630 653084

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Kathryn Dwyer

Date of previous inspection: 6th – 8th May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8339	Hugh Protherough	Registered inspector	English Information and communication technology Physical education Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9510	Christine Murray-Watson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20350	Vivien Davies	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Geography History Music	How well does the school care for its pupils?
20498	Mary Hamby	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage Science Art and design Design and technology Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a small village primary school with 76 pupils on roll comprising 35 boys and 41 girls. The current Year 6 is very small (7 pupils), and the Year 2 large (21 pupils). The vast majority of the children are of white ethnic origin. There are four pupils who speak English as an additional language, but none is at an early stage of acquisition. Although many pupils live in the village, a significant number come from neighbouring hamlets and the local market town. Employment levels are high with many parents working as managers or in the professions, consequently the number of pupils entitled to free school meals is very low. The children's attainment on entry covers a wide range but is generally above average. The proportion of them on the special needs register is below average at 15% and includes one pupil with a statement of special educational needs.

The school has coped well with a turbulent few years. Their popular and respected headteacher died two years ago after lengthy illness. His replacement was only in post for six months before she too was taken ill and subsequently resigned at the end of 2001. The deputy headteacher has assumed the role of acting headteacher throughout each absence. A new headteacher will be appointed in the summer term.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The acting headteacher, staff and governing body have done a good job in moving the school forward during difficult times. The quality of education provided is good and standards are secure. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The school charter sets out a vision for the school that is reflected in every aspect of its day-to-day life.
- Standards in English, mathematics, geography and history are above average.
- The pupils are eager and enthusiastic learners who work hard and do their best.
- The teaching is good throughout the school.
- The acting headteacher and her staff team carry out their management responsibilities simply, but effectively.
- The governing body has a good oversight of the work of the school and provides a healthy blend of challenge and support for the staff.
- The information provided for parents is very good and contributes to the strong partnership between the school and many homes.
- The staff take good care of the pupils and know them well.

What could be improved

- The match of tasks to pupils' prior attainment in science.
- Procedures for registering attendance and the storage of attendance registers.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in May 1997 there has been good improvement. Standards in Year 6 are now generally above average in English and mathematics. The quality of the teaching is far more consistent, especially in Key Stage 2, and the monitoring of the lessons and the standards achieved by the pupils is secure. The leadership now collects a very good range of test and assessment data and uses it effectively to plan improvements in the curriculum and the teaching. Design and technology is being taught properly and the requirements of the local syllabus for religious education are now met. The continuing, committed stewardship of the acting headteacher means that the school is well placed to sustain improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English				
mathematics				
science				

Key

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

The table is left blank because fewer than ten pupils took the tests.

The results of last year's national tests were lower than usual. This was because the group of pupils taking the tests the very small and included a significant proportion with special educational needs. Even so, the overall trend in the school's results has been one of steady improvement in line with the national picture. For instance, the three-year average indicates that the pupils leave school about half a term ahead of the typical eleven-year-old in English, mathematics and science.

The present Year 6 group is even smaller than last year's, and once again contains a wide range of abilities. The inspection findings show that all the pupils are achieving well. For instance the higher attainers are on course to exceed the expected levels in English and mathematics, and the lower attainers are striving to reach the expected level 4. In science standards are average, but the pupils could achieve more.

The results achieved in last year's tests for seven-year-olds show that standards were above average in writing and mathematics and well above average in reading. This year standards continue to be above average in all three subjects. Although there are a few lower attaining pupils, a good number of the abler pupils are on course to exceed the levels expected of typical seven-year-olds.

A strength of the school's performance lies in the generally good achievements of pupils of all abilities. This is a direct result of the teachers' good knowledge of their pupils and their no-nonsense approach to target setting based on firm views of what the children are capable of achieving. The brighter children are being purposefully challenged, especially in English and mathematics, and the strong support for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language ensures that they too make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The pupils are hard working and attentive to their teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The children are polite, well behaved and show good self-discipline, especially on the very small playground.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils are well-rounded individuals who have a keen appreciation of their own learning as well as a good awareness of wider social and world issues. Relationships throughout the school are harmonious, and the pupils' skills of collaborative working are very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Last year's attendance was lower than usual due to two emergency closures and the effects of the foot and mouth outbreak.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	good	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 far stronger and much more consistent than at the time of the last inspection when almost one in three lessons was judged unsatisfactory. On this occasion, no unsatisfactory teaching was observed and the vast majority was at least good, with about a third judged to be very good.

Throughout the school, the teachers manage their classrooms effectively and have established very good relationships with the pupils that generate positive approaches to work. They plan the lessons carefully, especially evident for the teaching of literacy and numeracy where their objectives for learning are generally sharp and clearly understood by the pupils. In many lessons, the pace of learning is brisk because the teachers question the pupils' carefully to check that they understand.

Throughout the school a major strength of the provision is the teachers' high expectation of the children, regardless of their background or ability. They know the children very well and use this knowledge skilfully in planning lessons that interest and motivate, frequently making effective use of the good range of books, computers and other educational resources.

However, there is a weakness in science because the teachers too often set the same work for the whole class. As a result, the brighter pupils are not always fully extended whilst the lower attainers sometimes struggle to understand or complete their written work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a much-improved curriculum that has appropriate breadth and balance and is enriched by a good range of extra curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	These pupils are identified swiftly and receive effective support that helps them to make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Although no specialist support is available, the teachers do a good job in ensuring that the language skills of these pupils continue to improve and that they have full access to the school's curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school provides a wide range of stimulating activities that cater effectively for the children's all round development. There is particular strength in the frequent opportunities offered for the pupils to reflect on moral and social issues.
How well the school cares for its pupils	With the exception of the arrangements for registration the teachers take good care of the children and know them well.

The home school partnership remains strong. The staff work hard to keep the parents informed and offer a very good range of useful information ranging from the Monday newsletter to the predictions for pupils' performance in the national tests. Parents provide strong support for their children's learning at home and many are regularly involved in the day-to-life of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	With the support of her small staff team, the acting headteacher has sustained the school's distinctive ethos and ensured that both the quality of education and the standards achieved by the pupils have continued to improve.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is effective in its support of the school and fulfils all of its statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good and much improved. The acting headteacher and governors evaluate with greater rigour because they now analyse a far wider range of useful information.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There are simple, but effective systems to ensure that the school uses its budget wisely. A good start has been made to introducing the principles of best value.

The staffing levels are good and the class sizes are small. The governors have made wise investment in a good number of teaching assistants. The school's accommodation is well maintained and the limited space used imaginatively. However, the site and buildings have many drawbacks, such as the lack of a school hall, a tiny playground and no playing field. The levels of educational resources are good and include a well-stocked library and recent improvement to the school's supply of computers.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are happy to come to school. • The school's caring ethos that encourages the children to accept responsibility and behave with consideration towards others. • The teaching is good and challenges the children. • The children work hard and generally make good progress. • The management of the acting headteacher over the past few years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An end to the uncertainties about the school's leadership. • Better information about their children's progress. • More extra-curricular activities. • An end to dividing year groups between two classes.

The inspectors agree with the predominantly positive views of the vast majority of parents. In addition, they judge that the school provides a very good level of information about the pupils' progress and that the range of extra-curricular activities offered is good for a school of this size and type. The governing body has made appropriate arrangements for the appointment of a new headteacher. The school does all that it can to ensure a sensible range of age in each class, but from time to time an imbalance in the size of different cohorts might well make it impossible to avoid dividing pupils of a similar age.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The majority of the children arrive at the school with levels of attainment that are generally above average. The inspection findings show that the present small group of reception-aged pupils is making good progress in the early skills of communication, language and literacy, numeracy and their knowledge and understanding of the world, and especially in their personal, social and emotional development.
2. The very small number of pupils in each year group means that the statistical analysis of the results of the national tests must be treated with caution. However, from the results of the four years since the previous inspection it is evident that the pupils' performance at the end of Year 6 has seen marked improvement, particularly in English and mathematics, where standards are now generally above average. The exception was last year, when the results were much lower than usual. In this instance, the cohort was tiny and contained a significant proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Even so, taking the results of the past four years together, the rate of improvement in standards has matched the national trend.
3. Close scrutiny of the test and assessment data shows that despite the large swings in the performance of boys and girls in successive cohorts, on average by age eleven there is no significant gender difference in the performance of the groups. Indeed, a major strength of the school's performance lies in the generally good achievements of pupils of all abilities. This is a direct result of the teachers' detailed knowledge of their pupils and their no-nonsense approach to target setting in English and mathematics based on firm views of what the children are capable of achieving. As a result, in these subjects in particular the brighter children are being well challenged and good support for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language ensures that they too make good progress.
4. The current Year 6 is even smaller than last year's and again contains a wide range of abilities. The inspection findings confirm that all the pupils are achieving well in English and mathematics. Most of the pupils are on course to reach the expected levels and a few should exceed them. The vast majority of the pupils are confident and articulate conversationalists who talk authoritatively about a wide range of subjects. Most read avidly and have a good mastery of a range of writing styles. They enjoy mathematics and have a generally secure grasp of the fundamental skills of numeracy.
5. The results achieved in last year's tests for seven-year-olds show that standards were above average in writing and mathematics and well above average in reading. This year standards continue to be above average in all three subjects. Although there are a few lower attaining pupils, a good number of the more able pupils are on course to exceed the levels expected of typical seven-year-olds.
6. In science, pupils throughout the school are not achieving as well as they might. The vast majority of pupils in Years 2 and 6 are working at the levels expected for seven and eleven year olds, but sometimes the teaching does not build sufficiently upon what the pupils have learnt previously. For instance, the same work is often set for all pupils, regardless of ability. As a result, the more able pupils mark time while the lower attainers struggle to understand and complete their work. **This is a key issue for action.**
7. The previous inspection report identified shortcomings in the pupils' attainment in design and technology and religious education. The teachers have addressed these issues conscientiously and the pupils' work in these subjects now reaches the expected levels in both Years 2 and 6.
8. The quality of the pupils' work in history and geography exceeds the expected levels at ages seven and eleven. Imaginative teaching that makes effective use of artefacts and educational visits extend the children's good general knowledge. The pupils' good literacy skills underpin their enthusiasm for personal research from a variety of sources, including the Internet. Their enjoyment of these subjects shines through in many of their exercise books and folders.

9. All the available evidence gathered during the inspection period indicates that the quality of the pupils' work in the other subjects of the National Curriculum is in line with the levels expected for Years 2 and 6.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The school is successful in establishing constructive relationships with the children as soon as they start, and in turn this positive model helps the children to form good relationships with each other. The children in the Foundation Stage are well behaved and courteous and clearly enjoy their time at school. They work together well; they have developed a sense of belonging to the class and positive dispositions to learning. The children understand the need to take turns and to share their equipment, and they willingly help each other without being prompted to do so.
11. The pupils enjoy school and respond very well to the consistently good teaching that they receive. The value placed on their contribution within lessons and the challenging level at which each child is expected to work promote very good levels of concentration. Consequently, the pupils work hard and show both pleasure and satisfaction with what they are achieving. For example, in a music lesson seen, young pupils showed commendable restraint when first introduced to tuned instruments and investigated the differences between high and low notes responsibly and with great interest. Their willingness to explore different musical patterns and to listen to what others were achieving was commendable, given the temptations of having a percussive musical instrument all to oneself.
12. Although the levels of attendance have been low compared to those normally found in primary schools, this largely relates to the difficulties in getting to school that the pupils in a rural area experienced during the outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease. The current levels of attendance have returned to their normal good levels.
13. Across the school, the children's behaviour is of a consistently high standard. They show a good measure of independence in settling to their work, are prompt to follow instructions and handle books and materials with care. In addition, they display a friendly and co-operative approach when working together, in either pairs or small groups. The respect they are shown by their class teachers is mirrored in the way they treat each other and this makes a positive contribution to the standards of work they are achieving. Ideas are shared freely and the pupils are happy to explain their reasoning when this is appropriate. Outside of lessons, they mix amicably across the different age groups and the older pupils show a caring and friendly attitude towards the little ones. During a wet play time, for example, the pupils moved freely between the three "mobile" classrooms, making good use of the play equipment provided and organising their own activities with little need for adult supervision. The relationship between pupils and the adults in the school is similarly both friendly and respectful.
14. The pupils' involvement in a number of activities, such as the "Eco" project, shows a growing awareness of personal responsibility and of how both individual and group activity can make a positive difference to the world in which they live.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. The teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection when almost one in three lessons was judged unsatisfactory. On this occasion no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The vast majority was at least good, and about a third was very good.
16. Central to the success of the teaching is the extremely positive ethos for learning created by the consistent application of the principles set out in the School Charter. Throughout the school, the teachers and children treat each other with care, consideration and respect. The pupils understand that they are at school to work hard and learn, while the teachers appreciate that to do this successfully the lessons must be purposeful and fun. As a result relationships are harmonious, the pupils behave extremely well and the pace of learning is often brisk.
17. This positive tone is set from an early age. Although there are considerable difficulties in implementing the Foundation Stage curriculum in a class that contains a majority of Year 1 pupils, the teaching successfully incorporates the overwhelming majority of the key features central to successful early

childhood education. The effective induction programme means that the children settle swiftly into the routines of school. The teacher takes care to ensure that there is a rich variety of activities to support learning. The weekly “plan, do and review” sessions provide good opportunities for the children to make choices and develop initiative that is clearly helping in them in other lessons too. For instance, in an ambitious music lesson the teacher arranged for the pupils to work in groups to create their own African dance music using a range of authentic percussion. The lesson was successful because it was well resourced and each section was sensibly paced. The video of an African wedding provided a good starting point because it encouraged discussion and set the focus for learning. The selection of instruments was achieved smoothly and the pupils had just enough time to devise their music and to perform it for their classmates. The effectiveness of the teaching was evident in the consistently high level of collaboration shown by the children and their responsiveness to her questioning and observations. As a result, each group succeeded in producing a simple piece of music, and in one instance their own dance to go with it.

18. Despite the constraints of mixed-age classes, the teachers have successfully introduced the national strategies for teaching English and mathematics. Their planning is strong in these subjects because the frameworks in use help them to be clear about what it is that they expect the children to learn in each lesson. In some of the most successful lessons seen during the inspection, the teachers made these objectives clear to the pupils at the outset and referred to them regularly throughout. For instance, the pupils in Years 5 and 6 made rapid gains in their appreciation of how poets manipulate language to gain maximum effect. This was achieved because they were told what to look and listen for before they heard the teacher read W.H. Auden’s “Night Mail” and were then able to apply similar principles in their analysis of other poems. Similarly, in a very good numeracy lesson the pupils in Years 3 and 4 were told that the focus of their lesson would be to identify the rule that governed a sequence of numbers. This enabled the pupils quickly to appreciate the problem facing them. Furthermore, as a result of some carefully prepared group work, the higher attaining Year 4 pupils rose to the challenge of identifying the rules for some complex number sequences, whilst the teacher and her assistant concentrated on the younger and lower attaining pupils.
19. The teachers consistently effective classroom management skills also contribute strongly to the brisk pace of learning. For instance, there is a common expectation that classrooms are organised in ways that the pupils can access books, equipment and resources for themselves. A recent initiative to ensure that all the pupils improve still further the presentation of their work was evident in the inspectors’ analysis of the exercise books from each class. Other features, such as the skilled use of overhead projectors to present text and to raise questions, clearly help the children to understand what is required. For example, when the Year 3 and 4 pupils were introduced to force-meters in science, the teacher’s careful projection of the different scales of measurement on different types of force-meter ensured that when practical work began the children measured accurately and with good understanding.
20. A further strength lies in the teachers’ questioning skills and their correct usage of technical language. In many lessons, the teachers take great care to question the pupils in ways that encourage them to make links with their previous learning. Thus when the Years 5 and 6 were learning about balanced arguments in English, their teacher reminded them of previous class debates about fox hunting. Then looking at the text of a balanced argument the teacher asked the pupils to consider the “tense” used by the author and to pick out features such as “conditional verbs” and “connectives.” In Year 2, the dramatic reading of a modern fairy tale successfully paved the way for some acute questioning about the similarities to and differences from the traditional version of “Cinderella.” Lessons in science, design and technology, music and physical education all contained good evidence that the pupils’ vocabulary is being regularly enriched and extended and this was confirmed by the conversations between inspectors and pupils. The teachers also take very good care to ensure that the few children who speak English as an additional language understand what is being said. Although these pupils are generally reasonably fluent, the strength of teaching becomes particularly evident when the adults take care to explain colloquial language and stop to explore meaning beyond the literal. This was seen, for instance, in a story where the “paper bag princess” says of Prince Ronald, “You’re a toad.”
21. Throughout the school, the teachers’ have high expectations of the children regardless of either their background or ability. They know the children very well and use this knowledge skilfully in planning lessons that interest and motivate them. They encourage independent learning in class and often set

stimulating homework challenges, such as research for history and geography. In order to help the pupils improve their work, the teachers have begun to set targets that are fixed in the front of their exercise books. This is a useful start. However, the marking of the children's work seldom refers to the targets and this currently limits their usefulness as a tool for improvement.

22. The teachers have worked systematically and imaginatively to overcome the weaknesses in their subject knowledge identified in the previous report. The wholehearted commitment of the staff to planning for school improvement and developing performance management derives from an honest appraisal of the areas needing action and identification of the training required by the teachers. The improvements in the pupils' work in design and technology and religious education reflect the teachers' increased confidence. Similarly, the use of external expertise, such as that of the gymnastics coach in physical education and the local schools music service for instrumental tuition, also adds to the range and quality of the school's provision for its pupils.
23. In English and mathematics, the teachers set tasks that are generally well matched to the abilities of the pupils, but this is not always the case in science. The analysis of the pupils' exercise books shows that in many lessons all the children have to tackle the same sort of work, often on a worksheet. As a result, the more able pupils often complete work quickly and lack the necessary challenge to extend their scientific understanding, whilst the lower attainers struggle to complete the written recording of what they have been doing. A further weakness of this approach is that pupils are not being given sufficient opportunities to learn to record their experiments by setting out charts, tables and written commentary for themselves. **This is a key issue for action.**
24. The teaching assistants are generally deployed effectively to support the pupils during group work activities. For instance, they provide valuable assistance during the literacy and numeracy hours by checking that pupils understand what to do and helping those with special educational needs to concentrate on the task in hand. Some have been successfully trained to run booster groups and programmes such as Additional Literacy Support that are designed to help the lower attaining pupils to catch up. However, on some occasions the teachers could make better use of their assistants. For example, during the opening of some literacy and numeracy lessons the teaching assistants listen to the teacher, but do not always have a specific task, such as noting which pupils answer questions and which ones are having difficulty understanding.

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

25. Since the last inspection, the school has worked successfully to redress the shortcomings identified in design and technology and religious education so that its curriculum now has greater breadth and better balance. There is a sound programme of personal, social and health education that includes appropriate opportunities for sex education and elements that raise the pupils' awareness of the dangers of the misuse of drugs.
26. The adoption of the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy has been managed effectively and the suggested planning frameworks have been successfully adapted to meet the needs of pupils being taught in mixed age classes. The teaching of the other subjects of the National Curriculum benefits from a series of coherent long term plans that set out clearly what is to be taught and when.
27. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is planned well and provides relevant learning opportunities and realistic challenges within the constraints imposed by the children being taught in a mixed-age class. The curriculum builds on the children's existing knowledge and takes account of any special educational needs that they might have. Suitable opportunities are provided for the children to have access to outdoor play as part of their programme, and purposeful activities are planned that engage the children in the learning process.
28. The acting headteacher's honest self-evaluation acknowledges the difficulties facing a small staff team in providing subject expertise in all areas. As a result, the staff has adopted a number of sensible approaches such as employing external expertise and training to improve their own skills and knowledge. This approach is successful in adding further breadth to what the school provides. A further strength is

the regular use of educational visits, both locally and further afield, that adds depth to the pupils' learning. For instance, to Shugborough Hall and the adventurous pursuits centre at Arthog.

29. Although a few parents would prefer a wider choice, the small staff team does a good job in providing an interesting range of extra curricular activities. During the inspection, there were clubs for French, drama and computing and at other times there is netball, soccer and country dancing. The school's strong links with the community are reflected in a recent initiative by which the pupils learned to play crown green bowls at the village club.
30. There are strong links with the local nursery and playgroup that share the school site. This is evident from the many positive comments of the parents about the effective induction programme and the easy way that the children swiftly settle into life at school. The Year 6 pupils transfer to a variety of secondary schools, some of which are selective and have entry by examination. A few pupils find places at these schools, but the majority of them transfer to the comprehensive at the market town nearby. There are good links, including a series of visits for the pupils to get used to the school site and buildings. Conversations with the staff also indicate an increasing level of primary and secondary school liaison in relation to approaches to teaching and learning.
31. Taken overall, the school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is very good. The major strengths lie in the areas of social and moral development, both of which are clearly based on "The School Charter." Many of the children who spoke with the inspectors described the school as "a big family." This comes about as a direct result of the consistent role models presented by the teachers. They treat the pupils fairly, speak to them politely and are clearly interested in what they have to say. There is a heavy emphasis upon developing the pupils' abilities to think and act independently, so from an early stage they are trusted to cross the playground unaccompanied to collect books and equipment from the main school building. The older pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility for the younger ones and the relationships formed are often strong and long lasting. For instance, one six year old confided to an inspector over lunch that, "I miss X, he's left school now." The inspector asked where the friend had gone. "Oh no, he's moved to secondary school, but I haven't seen him for absolutely ages!" A further strong feature is the way that visitors to the school are given a tour by two of the oldest pupils. This emphasizes to the pupils their central role in the school and the importance attached to their views of what school is really like.
32. The teachers do a very good job in nurturing the pupils' moral development. Contemporary matters are frequently discussed and debated in class, and the teachers are assiduous in helping the pupils to develop a good awareness of local, national and international issues. As a result, the weekly newsletters are full of the pupils' spontaneous responses as they attempt to assist others less fortunate than themselves by organizing fund raising events. Good examples were the "Jeans for genes" day in October and fund raising for Afghanistan. The pupils are developing a strong sense of right and wrong actions, and by the age of eleven are starting to realize some of the deeper complexities of moral argument, for instance in relationship to the debate over fox hunting.
33. The provision for the pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good. As well as regular prayer within worship, the children are given good opportunities in lessons to reflect on their work and experiences and on life's deeper questions. Conversations with the children reveal a good appreciation of the work of Western European authors, artists and musicians. There are regular theatre trips to see both pantomime and productions of Shakespeare. The pupils have won prizes in national poetry and art competitions. The cultural diversity of 21st century Britain is celebrated through such events as an "India Day", work on the Chinese New Year and the current study of African music and dance in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. A group of children described their experience at the school as "belonging to a family". This captures the ethos well and reflects the high standard of care that this small village school offers its pupils. The children in the Foundation Stage are looked after very well. There are good induction procedures for both children and parents backed up by an informative and helpful booklet. The children settle readily and happily into the routines of the classroom. They quickly learn what is expected of them and staff

consistently reinforce good work and behaviour with praise. Throughout the school, parents have very good opportunities to speak informally to staff about any small matters of concern. There are good systems for assessing the pupils' abilities and monitoring their progress based on careful observation, discussion and testing.

35. There has been a thorough response to the issues raised in the last inspection about the use made of test and assessment data. Since then, the school has made major improvements in procedures and arrangements for assessing the pupils' academic attainment development, especially in English and mathematics. The assessments for all other subjects are graded on a three-point scale and are generally sharp, though less detailed. They are reported well.
36. The end-of-year tests in English and mathematics are used to track individual progress throughout the school. The results are carefully analysed to discover what each pupil knows, what needs to be taught next and which aspects of the subjects the pupil finds difficult. An analysis of results by gender and ethnicity is routinely carried out. All the information so gained is then used in curricular planning. The school has made a good start with target setting for the pupils, so they know what they need to do to improve. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However some refinements, for example simpler language, fewer targets and more frequent reviews, are needed if the process is to be fully effective.
37. In nearly every class, the educational support and guidance are very good because the teachers are very committed to their pupils, know them very well, respect them and are working with each one on an agenda of academic and personal development. The parents declare this to be very evident during discussions about their child and in the accurate annual reports they receive.
38. The school also successfully supports the pupils' personal development. The process is clearly reflected in the ethos of the school and was observed during assembly and personal, social and health education lessons. The pupils are very aware of health and safety issues, for example, when they cook or use tools. There are very precise policies about recording instances of poor behaviour and bullying. The school charter formalises the high expectations for polite and courteous behaviour placed on all children. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are fundamental to the school's caring agenda. The all-pervasive good behaviour culture and the pupils' constant experience of many good adult role models have very positive effects.
39. The pupils with special educational needs take part in all aspects of school life and receive a good level of support, both personal and academic. The school's good special educational needs provision, including effective links with outside agencies, helps the pupils to make good progress. Individual educational plans include attainable targets, which are reviewed regularly with the pupils and parents. The few children with English as an additional language are also supported well so that they too make good progress. Child protection procedures are in place, but training is required for new staff so that they are fully conversant with all aspects of this important issue.
40. Attendance and punctuality are properly monitored with appropriate occasional support from the educational welfare service. However, the arrangements for registration and storage of registers during school day require improvement. At present, the loose-leaf sheets that constitute the register also contain school meals information so they are stored in the kitchen. This presents a potential health and safety risk that could result in the register not being available for checking procedures in the event of a fire. **This is a key issue for action.**
41. Other arrangements for the health, safety, care and welfare of the pupils are good. Health and safety procedures are widely understood and the supporting procedures set out clearly for staff in a useful handbook. The governors conduct regular reviews of health and safety, and the local education authority has also undertaken a recent audit. The supervision during the mid-morning break and lunchtimes is good, and on the few occasions when accidents occur appropriate first aid is available.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

42. The school has an effective partnership with parents to support the children's transition from home to school. The teachers respect the parents' role as co-educators and are keen to involve them in their children's school life. A very useful information pack is given to parents before the children start school, and the information flow is continuous thereafter. The home/school reading book is used productively to explain to the parents what the teaching is focusing on, and what should be practised at home. The parents show by their comments that they appreciate this advice, and are forthcoming with their own assessments of what their children have achieved.
43. The parents have largely positive views of the school and are happy with the education being provided for their children. In particular, they appreciate how much their children like coming to school, the good teaching they receive and the ease with which they feel able to approach the school with any questions or problems. The circumstances requiring several changes of head teacher were clearly beyond the school's control, but have nevertheless given rise to some anxieties. Concerns were also expressed about the amount of homework being set and the range of activities being offered outside lessons. The inspection evidence confirms the areas where the parents feel the school is particularly strong, but does not find sufficient evidence to justify the concerns expressed.
44. It is evident that the school maintains an effective dialogue with the parent body and is prepared to respond to suggestions and concerns. For example, an improved system of annual reporting has recently been introduced at its suggestion. This now gives a very good picture of what each child is achieving and the way they are tackling the work. A newly created reception area provides a welcoming environment for parents coming in to the school and there are opportunities at the end of the school day for them to have informal contact with the teaching staff. The parents appreciate the regular "Monday Letter" which gives a good level of information about forthcoming events.
45. There is an active "Friends Association" that works hard to raise valuable funds for the school each year. For example, it makes a substantial contribution annually to the school's provision for computer hardware and software, as well as providing a wide range of other educational and recreational resources. The school makes good use of homework and parents provide strong support for their children's learning at home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

46. At the time of the previous inspection the headteacher was ill, sadly, never to return to school. His deputy assumed the role of acting headteacher and guided the school through its first inspection. Although there was much that was positive within the report, it is clear that a succession of temporary supply teachers in the class with the oldest children badly affected the continuity of their education. Important aspects of school management, such as the use of test and assessment data to track children's performance, were only at an early stage of development. Since then life has not been any easier. A new headteacher started work in January 2001, but remained in post for just six months before falling ill and resigning in December. Consequently, it has again fallen to the deputy to assume the role of acting headteacher for the period leading up to the latest inspection and until a new headteacher can be appointed for September 2002.
47. Although a number of parents are clearly anxious to see a new headteacher in post, the inspection team endorses the views of the vast majority of parents that the leadership of the acting headteacher during these difficult times has been extremely effective. This is principally because she has encouraged the children, staff and governors to hold fast to their key beliefs about the central mission of the school. These values are set out in the school charter; a document that was the brainchild of the late headteacher and that continues to inform every aspect of the school's life. The management style of the acting headteacher may be quiet and understated, but she leads strongly, by example and enjoys the full support of her staff team. A shared commitment to developing a love of learning, high standards and excellence was apparent throughout the inspection.
48. Further evidence of this purposeful leadership is the robust way that the school now checks to see whether or not its implementation of the charter is successful. The principles of challenge and comparison are very much to the fore because the governors make regular visits to check each charter point and evaluate both provision and outcomes. They do this by speaking with the pupils about their

attitudes to work and behaviour. The staff support this process because they are far more rigorous in their own monitoring and evaluation of many aspects of the school's performance. For instance, the teachers have a better grasp of the standards being achieved by the pupils and now track individual performance assiduously, particularly in the core skills of literacy and numeracy. This is a big improvement on the picture shown by the last inspection report. They have been responsive to parental views about the quality and depth of the information provided about the pupils' progress, and are now in the position to predict with considerable accuracy the future performance of individual children and to state what they need to do in order to improve. All these activities are positive indicators of the good start made by the school in establishing the principles of best value.

49. The small staff team adopts a sensibly pragmatic approach to the business of school management. They make the best possible use of their respective experience and expertise to tackle issues such as policy making and curriculum planning as a team. The notes maintained from monitoring exercises show that the teachers are open and professional in their dealings with each other, when discussing the merits of samples of pupils' work and evaluating lessons by watching each other teach. Strengths are recognised, but equal weight is given to identifying how things might be improved; for instance, by establishing more consistent expectations of how the pupils should present their work. This impression was confirmed during the inspection when the staff met as a group with the inspectors to discuss their work. Each made valuable contributions to the discussion and provided helpful insights into how they work together. For example, it is clear that the introduction of Performance Management has been successfully managed. Each teacher has appreciated the opportunity to review her performance; to reflect on success as well as identifying future targets. A further strength of the process is that teachers recognise how their personal targets fit within the broader framework of the school improvement plan.
50. Although the uncertainties surrounding the departure of the last headteacher were difficult, the processes of planning for future school improvement have continued remarkably smoothly. Both the staff and governors play an active role in the evaluation of the progress of the current school improvement plan and in the creation of priorities for the next one. For instance, the teachers are regularly involved in making presentations to the governing body about initiatives specific to the plan, and the acting headteacher also provides detailed written reports. In order to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the new plan, questionnaires are provided each spring for all staff and governors. This works well because it is these responses that form the basis for discussion and the early drafts of the plan. As a result, everyone the inspectors spoke to shared a good understanding of the current priorities and the progress being made towards their realisation.
51. The governing body has a good oversight of the work of the school and fulfils all of its statutory responsibilities. A particular strength lies in the careful blend of support and challenge provided for the staff over the past few years. The arrangements for the appointment of the new headteacher are well in hand and the quality of information provided for candidates is helpful in providing a useful context for their applications.
52. The school makes good use of its delegated budget and augments this successfully through the fund raising activities of the parents and the rent paid by the local playgroup. Expenditure is tied closely to the priorities of the school improvement plan so that, for instance, the necessary improvements to the school's computer resources coincide with investment in staff training. The school secretary maintains detailed accounts so that the headteacher and governors know how much has been spent. She makes effective use of local purchasing consortia to acquire equipment and resources at a good price, but always obtains quotations from several suppliers before purchasing more expensive items.
53. The good range of books, computers and other educational resources provides strong evidence of the effectiveness of the school's financial planning. There has been careful, steady investment to improve resources to meet the demands of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. The small library is well stocked. A recent bid was successful in providing additional computers for the school that are also made available to the local community. Although there is little financial flexibility within the budget of a school of this size, a small amount of money is allocated each year to update the furniture in the classrooms so that pupils are seated in desks and chairs better suited to their age and size.

54. The governors have made wise investment in a good number of teachers and teaching assistants to keep the class sizes small. However, the current arrangements place a heavy demand on the acting headteacher because she teaches almost every day of the week as well as dealing with the full weight of school administration and management. This balancing act will be even more difficult for the new headteacher who will need time to become established in the role.
55. The staff and governors make imaginative and effective use of the limited space offered by the school site. The buildings are scrupulously clean and attractively enhanced by samples of the children's work. However, nothing can disguise the fact that the current setting has serious shortcomings when it comes to fulfilling the requirements of a 21st century education. Three classes are taught in temporary demountable buildings; there is no school hall for worship and physical education; the playground is tiny and there is no school field. Although wheelchair access is provided for the temporary classrooms, access to the main school building for pupils with physical disabilities is extremely difficult.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. In order to improve still further the quality of education and the standards achieved by the pupils, the headteacher, staff and governors should now:
- (1) Ensure a more consistent level of challenge in science for pupils of all abilities by establishing a closer match between the tasks set and the pupils' prior attainment. (Paragraphs 6, 94)
 - (2) Develop a secure system for recording and storing the information relating to the pupils' attendance. (Paragraph 40)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	14

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	9	13	4	0	0	0
Percentage	0	35	50	15	0	0	0

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	YRec – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	71
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YRec – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	12

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.76
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	4	10	14

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	4	4	4
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	14	14	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	4	4	4
	Girls	10	9	10
	Total	14	13	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	93 (100)	100 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	[]	[]	[]	[]

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	[]	[]	[]
	Girls	[]	[]	[]
	Total	[]	[]	[]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	[] ([])	[] ([])	[] ([])
	National	[] ([])	[] ([])	[] ([])

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	[]	[]	[]
	Girls	[]	[]	[]
	Total	[]	[]	[]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	[] ([])	[] ([])	[] ([])
	National	[] ([])	[] ([])	[] ([])

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	3
Chinese	0
White	70
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: YRec – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Average class size	19

Education support staff: YRec – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	44

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
	£
Total income	200671
Total expenditure	190795
Expenditure per pupil	2120
Balance brought forward from previous year	5968
Balance carried forward to next year	15844

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	76
Number of questionnaires returned	48

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	40	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	40	6	4	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	50	6	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	48	23	0	4
The teaching is good.	50	42	2	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	48	13	4	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	27	6	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	46	0	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	48	31	15	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	23	46	19	4	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	63	0	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	44	19	2	4

Other issues raised by parents

Many parents expressed the view that the acting headteacher has done sterling work in leading the school through periods of considerable turbulence. However, there is concern that a permanent headteacher is appointed as soon as possible to take the school forward.

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. At the time of the inspection there were four girls and three boys in the Foundation Stage. Three of these children were still four years of age. The children are admitted to the school in the term in which they become five years of age and are taught in a class with pupils in Year 1. The school has strong links with the nursery, which is housed in the school building, and many of the children attend this facility before coming to the school. The transition between home and school is carefully handled, and the school provides an inclusive ethos where the children feel valued. It has developed strong links with the parents, and as a consequence the teachers know the children well before they start. The parents value the comprehensive induction pack that details the provision that will be made for their children. In turn, they supply the school with pertinent information to help the teachers to assess their children's abilities on entry to the school. The school's "baseline" assessment shows that over the past few years the children have entered the school with abilities that are above the usual expectation for four-year-olds. An analysis of the records shows that the children make good progress in their reception year and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
58. The Foundation Stage was not reported separately at the time of the previous inspection. However, the school has built successfully on the strengths that were reported and rectified the areas of weakness.

Personal, social and emotional development

59. The children's attainments are above expectations because they were thoroughly prepared for school and have been taught well since they started. The teaching helps the children to feel secure and cared for, and sensitively builds on what they can do for themselves in order to foster their growing independence. The teacher understands the need for them to be actively involved in their own learning and plans activities for them to do this. In the weekly "Plan, Do and Review" sessions, for example, the children are given the freedom to try things out for themselves; are urged to persevere; to evaluate their efforts and to respect the efforts of others. In this way, they learn a great deal about their own capabilities and become aware of how they might improve next time. In these sessions, they learn very rapidly and show by their concentration and perseverance that they find learning a rewarding and enjoyable experience.
60. The children behave very well and sit quietly when appropriate, for example, in assembly and at story time. They join in the hymns and prayers and are developing a respect for their own culture and the beliefs of others. A strong aspect of the teaching is that it encourages them to share their feelings, to respond individually, and to talk about why they feel as they do. Stories are chosen carefully to develop this aspect of the area of learning. For example, a traditional Pueblo Indian tale enabled the children to discuss feelings of anger, and traits like laziness, and to share their feelings about being frightened if they have had a bad dream. The sensitive way that the teacher handled this discussion enabled the pupils to learn from each other and to be reassured that their experiences were common amongst the class.

Communication Language and Literacy

61. The school understands that the development of communication and language is at the heart of the curriculum and provides well for this. The children's attainment in all aspects of this area of learning is above the expected levels. When the children enter school, they are confident in talking about their needs and interests, and the teaching develops this self assurance well to enable them to initiate conversation and take account of what others say. They have many opportunities to negotiate, explain and question, and to participate in group discussions. As a consequence, they learn quickly and are eager to contribute their thoughts, ideas and feelings. Good teaching helps to extend the children's vocabulary. The teacher uses a wide vocabulary when talking to the children and has a gentle insistence that they also try to use more adventurous words when recalling events. A particularly successful aspect of the teaching is a strategy called "hot seating" where the teacher adopts the role of one of the main characters in the story. This stimulates the children's interest to ask the "wolf" all sorts of questions and makes an excellent contribution to the development of their speaking and listening skills. The children are

attentive listeners because the teacher models active listening when they talk to her. She shows great interest in their personal views and provides time at the end of lessons when they are encouraged to listen to each other. This routine helps them to understand the nature of conversation and prepares them well for more formal discussion when they enter Key Stage 1.

62. The teacher reads stories enthusiastically, and this engages the interest of the children and helps them aspire to be good readers. They show pleasure when reading their own books and have good recall of the words they are learning. They know that information can be retrieved from books and computers, and they retell a story in the correct sequence. The children are aware that print carries meaning, can follow the text from left to right and make good use of their phonic knowledge to read new words. They also use other strategies that they have been taught, such as looking for cues in the pictures and breaking words down into smaller parts so that they can read them.
63. The children use their phonic knowledge well when writing simple sentences for themselves. Their handwriting is reasonably well formed and the teaching pays sufficient attention to the correct orientation of letters. The staff are helpful and encouraging when the children are writing and provide them with a range of suitable opportunities for them to see that writing has an important purpose.

Mathematical development

64. The children's mathematical attainment is above the expected levels and is developed well not only in specific subject lessons, but also through stories, songs and games. The teaching is good and helps the children to use numbers competently, to see patterns and make connections. It builds on their natural interest in numbers and as a result they learn well. Rhymes such as "Five Currant Buns" help the children to subtract mentally and enable them to become familiar with the sequence of numbers. They are provided with good resources to help them to understand that numerals represent quantities. For instance, regular use of the "washing line" encourages them to work together in order to place the numerals from zero to ten in the correct order. They know what each numeral means including zero, which was described by one of the children as, "There isn't any there".
65. The children use their developing mathematical knowledge to solve problems, such as how much string they need to cut for their model and what size box would be appropriate to contain a puzzle that they had made. The teaching is well paced and encourages the children to complete activities quickly, for instance, sorting out their numbers before the buzzer goes. In bingo games the children are encouraged to think how many more numbers they have left and this helps them to solve simple equations. Their mathematical language is good. They use words such as "heavier", "smaller", and "faster" accurately, and are able to name the common, regular shapes and describe some of their properties.

Knowledge and Understanding of the world

66. The teaching of this area of learning is very good and helps the children to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to help them make sense of their world. The teacher's planning takes account of the children's previous learning, and the activities are based on first hand exploration and problem solving, which encourages them to become critical thinkers. Progress is good and the children's attainment is higher than expectations.
67. The children know that their school is in a village and recall familiar landmarks such as the church that they pass on their way home. They know that the church is a place of worship and that Christmas marks the birth of Jesus Christ. They understand some of the benefits and drawbacks of village life, and realize that they have to go into the local town for most commodities. They know that the town is "much too far away" for them to walk there, and can name appropriate forms of transport for other journeys. They understand the dangers of roads, saying that the lanes are very narrow for the cars and that they have to take care when crossing the road. They are familiar with some of the uses of technology, such as a pelican crossing and realize the consequences of pressing the button.
68. One of the strengths of the teaching in this area of learning is that the teacher judges very well when the children can do things for themselves and when they need assistance. For example, when the children were making their own models, the staff were vigilant and intervened with help to teach particular skills

such as using scissors correctly. In every instance, the children are encouraged to do as much as they can for themselves. In one instance, a girl who was making a frame for her picture encountered difficulty when threading wool through holes punched at the corners of the paper. The teacher watched this and her assistance was both timely and correct. By holding the paper while the girl did the threading, she enabled the child to achieve her aim. The look on the child's face showed the great sense of satisfaction she felt in completing the task for herself.

69. The teaching fosters the children's curiosity well and ensures that they have suitable opportunities to acquire scientific knowledge and understanding in the classroom and in the playground. They learn that the rocking toys that they used in the nursery need forces to make them work, and can identify the force as either a push or a pull. The children relate this learning to their own lives and confidently suggest other actions requiring forces, such as opening a drawer. They also enjoy using technology and have good understanding of its uses. For example, on the computer they have successfully completed pictures using a simple paint program. At playtime, they often use improvised mobile phones to call each other, and they know that a microwave oven is useful for cooking food quickly. They are aware that this technology is of recent origin and that things change and develop with the passing of time.

Physical development

70. The lack of a dedicated outside area imposes some restrictions on this area of learning, but the school makes the best of its available facilities to support children's physical development. Attainment is within the expected range in all aspects of this area of learning, and the children make suitable progress in improving their skills of movement, co-ordination, manipulation and control. There were no physical education lessons during the inspection period and so no judgement of teaching has been made.
71. At playtime, the children join in with running and jumping and clearly enjoy the opportunity to be physically active. They prepare to go outside by putting on their own coats and make good efforts to fasten buttons and zips for themselves. They manipulate the pieces of construction kits well and show good hand-eye co-ordination in fitting interlocking bricks together. The children persevere with puzzles, including those that they find difficult, and rotate the pieces carefully to achieve a fit. They are taught to use tools safely and to look after the equipment that they are given.

Creative development

72. Attainment is within the expected range in all aspects of this area of learning, and the children make suitable progress in art, music, dance and imaginative play. They learn to express their ideas through a variety of media and are given sufficient time to respond to a variety of stimuli. The teaching was good, particularly in music where the teacher captured the children's interest very well by using a video of an African wedding. The lesson progressed well, and the children were eager to use an array of authentic instruments, which they played rhythmically. Good resources are provided to fire the children's imagination in other aspects of this work. For instance, all the children had photocopied pictures to use to help them act out a traditional tale. They were keen to do this, but needed more help and direction to complete the activity successfully. They have lively imaginations and engage in role-play individually and alongside their friends.
73. The children's drawings show appropriate understanding of the human form, and a few have a high degree of detail, such as eyelashes and fingernails. They use paints and crayons with confidence and enjoy the opportunity to record what they have either seen or imagined. They are encouraged to explore colour, texture and shape and are given constructive feedback when they are nearing the completion of their work.

ENGLISH

74. There are usually fewer than twenty pupils in each cohort. Therefore, any comparison of the school's test results with national statistics on an annual basis is generally unreliable. A slightly better indicator is the pattern of the pupils' performance over a number of years. From this perspective, it is evident that in English on average both boys and girls leave school around half a term in advance of the typical eleven-year-old.

75. The inspection findings confirm this positive picture because pupils of all abilities are achieving well. At the ages of seven and eleven, there is a good proportion of higher attaining pupils on course to exceed the levels expected for their age. The vast majority of the remainder should reach at least the expected level and a small minority of lower attaining pupils should come close.
76. The pupils develop rapidly their oral skills because the teachers consistently encourage them to offer views and opinions and to listen carefully to the thoughts of others. The children in the Reception and Year 1 class love joining in with stories and many will ask the teacher spontaneously if they are uncertain about the meaning of new words. Equally, the teacher successfully encourages talk through the use of “discussion partners” where two children share their ideas before reporting back to the class. Many are skilled in working collaboratively because of the strong emphasis placed by the teachers on the development of social awareness. Thus when negotiating the use of instruments in music there are no arguments and everyone gets a turn. The teaching in Year 2 builds solidly on this good start so that by the age of seven most pupils speak and listen with assurance in a wide range of settings including worship where the whole school is present. By the age of eleven, most pupils are confident and articulate conversationalists who discourse freely over a wide number of subjects. The Year 6 pupils are used to acting as hosts and guides to visitors to the school and provide an entertaining and informative commentary about their experience of primary education and their hopes and fears for the future.
77. The vast majority of the pupils are swift to learn to read and write because the teachers have made good use of the guidance provided by the national literacy strategy and teach these skills effectively. In Years 1 and 2, the children are exposed to various types of text including a good range of contemporary children’s literature and poetry, including a number of traditional tales. It is evident from talking with the children that the vast majority enjoy books and read widely and regularly at school and at home. They are developing a good range of methods to tackle unfamiliar words including a thorough appreciation of the sounds of letters. However, a further significant strength of the reading of many higher attaining pupils is their ability to make sensible guesses and approximations based upon their understanding of what has gone before and the context of the unknown word.
78. By the age of eleven, the vast majority of pupils are skilful and discerning readers. In one literacy lesson, the pupils tackled an unseen piece of text enquiring if dogs should be banned from public parks. A number of different pupils read sections of the piece with accuracy and expression, including words such as “toxocarisis” and “biodegradable.” However, the real strength of the reading lay in the ability of the pupils to follow the arguments within the piece and identify those paragraphs that were “pro” dogs and those that were “anti.” Discussing literature with Year 6 is a delight that illustrates again the depth and breadth of the teaching. Each term they are provided with a target sheet that suggests an excellent breadth of reading activity that includes types of poetry, and contemporary and classic fiction. As a result, the pupils are able to talk about any number of myths and legends from their recent work on Ancient Greece and their good knowledge of the traditional tales of Great Britain. They know the key features of the form of a sonnet and that William Shakespeare wrote more than a hundred such verses. One boy has been enthused by the collections of poems edited and written by John Foster whilst others have been fired by the Harry Potter stories of J.K. Rowling. They debate the classification of authors in a serious-minded fashion, deciding for instance that the work of Philip Pullman is more akin to “fantasy” than “science fiction.” All are well placed to meet the demands of secondary education.
79. There has been a recent focus on improving the quality and presentation of the pupils’ writing by providing greater opportunity for them to write more extended pieces that can be polished and improved. There are good signs that pupils of all abilities in Year 2 have made steady progress since September. For instance, one lower attaining pupil who was simply writing strings of letters with no demarcation in September is now writing two or three short phrases that can be readily understood. Similarly, the higher attainers who were writing brief, well structured accounts of their holidays at the start of the school year have progressed to produce handwriting of more even size and fluency and are beginning to experiment with more advanced punctuation such as speech marks. However, the analysis of the children’s books and folders shows that a great deal of the written work in literacy is based upon worksheet materials. Although much of this work is useful and relates to important features of language such as spelling and phonics, the gaps between pieces that the children have written for themselves are too long. Last year, a

significant number of pupils reached only the lower end of the expected level 2. This year there is a similar group, many of whom would benefit from greater and more frequent opportunities to write independently.

80. In Years 3 to 6, the range and depth of the pupils' writing continue to improve at a good rate. For instance, in the Years 3 and 4 class, the pupils are currently reading written reports and translating them into ordered lists of instructions incorporating features such as bullet points. By the age of eleven, the work of almost every pupil reveals a fluent, joined script with the majority of pieces being completed neatly in ink. The pupils have already completed a good volume of work of various types and styles, including autobiography, diaries, personal responses to literature, letters, reviews and accounts of educational visits. Most pupils turn willingly to paper and pen to record their thoughts and ideas and this is further evidenced by some of the good quality research recorded in subjects such as history and geography.
81. There are several strengths that underpin the good teaching of English throughout the school. The close team work of the teachers at the planning stage means that they all have a good understanding of what will be taught and when. The regular monitoring of teaching and the checks made on the children's books also help to ensure that there is a concerted, school-wide effort to improve such features as presentation. In lessons, the teachers encourage the children's participation through their careful questioning and genuine interest in what they have to say. In Year 2, the quality of the teacher's story telling is excellent and her ability to establish character through change of voice works very well. As a result, when she questions the children about the story they are full of ideas and opinions. Similarly, in Year 6 the teacher's excellent subject knowledge leads to some very effective teaching of poetry.
82. The teachers have started to provide their pupils with targets for improvement in their written work. This is a sensible development, but there are ways that this practice might be further developed. For example, in some classes there are too many targets for the children to cope with at one time. Although the teachers mark the pupils' work regularly and in some detail, the vast majority of their written commentary tends to focus on spelling and presentation rather than referring regularly to the targets for improvement. In the classes with the older pupils, more still needs to be done to encourage the higher attaining pupils to examine critically the structure of their writing. Although "draft books" are in regular use, there is seldom evidence of pupils either attempting different openings to their writing or re-arranging the order of events in stories.
83. The school library is well resourced with a good range of fiction and non-fiction materials. There are sets of significant titles from children's literature that are extremely useful for group reading activities. The improvements in the school's provision of computers are reflected in the widespread use of word processing for much of the children's work.

MATHEMATICS

84. As few pupils take the tests each year, the national comparative data is a not a secure indicator of their performance. However, because the school is part of a national sample for monitoring the National Numeracy Strategy, other, more detailed information is available. Reports from this study by HMI and the National Foundation for Educational Research indicate that each cohort is making good progress year on year. The general trend over time is upwards. This is due to the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, skilled teaching and the pupils' interest in the subject. At the previous inspection, standards were above average in key stage 1 and average in key stage 2. The work seen during this inspection indicates that the pupils' attainment is currently above average in Years 2 and 6.
85. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils receive a good grounding in number work. In Year 1, they acquire the language of mathematics as they enjoy a variety of games. They learn to sequence numbers and solve simple number line problems, including adding on three. The Year 2 pupils have a good understanding of the language of addition and subtraction; they can count forwards and backwards in fives and tens, and the more able pupils can do so from different starting points. They are clear about odd and even numbers, doubles and multiples. They can also name two- and three-dimensional shapes, and the higher attaining pupils know some of their properties and can describe the shapes in detail. They tackle problems with confidence.

86. In Years 3 to 6, the pupils build effectively upon what they have learned earlier. For example, in Years 3 and 4 they are confident problem solvers. They learn to look at a sequence of numbers and identify a rule. For instance, the higher attaining pupils successfully tackled this challenging sequence, 4, 8, 9, 18, 19 and 38. In Year 5 and 6, the pupils are able to measure angles using a protractor. The Year 6 pupils can make use of ratio and proportion, for example, when converting recipes to make large quantities.
87. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are very good. The children are ready to begin lessons on time and are very enthusiastic. They enjoy the challenge of new work and concentrate well, sustaining their concentration until the end of the lesson. Throughout the school, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons because of their very positive attitudes to learning and their very good relationships with their teachers and each other. The lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well supported by the learning support assistants so that they make good progress in lessons. The good teamwork between the teachers and the learning support assistants ensures that group work is presented effectively to all pupils, including the high attainers. However, the classroom assistants could be engaged more effectively in the taught part of the lesson. This might include recording information about responses to questions, observing specific pupils or checking that the pupils with special educational needs are understanding the new learning.
88. During the inspection, the teaching of mathematics was generally good, and in some instances it was very good. The teachers' planning has been adapted successfully to the framework suggested by National Numeracy Strategy. Consequently, there is a clear structure of what will be covered in each year with a successful emphasis on developing mental strategies. Based upon this overall structure, the teachers' daily planning always includes work that is hard enough to challenge all pupils. However, the learning objectives are not exploited fully to further learning. Some teachers make the purpose of the lesson clear to pupils, but this is not a consistent feature. Nor is it common practice at the end of the lesson to refer back to the learning objective so that the pupils can evaluate their own learning. The lessons have a clear focus on the teaching of basic mathematical skills and then applying them to problems. There is a good balance between whole class work and group work and a strong insistence on getting the pupils to explain how they have worked things out. This not only reinforces their mathematical thinking, but also enhances their speaking and listening skills. Effective questioning of pupils encourages them to think things through and the pace at which lessons are delivered means that pupils are actively involved and pay attention throughout. Pupils have individual targets in their exercise books but some of the language is not child friendly and often there are too many targets.
89. A significant strength of one very good lesson was the use the teacher made of visual aids. She made constant reference to the hundred square so that the pupils were able to observe the emerging pattern as they counted in tens. She then used this knowledge as a basis for introducing counting in fives. She further reinforced this new learning by using an unlabelled number stick so that pupils could count forwards and backwards. She assessed their recall by pointing to various points on the imaginary number line and asking for pupils to name the number by location only. The teacher paid very good attention to language development and the use of correct terms including multiples, and as a result the pupils made good gains in their learning.
90. The curriculum is broad and well balanced and fully satisfies statutory requirements. The pupils' numeracy skills are further developed through their application to activities in other subjects. This includes using co-ordinates in geography and selecting appropriate units for measure, time lines in history and many opportunities taken in science to create graphs, conversion tables and scales. The teachers are beginning to use information and communication technology well in their mathematics lessons. The teaching and learning are well supported by good management from a recently appointed co-ordinator. She has received training and with the head teacher is beginning to monitor the subject carefully by observing lessons and discussing with teachers their strengths and areas for improvement. The teachers' planning is checked and the results of the regular assessment programme are analysed so that the teachers know what the children can and cannot do. The parents are given very good information that includes accurate prediction of the levels their children might attain in the national tests. The resources are of good range and quality, are well maintained and suitable for the effective presentation of the curriculum.

SCIENCE

91. In last year's national tests, the pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 achieved results that were well below average when compared with all other schools nationally, and with schools with a similar intake. On average, the pupils were a little over a term behind what is expected, and the proportion attaining the higher level was lower than the national average. The results in the previous year were well above average. These two examples show that caution needs to be exercised when judging the school's performance on the results of a comparatively small number of pupils. The trend over the past four years has been slightly above the national average, with little discernable difference between the performance of girls and boys.
92. In the lessons seen during this inspection and from other evidence gathered, it is clear that standards at the end of the Key Stage 2 meet expectations. For example, the pupils talk with confidence about the work that they have recently completed on electricity. They know how to construct a circuit using a battery and how to incorporate a switch to make a device work. They have used this knowledge to good effect in lighting a model room that they have designed. Their books show that they know how to use conventional symbols to illustrate circuit diagrams and that by changing the number of components in a series circuit they can make the bulbs either brighter or dimmer. The pupils enjoy the practical elements of the subject, and the range of investigative work builds on what they have learnt earlier in the key stage. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils enjoyed the opportunity to measure forces and showed high levels of cooperation in their group activities. Their attainment was high in this lesson because the level of challenge was well matched to what they already understood, and they were motivated to learn more about how they could measure the forces.
93. At Key Stage 1, the pupils' performance in last year's teacher assessments was judged to be very high; it was in the top five per cent nationally. The lessons observed during the inspection show that pupils are working within the expected levels. The pupils identify the action needed to change a shape and they know that some changes are temporary and that others are permanent. They identify the main bones in the human body using everyday language like "backbone", and are starting to understand how the body changes with age. Most of them are able to sort various objects into categories of living and non-living things with the help of criteria given by their teacher. They recognise that living things need food for growth, and are starting to learn about the constituents of a healthy diet.
94. Across the school, the work in the pupils' books covers an appropriate range of science. However, some of the pupils are not making the progress that they could because the work is not matched well enough to their prior attainment. On too many occasions the work is the same for all the pupils in the year group, and the expectations for the higher attaining pupils are too low. On the other hand, discussion with some of the lesser able pupils revealed that they had not completely understood the work that had been covered earlier in the year because it was too hard for them. Some of the work in their books was not finished and diagrams were not presented well enough because the level of challenge was too high. Worksheets do not help the pupils to improve their own presentation, and in some instances are incomplete. For example, worksheets about the human body and fruit in Key Stage 1 were completed easily by the more able pupils, but were half-finished by the pupils of average ability. In one of the Key Stage 2 lessons seen during the inspection, (on how the earth moves relative to the sun) the higher attaining pupils were not making sufficient progress because the task lacked challenge. The pupils said that they had covered the work before; they already knew that their test would show that the shadows would shorten as the sun got higher in the sky. The homework set at the end of this lesson had also been given before. The targets for the pupils are not yet securely established, and this further hampers progress because the teachers are not clear enough about what each pupil needs to learn next. **Improving the match of pupils' work in science is a key issue for action.**
95. Other aspects of the science teaching are good. The teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and their behaviour management is very good. The pupils enjoy their lessons, respond well to the tasks and show confidence in putting forward their own ideas. The teachers' questioning is good and helps to assess how well the pupils have understood the main points of the lesson. The resources are used very well and the subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. For instance, in a Key Stage 2 lesson about space, the pupils were truly amazed when the teacher demonstrated the relative sizes of the sun and earth using a space hopper and a tiny ball. Their gasps

showed their amazement and wonder. The lesson also included an African creation story and set that alongside other ideas they had about how the universe was formed.

96. A strong feature of the teaching is that it engages the interest of the pupils in practical investigations that are effective in helping them to understand that scientific ideas are based on evidence. This is an area of improvement since the previous inspection when the inspectors noted the need for scientific skills to be practised. Further improvements have been made in monitoring the way that the subject is taught. Although the coordinator has only recently been appointed, she has clear ideas about how the subject should be moved forward and has the capability of doing so. Good links with the parents and the local community support the subject well. Homework projects often involve parents, for instance in supplying facts about the pupils' birth, to support work on growth in a Key Stage 1 class. The local environment is also used well, and visits to places of interest are chosen wisely to supplement what is provided within the school.

ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

97. Although there were few opportunities to observe these subjects being taught, there was sufficient work on display around the school to indicate that the subjects are covered in appropriate depth and that all the pupils make suitable progress. This is a clear improvement from the time of the previous inspection when standards in design and technology were below the national expectations. The school has been successful in implementing its action plan and raising the profile of design and technology so that standards are now within the expected range at both key stages. The school now provides suitable opportunities for the pupils to use a wide range of tools and materials.
98. The pupils in Year 1 are taught the importance of design, and the benefits of evaluating both the design and the product itself. They learn well in their weekly lesson because they have the opportunity to make products that have a real purpose. In the week prior to the inspection, for example, the pupils made a "story sack" to go with a traditional tale and they were rightly pleased with how well such articles as the wolf, the cottage and Red Riding Hood turned out. During the inspection, the teacher again introduced a task that had real purpose, and which motivated the pupils to do their best. In response to the need to create something to amuse "Lazy Jack", one girl was in the process of making a book and told the inspector, "If it doesn't look right, he won't be interested in it and he will be lazy again". This attitude captures the essence of the pupils' enthusiasm for the subject that is evident throughout the school. Discussions with the pupils revealed how much they enjoy the opportunity to work practically and creatively. In Year 2, the pupils enjoyed the opportunity to develop their design skills by adding labels to their vehicle diagrams. They also used their sketch books well to try out various ideas before starting to paint or print. Their recent visit to the local church provided a good stimulus for work in clay, and their finished tiles show how carefully they had observed the patterns in the roof and floor of the building.
99. Collaborative work in these subjects helps to develop the pupils' social skills, and the teachers ensure that such opportunities are planned into their lessons. In Years 3 and 4, for example, the pupils have worked together in small groups to produce toys that have a moving part. These toys are of good quality and the pneumatic element in the moving part links well with their work on forces in science. In addition, the storyboards for these "moving monsters" were used very effectively in an English lesson about instructional texts. Good links are evident with information and communication technology; for instance, the use various computer programs extended the pupils understanding of design, line and tone. Recent work includes using the spray function in a paint program where the pupils have overlaid successfully different tones to evoke the desired mood for various landscapes. Their landscape paintings show that the pupils use washes successfully to distinguish the sky from the land, and their ability to mix various shades from the primary colours is helping to give their paintings tonal harmony. Discussions with the pupils in Years 5 and 6 showed that they also had a reasonable grasp of how to use perspective to give their pictures a realistic feel. They understand some of the similarities and differences in the work of artists and craftspeople and talk confidently about their preferences.
100. The subjects are enriched by visits to the local area and farther a field. The pupils talked animatedly about their visit to a tile museum and more recently to a local supermarket. The study of breads following this visit helped them to appreciate the diversity of such a simple food, and also helped them to design recipes for their own loaves. Another good feature is the pupils' understanding of the health and safety

aspects of the subjects. As a consequence, they know the importance of food hygiene and how to use tools safely.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

101. The school's programme for humanities work is based on a cycle, in which geographical and historical studies are provided in half-termly sequence. The inspection team saw only a small sample of lessons, but other evidence was taken from the scrutiny of the teachers' planning, discussion with the pupils and samples of their work. Standards in both subjects were above average in both key stages during the last inspection. This is still the case.
102. The standard of the work in geography is good. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn about their own environment and the effect of change, and they make comparisons with other environments found in the wider world. They gain a good grounding in geographical skills, such as the use of maps, and the travel agents shop in the classroom generates excitement in their studies. Their written work shows a good grasp and use of essential vocabulary in describing, for example, the characteristics of a seaside environment. In Years 3-6, the pupils extend the range of their learning well and are able to relate work studied last term on climate to the new topic on the Indian village of Chembakolli. They use atlases well to identify an outline of a country, and through fieldwork and studies of people, places, and environments, they develop sound skills in geographical inquiry. They learn the location of key places in the United Kingdom, Europe and the wider world, and increase their knowledge and understanding of how humans influence the environment and bring about change. They can talk knowledgeably about the differences between their village and a settlement such as Shrewsbury. They can carry out independent research using the Internet, such as their recent work on mountainous regions.
103. Overall, the standard of the pupils' work in history is good. At each stage, the lessons provide the pupils with a good understanding of the lives of people in different eras, and knowledge of important events of the past. In Years 1 and 2, this often takes the form of studies that are of particular interest to them. For example, during the inspection pupils brought teddy bears to school and the teacher provided additional toys and illustrative material to add to the historical range. The pupils were allowed to handle these artefacts and talk about them. The good first-hand experiences that ensued did much to extend their knowledge and understanding of change and to develop appropriate historical language. The pupils discussed the reasons for change and related their own experiences and ideas. The experience was very positive and fruitful and the pupils made good progress in their learning. In Years 3-6, a similar pattern occurs. Through good first-hand experiences and the use of secondary sources of information, they gain a good understanding about the past and its influence on the present day, and a sound knowledge of historical terms. Their factual knowledge of life in the past is good and they can recall previous learning well. In particular they have learnt a lot from a study of the Ancient Greeks and made use of their knowledge, for example, by using a classical Greek motif to decorate a tile.
104. The teachers have good subject knowledge, and at both key stages their teaching is lively. The lessons are thoroughly planned with clear historical or geographical objectives and are often exciting and inspiring. Artefacts and resources are used well to support the learning. One teacher related the history of her own teddy bear to her pupils, who became over excited but nevertheless very well motivated and eager to do their group tasks. The teachers give well-planned support to the pupils with special educational needs and the more able. Both groups are suitably challenged and do well. In the Year 3 and 4 class, the teaching is very good because the teacher makes very good use of the pupils' previous learning, for example, to revise vocabulary related to climate. She turns the identification of the country about to be studied into an inquiry. A particular strength is the opportunity the pupils have to pose their own questions prior to starting a topic. In another class, the history teaching is good because the teacher is thorough. She establishes a very solid foundation for the topic. Her pupils enjoy exploring our language links with ancient Greek. They are enthusiastic about the linguistic trails and are acquiring insight into our cultural links with the classical world.
105. The pupils' attitudes to their geography and history studies are very positive. The quality of their work is good overall, and there are numerous good features, one of which is their ready involvement and interest. In some lessons, the pupils use their literacy skills effectively when writing about historical or

geographical subjects, but at other times too much of their work is based on work sheets. The pupils have good opportunities to use technology to obtain information and to carry out research.

106. History and geography have taken a lower profile in the school's recent programme for improvement. Nevertheless, these subjects beneficially maintain a strong position in the pupils' overall learning experiences. The QCA materials for history and geography have been adopted and are well incorporated with the local project material. Within this small school, the staff takes a shared approach to curriculum development. The subject policies are helpful and well linked to the school's teaching and learning policy.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

107. The school has continued to make steady investment in its provision for the teaching of this subject. Good use of the additional government funding has provided every class with five or six networked computers complete with Internet access. Although it was not possible to observe the subject being taught during the inspection, there is plentiful evidence to indicate that standards are satisfactory with most pupils working at the levels expected by the time they reach the ages of seven and eleven. The fact that almost 80% of pupils have computers at home also contributes strongly to the standards being achieved in this subject.
108. By the age of seven, most pupils are familiar with simple word processing. They compose their writing directly to the screen and know how to delete and replace letters, create capitals and start a new line. In Years 3-6, the children make good progress in developing these skills so that by the time they leave school most can change the colour, size and font of letters and to use “wizards” to assist in formatting documents, such as letters. Many pupils are adept at creating images when using programs such as “Colourmagic,” and the oldest children are getting to grips with a specialist program that helps them to produce accurate drawings in the early stages of their work in design and technology.
109. Throughout the school, the pupils develop a growing appreciation of how their studies can be enhanced by researching for information either in electronic encyclopaedias stored on CD-ROM or on the World Wide Web. Conversations with the oldest pupils reveal that they all know about search engines and are beginning to acquire personal preferences, such as Google or Yahoo. This enthusiasm is reflected in much of the good research that enhances the work in history and geography, for example.
110. A good start has also been made to employing the power of new technologies in subjects like mathematics and science. The pupils use simple programs such as “Numberbox” to present data in a variety of formats, and they recognise that this is often faster than tallying their own data and drawing their own graphs. However, the work of the oldest pupils reveals no recent evidence of the use of spreadsheets.
111. The teachers in Years 1 and 2 make effective use of a programmable electronic toy so that the pupils soon get used to the idea that entering instructions electronically can control movements. However, the pupils in Year 6 appear to have done little that builds on this good start. One girl remembers using the program “Logo”, but other appropriate activities, such as employing a computer to control a sequence of lights or the use of external sensors to provide the computer with information about temperature, have not yet been introduced. The teachers are part of the way through the extra training made available through the New Opportunities Fund. This is helping to develop their expertise, but much greater knowledge and confidence are needed if the oldest higher attaining pupils are to be more fully extended.

MUSIC

112. A very small number of lessons was seen. During the last inspection music was judged to be good, but now largely due to the teachers’ lack of expertise in the subject this is no longer the case. However, from conversation with pupils and an examination of the teachers’ plans it is clear that in both key stages standards are at least in line with the national expectations.
113. By the end of key stage 1, the pupils attain the standards expected of seven-year-olds. They know the words of a good range of songs and hymns, which they sing tunefully in class lessons and assemblies, often without musical accompaniment. They are confident and give good attention to clarity of diction. Nearly all the Year 1 pupils showed they could maintain a steady beat by either clapping or using a musical instrument. They can create and sustain a simple three or four note motif, and they make good progress in handling and using unpitched percussion instruments. All pupils listen well to the music played at the start and end of assemblies and are becoming familiar with the music of different composers. Some can identify and name different instruments of the orchestra. The pupils’ progress in singing is greatly helped by the good example set by their teachers, especially the acting headteacher who confidently leads the school in assemblies. The pupils with special educational needs make progress similar to other pupils of the same age.

114. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 have positive attitudes and above all they enjoy music; this was especially evident in their performance of “The Hot Cross Bun” and during group work. The teachers ensure that the pupils learn to treat musical instruments with care and respect. There is much incidental music in the form of rhymes and chants to support the work in language and mathematics; the pupils respond well to these opportunities which include a sung registration. When the pupils work in groups, they exhibit a maturity beyond their years and demonstrate high levels of self discipline. They understand the role and purpose of a conductor, and concentrate really hard on responding correctly to instructions.
115. Overall, the teaching is good in Years 1 and 2. The teachers plan their lessons well, ensuring that the pupils listen to a range of music, perform and make their own simple compositions. The lessons are fun and as a result the pupils concentrate hard and want to learn. In one lesson, for instance, the teacher captured attention well by producing a bride’s bouquet then showing a snippet from a video of a Nigerian wedding. The teacher then produced a basket full of African drums to augment the class set. There was lots of excitement and eagerness as the pupils responded to the teacher’s challenge to guess the sound they might make. However, more could be expected of higher attaining pupils during the group work. The teachers have good subject knowledge and use of exemplars well to help extend musical vocabulary including rhythm and pitch.
116. Insufficient evidence was gained to judge music in Years 3 to 6. However, discussions with pupils showed that they enjoy regular music lessons and take particular pleasure in the regular opportunities to use the school’s good collection of musical instruments. Although most listen to contemporary music at home, their knowledge of a wider range of composers is more limited. The teachers’ planning indicated that they found useful the programme of lessons recommended in national guidance from the Qualification Curriculum and Assessment Authority.
117. Christmas and Harvest festivals provide good opportunities for the pupils to participate in music making and to perform for their parents. Their interest is also sustained by listening to and participating in music making activities provided by visiting musicians. These occasions enhance the pupils’ attainment and contribute to their positive attitudes. There is no monitoring of the subject. Apart from recorded music, there is no instrumental accompaniment to either the singing or the percussion work. The teachers acknowledge their lack of specialist knowledge, but make use of the expertise provided by the local education authority advisory service. Lessons for recorder, cello, violin, cornet, trumpet, flute and saxophone are available to the pupils.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

118. Despite the shortcomings of the school site and buildings, the acting headteacher and her staff have come up with a variety of imaginative approaches to ensure that the children receive their entitlement to physical education. Although some of these activities involve lengthy journeys by coach, the high quality of the tuition when they reach their destination makes this investment extremely worthwhile. A good example of this was seen during the one lesson it was possible to observe during the inspection.
119. All of the pupils receive five sessions of gymnastics each year at a specialist centre some thirty minutes drive from the school. Each lesson lasts for ninety minutes and is taught by a qualified gymnastics coach supported by the class teachers and a teaching assistant. Although this was the first time that the Years 3-6 had been to the centre since last year, it soon became clear that they remembered a great deal. It reflected not only the teachers’ high expectations for dress, safety and conduct, but also the pupils’ understanding of the language and movement in gymnastics. The teacher is extremely knowledgeable about his subject, and his enthusiasm and expertise are matched by the extremely positive attitudes of the children to their work.
120. The lesson moved along at a very brisk pace. The warm-up was very thorough and flowed smoothly from activities aimed at raising pulse rate to an extensive programme of stretches that prepared the children’s bodies for the main part of the lesson. Throughout the lesson, the teacher sustained the children’s concentration by making extremely effective use of individual demonstrations. There were always plenty of volunteers and each offering was praised and followed by a simple suggestion for improvement. It is this eye for detail that frequently accelerated the learning for the whole class. For instance, as four or five

different pupils showed their sequence of three different types of roll, the teacher drew attention to one or two by saying, "Remember that one." Afterwards when he asked what it was about these examples that might be helpful several of the older pupils swiftly pointed out that the pace and fluency of movement was greater when the rolls were linked at a similar level. The following practice saw large numbers of the children improving their performance.

121. The children are kept hard at work throughout the lesson. Indeed, subsequent conversations with some of the oldest pupils in Year 6 indicated that some of them find these lessons extremely demanding. Nevertheless, regardless of age, shape or fitness they all remain committed to their work and strive to improve. Even at this early stage of their course, the standard of their work is clearly in line with the expected levels.
122. The school's curriculum also includes ten weeks of swimming tuition, dance in the village hall, regular games lessons on the playground and adventurous activities for the oldest pupils at a local centre. There are occasional competitive events in netball and soccer with other local schools.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

123. There were no religious education lessons taught during the inspection period, and there was insufficient work in the pupils' books to form a reliable judgement about their progress. However, an analysis of the teachers' planning and discussions with the pupils indicate that at the end of each key stage standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This is an improvement from the previous inspection when standards were below expectations at Key Stage 2. The school has been diligent in its response to the key issue that required a fuller programme of religious education to be offered to the pupils in Key Stage 2.
124. In Key Stage 2, much of the syllabus is conducted through discussion. The pupils in Year 6 remember what they have been taught and are able to compare certain elements of belief from different faiths. They know, for example, that fasting and pilgrimage are common to certain religions and that Christians have recently marked the beginning of Lent. They were able to describe their view of Christ's journey in the wilderness and the temptations he was offered. The pupils remembered that Ramadan is marked by fasting and reminds Muslims that the good things in life are to be enjoyed, but not over-indulged. They know that there are sacred texts that have special significance to believers, and that in some religions there are special rules that govern how these texts are handled. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils know that food is an important element in religious festivals and have started to understand the significance of the foods that make up the seder at Passover. Their accounts of Shabbat show that they have been taught some of the main elements of the Jewish faith. At Key Stage 1, the pupils understand that Harvest is a time of thanksgiving and that Christmas is when Christians celebrate the birth of Christ. They are starting to appreciate the meaning of parables, such as that of the Good Samaritan, but some of the work has not been covered in sufficient depth for the pupils to relate it to their own lives.
125. Throughout the school the teachers regularly mark the pupils' written work, but they do not pay enough attention to highlighting the aspects of the subject have been understood well and those that the pupils need to improve. Much of the marking properly relates to aspects of English, but does not also help the pupils to improve their understanding of religion. The preponderance of worksheets, which are the same for all pupils, is not helping the pupils to make the progress that they might.
126. The subject makes a strong contribution to the spiritual and cultural development of the pupils. The curriculum includes opportunities for them to reflect on key ideas and appreciate symbolism. The pupils know that some people believe that the rainbow is a sign of God's forgiveness and that other signs and symbols have deep significance for believers. They are taught that certain objects have particular and personal significance for individuals and are taught to appreciate and respect these. The school's links with the local church are good, and this is an important element in helping the pupils to understand about Christianity.