

INSPECTION REPORT

EXTON C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Exton

LEA area: Rutland

Unique reference number: 120178

Head teacher: Mr I Abbott

Reporting inspector: Mr D Hardman
17794

Dates of inspection: 25th – 27th June 2001

Inspection number: 197174

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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
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Garden Road Exton Rutland
Postcode:	LE15 8AY
Telephone number:	01572 812380
Fax number:	
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend P Townsend
Date of previous inspection:	4 th March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr D Hardman 17794	Registered inspector	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Equal opportunities	Characteristics Standards and the school's results Teaching Leadership and management
Mrs J Moore 11439	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development The school's care for the pupils Partnership with parents Resources, staffing and accommodation
Mr A Margerison 21666	Team inspector	English History Geography Music Physical education Religious education Special educational needs Under fives	Curricular opportunities Assessment and monitoring Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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The Registrar
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PART A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Exton C of E Primary School is a very small school situated in Exton, a small rural community in Rutland. There is a broad social mixture in the school, including parts of the catchment area that are socially deprived with a high proportion of unemployment. Approximately one third of the pupils travel from the nearby village of Greetham. Many pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below the level expected for their age in many areas assessed. However, with a very small intake each year, comparisons with national figures are statistically unreliable. There are 36 boys and 34 girls currently on roll. There are no pupils who have English as an additional language and none from minority ethnic groups. Approximately 5.8 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average. Eleven pupils have been identified as having special educational needs. This is below the national average. One pupil has a statement of special educational need, which is about the same as the national average. Most of the pupils with special educational needs have moderate learning difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Exton Primary School is going through a difficult time because of the absence of the head teacher and the employment of temporary, short-term replacements. The temporary head teacher and all staff are managing this very well and they are well supported by the governors. The leadership and management by the temporary head teacher and governors are good. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment in English, mathematics, science, religious education and all other subjects is in line with the levels expected for pupils' ages. Standards in information and communication technology are at the expected level in most areas. Pupils' standards are improving and they achieve well in relation to their previous attainment. Despite the high cost of educating each pupil, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the school by the temporary head teacher and governors are good. Good financial planning supports educational priorities.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good for children in reception and for older pupils in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils have very good relationships with each other and adults. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to their work and school life.
- The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. It is good for their spiritual and cultural development.
- The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good. As a result, pupils' behaviour is very good.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they make good progress in their learning.

What could be improved

- The assessment and planning of work for children under five does not adequately cover all areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils capable of higher attainment are not always challenged by the tasks set, particularly in English, mathematics, history and geography in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' attainment in Key Stage 2 is below the expected level in one aspect of information and communication technology, mainly because the school does not have sufficient resources to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- The inconsistent use of computers means that pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise new skills and use them in other subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress in resolving the issues raised in the last inspection in 1997. The school has established a clear system for assessing and planning the curriculum, except for certain aspects of the curriculum for children in the reception class, and this now ensures that teachers are more secure in what they are to teach. As a result, teaching and pupils' learning continue to improve. However, pupils capable of higher attainment are still not always challenged, particularly in English, mathematics, history and geography, by the tasks set in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. There has been good progress in improving the provision for information and communication technology except for one area of the curriculum. The school now has a good range of modern computers and these are well used most of the time. However, there are occasions when the computers are not effectively used to support other subjects. The provision for design and technology, history and geography has improved since the last inspection and pupils are now making satisfactory progress in these subjects. The head teacher and subject co-ordinators regularly observe teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science throughout the school and share the good practice observed with their colleagues.

STANDARDS

The table that is normally shown here is omitted because fewer than 10 pupils took the National Curriculum tests and comparisons with national figures or similar schools are not statistically safe. All children in the reception class achieve well and most achieve the outcomes expected of them in physical and creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world, but they exceed expectations in aspects of their personal and social development, communication, language, literacy and mathematical skills. The school's implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is beginning to raise pupils' attainment. The trend of pupils' attainment over time is now improving, particularly for the oldest pupils, because of good teaching. By the ages of 7 and 11 pupils' attainment in English, mathematics, and science is at the level expected for their age. Religious education is taught well with a structure that follows the locally agreed syllabus and all pupils gain good factual knowledge about a variety of faiths and reach standards that match the expectations for their ages. Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology at Key Stage 2 is below the level expected in one aspect of the subject, mainly because the school does not have sufficient sensing equipment. In all other subjects pupils' attainment is at the levels expected for their age. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when pupils' attainment was below the expected level in information and communication technology, geography and history. The school is well set to continue to improve standards, meet its realistic targets and implement the new curriculum.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to the school and their work. The majority are polite, sensible and hard working. They are keen to come to school and this improves their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Most pupils behave well in school and during break times. They respond well both to teachers' high expectations and to the awards for good behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good. They respond well to opportunities to take responsibilities. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and, for this year, in line with the national average. Most pupils arrive at school promptly, settle into class quickly and lessons start on time. There have been no

	exclusions from the school in the last year.
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Pupils' good attitudes result from their response to the caring, family atmosphere in the school. Most pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and treat people courteously. Pupils respond well to the trust and respect they are shown. For example, older pupils look after younger ones at playtimes and all pupils are keen to undertake any extra tasks set by teachers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

During the inspection teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons. It was good in 48 per cent of lessons and very good in a further 14 per cent. Teaching was particularly good for children in the reception class and for the oldest pupils in the school. The quality of teaching is improving as a result of the observation of teaching and learning by the head teacher and co-ordinators. This sharing of good practice is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching throughout the school. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been successfully implemented.

The teaching of basic skills in English and mathematics is good. Teachers' planning is clearly linked to the requirements of the National Literacy and Numeracy. Teachers use their daily observations of pupils' work to set challenging tasks but this is not always consistent throughout the school. For example, particularly in English, mathematics, history and geography in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, pupils capable of higher attainment are not always challenged as well as they could be. Classroom assistants support both individuals and groups of pupils effectively. When they are withdrawn for specialist help, pupils with special educational needs are well taught. Teachers make good use of support staff and other adults to work with pupils. The teaching of information and communication technology skills is satisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school has a sound curriculum, which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, except for information and communication technology. Although the assessment and planning of work for children under five does not adequately cover all areas of the curriculum, children in the reception class experience a wide range of activities that are appropriate to the learning needs of children of this age. There is a satisfactory range of extra curricular activities that enhance the very good provision made for pupils' personal development.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The procedures and provision for pupils with special educational needs are good. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well and provide activities that meet the requirements of their individual education plans. This makes a positive contribution to their attainment and learning.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. It is good for their spiritual and cultural development. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted well through lessons and assemblies. The quality of relationships in school is very positive and makes a significant contribution to the improved behaviour of pupils. This provision makes a good contribution to promoting the school aims.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and this is used effectively to guide teachers' planning of the National Curriculum.

The curriculum includes several features that enrich it; for example, there is a very good personal, social and health education programme. The school has formed a good partnership with parents, which makes an effective contribution to pupils' learning both at home and in school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	The temporary head teacher provides very good leadership. The school development plan, written by the head teacher absent during the inspection, is effective and gives a clear indication of future priorities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body is committed to helping the school move forward. Governors make an effective contribution to the running of the school and are committed to maintaining and raising standards further.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Both the head teacher and the temporary replacement know the school's strengths and areas for development. The monitoring and evaluation programme is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and all staff work hard to improve their own work and the educational opportunities provided for pupils.
The strategic use of resources	The school has sufficient staff and they are well deployed. Support staff play an important role in the life of the school and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. The accommodation is well maintained. With the exception of information and communication technology, resources to support pupils' learning are satisfactory and used effectively. The school's finances and administration procedures are good.

The recently appointed temporary head teacher has led the school very well during a turbulent time for the school. In the past, the head teacher and co-ordinators have observed teaching and learning. As a result, the school is well placed to improve and prioritise initiatives for raising standards. There is a healthy budget surplus at the moment but governors have clear plans for its use to extend part of the building and so create much needed storage space. The school follows the principles of best value and ensures that pupils have sufficient resources to help them learn. Specific grants are used well for their designated purpose.

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 like school • Their children are making good progress • Behaviour is good • Teaching is good • They feel they can go to the school with any questions or problems • The school expects children to work hard • The school works closely with parents • The school is well led and managed • The school helps children to become more mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework given • The range of activities outside lessons

The inspection findings confirm the positive views expressed by parents about the school. The inspection team disagrees with the concerns identified above, which came mainly from the questionnaires. The majority of the parents at the meeting, held before the inspection, did not share these concerns. The school has an established homework policy that teachers use consistently and as a result the amount of homework given is about right for pupils' ages. Considering the size of the school there is a satisfactory range of extra activities, which make a positive contribution to pupils' learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 By the age of 11, pupils' attainment in English, mathematics, science and religious education is at the level expected for their age. Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology is below the level expected in one aspect of the subject, mainly because the school does not have sufficient sensing equipment. In all other subjects pupils' attainment is at the levels expected for their age. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when pupils' attainment was below the expected level in information and communication technology, geography and history. The school is well set to continue to improve standards, meet its realistic targets and implement the new curriculum.

2 In Exton C of E Primary School the Foundation Stage is made up of a small group of children in one reception class. Many children enter the reception class with below average skills in speaking and listening, mathematical development and personal independence. This is confirmed by the initial tests carried out in school. However, by the time they are ready to enter Year 1, all children have achieved well and nearly all attain the levels expected for their age in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development through good teaching.

3 It is not possible to give statistics for pupils' National Curriculum test results because there were fewer than 10 pupils taking the tests in 2000 and so comparisons would be unreliable. During the inspection, there was no significant variation noted in the attainment of boys and girls in any subject. The school builds on the good start made in the reception class and pupils make satisfactory progress in all subjects in both key stages, except in aspects of information and communication technology in Key Stage 2. The school's results fluctuate considerably because of the variation of pupils' prior attainment and the very small numbers in each year group, which makes comparisons with national standards unreliable. For pupils in the present Year 2, attainment in speaking, listening, reading and writing is in line with the levels expected for their age. In Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment in English is in line with the level expected for their age. These standards are similar to those found in the previous inspection. However, standards are now improving, particularly for pupils in Years 5 and 6 where strategies to improve writing skills are having the greatest effect. There has been positive progress in raising attainment in English by the end of Key Stage 2, because of the successful introduction of the Literacy Strategy and the detailed analysis of pupils' previous results. However, there are inconsistencies between the different approaches to planning used by teachers to cater for the mixed ages and abilities in each class. These inconsistencies in planning mean that not all pupils, particularly pupils capable of higher attainment in the Year 1/2 and 3/4 classes, are fully extended by the work. The analysis of data means the school has evidence of the sound and sometimes good progress made by the Year 6 pupils over the last seven years. Teachers use pupils' literacy skills in other subjects effectively, for example, in the recording of experiments in science and in written descriptions of different faiths in religious education. The school is setting realistic targets for improvement in English and mathematics.

4 At the age of 7 and 11, pupils' attainment in mathematics is in line with the level expected for their age. The good teaching for pupils in Years 5 and 6 ensures that pupils are aware of their difficulties and work hard to overcome them. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Although teachers set specific tasks for pupils of different abilities this is not consistent, particularly for Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. As a result, pupils who are capable of higher attainment are not always challenged as much as they could be. However, pupils' attainment is improving by the end of Key Stage 2 and the positive effect of the National Numeracy Strategy and the good use of assessment to guide teachers' planning

are raising standards and pupils achieve well when compared with their previous attainment. Pupils use their numeracy skills effectively in other subjects such as science. For example, they work out the strength of forces and accurately record results of scientific experiments.

5 At the age of 7 and 11, pupils' attainment in science is in line with the level expected for their age. This is a similar picture to that found in the previous inspection. The school focus on experimental science is having a positive effect and raising pupils' standards because they are now explaining how they achieved their results and using a good range of scientific vocabulary when writing an account of their experiment. For example, pupils in Key Stage 1 draw accurate diagrams to show different light sources and they conduct simple experiments with materials and show which ones stretch and which do not. They use their knowledge to record the materials used to build houses and explain that glass is best for windows because it is transparent. Pupils in Year 5/6 understand the concept of a fair test, for example, they conducted an experiment into the size of shadows and knew that only the object blocking the light could be moved to make the comparison fair. These results were carefully recorded in a graph and pupils explained this method allowed the results to be seen easily. The careful analysis of results from school set tests and the National Curriculum tests means that there is a good capacity for further improvement.

6 Standards in information and communication technology have improved since the previous inspection and pupils' attainment is in line with the level expected for their age. The exception to this is in Key Stage 2 because the school does not have the necessary resources to enable all the different strands of the subject to be adequately covered. For example, pupils reach satisfactory standards in the elements that are taught but do not learn to sense physical data. The school has made considerable improvements to its curriculum and resources over the past three years. Information and communication technology is valued as an essential part of the curriculum, however, computers are not used regularly enough to support other subjects and so improve pupils' skills further. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make steady progress in developing their skills and knowledge. They use their keyboard skills to produce short pieces of text on the screen, use the mouse and understand the use of the cursor and of several of the screen icons when amending their work. In Key Stage 2, pupils build effectively on their skills and knowledge. In discussions, pupils explained how to load and save their work. They are confident when using computers and understand how to access the various menus available, for example, when using text in an art program to make special cards. Pupils use computers to support their work in other subjects such as English and science, for example, they use the Internet for research, but this is not consistent and opportunities are missed, for example, to support their work in mathematics.

7 At the age of 7 and 11, pupils' attainment in religious education matches the level expected for their age in the Agreed Syllabus. They develop a secure understanding of Christianity and other world religions. Personal, health and social education lessons make a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development. For example, they develop a satisfactory understanding of broader issues such as friendship, prejudice and fairness. Assemblies have a strong Christian theme and make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development as well as reinforcing their understanding of religious themes. Following a visit to the village church, pupils in Key Stage 1 discover the importance of special places in the building and the role that the altar and the font have in worship. As pupils move through Key Stage 2, the Christian foundation of the subject is developed to include other world religions. For example, pupils in Year 6 understand the concept of the five themes of worship, praise, thanksgiving, repentance, petition and adoration, within a Christian context, but they also learn about the main philosophies of Hinduism and Sikhism and how the main festivals of these religions relate to these.

8 In all other subjects, pupils' attainment is in line with the levels expected for their age. These subjects make an effective contribution to pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, through discussions in history and geography, recording their visits in the local environment, producing graphs of the transport used and explaining their designs when

working with visitors from the community. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. These pupils work at levels, which are well matched to their abilities and their previous experiences. Teachers set work, paying particular attention to the targets identified in the individual education plans. Extra support is provided for these pupils and teachers assess their work regularly and review their individual educational plans accordingly. The curricular opportunities for pupils with special educational needs are good. All pupils on the special educational needs register have their areas of need identified and appropriate activities are planned. Pupils with special educational needs meet the targets set out for them. There is a weekly timetable for extra support and during this time pupils make good progress in their learning, particularly in their literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, the very good provision for promoting pupils' social and moral development has a significant impact upon their good standards of behaviour and personal development.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and the improvement in behaviour noted in the last inspection report has continued. Behaviour and relationships in the school are very good. These are strengths of the school. Pupils' good attitude to learning combined with their very good behaviour and very good relationships with each other and with staff and other adults have a very positive effect on their learning. Pupils are enthusiastic, enjoy their work, listen well and are keen to take responsibility and appreciate the praise and rewards given for all aspects of good behaviour and work within the school.

10 There were no incidents of inappropriate behaviour seen and both parents and staff feel that this is not an issue in school. There are good procedures in place for dealing quickly and effectively with any such incident should it arise. There were no exclusions last year. Pupils mix well across the age range and between boys and girls. Older pupils take responsibility for younger ones and all join in well when playing together at break and at lunchtime. They show respect for all staff within the school and each other, they are co-operative and listen to others' needs.

11 The staff know the pupils well and this has a positive effect on their personal and social development. Teachers have high expectations and pupils co-operate well together in lessons. They make positive contributions, take care with their work and keep their interest even when initial lesson explanations are over long. They like school and want to please and do well. Pupils are given time for reflection in some lessons and also in assemblies, and this develops them morally and personally. Special education needs provision is good and all inclusive throughout the school.

12 Attendance this year is average. In the past it has been well below the national average, mainly because a few families take holidays in term time because of local farming commitments. In a small school, this affects the percentages considerably. Pupils are punctual, registration is quick and efficient and lessons start on time. Other agencies are involved if necessary to promote good attendance and parents are aware of their role.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13 During the inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons in both key stages. It was good in 48 per cent of lessons and very good in a further 14 per cent. Teaching was particularly good for the youngest and oldest pupils in the school. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection when 18 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. Discussions with teachers and analysis of pupils' work show that the quality of teaching is improving. This improvement has resulted from the observations by the head teacher and subject co-ordinators, who regularly observe colleagues teaching and check to ensure that all pupils are learning effectively. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been successfully implemented and pupils' standards are improving by the end of Key Stage 2. The quality of teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' learning but has not yet

had time to raise their attainment further by the end of Key Stage 2. Teachers assess individual pupils' attainment and progress regularly and use their daily observations of pupils' work to set challenging tasks but evidence from pupils' work shows that this is not always consistent, particularly for Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2.

14 Teaching is good and sometimes very good for the reception children. This is the new Foundation Stage, which was introduced in September 2000. The nursery nurse who is confident and has a very good understanding of how young children learn mainly teaches this group of children. As a result, there are stimulating activities which appeal to the children, generating a productive working atmosphere. There is a good balance between direct teaching and structured investigative activities. The nursery nurse does much of the day to day planning, teaching and assessment, particularly in language and literacy and mathematics. In these lessons the main focus is on personal development, communication, language and literacy and mathematics, areas in which children make good progress. The planning of lessons when children work with pupils in Key Stage 1, which cover major aspects of knowledge and understanding, physical and creative development is undertaken by the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator. However, this planning for children's knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development is insufficient. There are no detailed plans on how the different elements of each area of learning will be developed in the combined lessons with pupils in Key Stage 1 and no links are made to assessment or recording procedures. Although evidence from lesson observations and children's work show that all areas are addressed, the teacher responsible for the Foundation Stage does not have a secure overview of the progress children make or the curriculum provided for them.

15 The teaching of basic skills in English and mathematics is good in both key stages. Teachers' planning is clearly linked to the requirements of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and tasks are sometimes organised to challenge different ability groups in classes. The pace of most lessons is good and teachers use the techniques of the literacy and numeracy Strategies to best effect. Pupils have very good relationships with teachers and adults in the classroom, which have helped to improve the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour and effort are high and pupils are expected to do their best. This was seen in a Year 5/6 mathematics lesson, when pupils improved their knowledge and skills of mental recall when sitting in a circle and working out answers to problems called out in turn. They were very attentive to the teacher's introduction and tried very hard to beat the time target for the activity. They listened attentively to others' answers. The brisk pace of the lesson and the mature attitude of pupils led to good learning and pupils' improving skills in the use of mathematical measurements. Teachers use the literacy strategy effectively and plan lessons that are challenging and interesting. For example, in a Year 1/2 English lesson pupils joined in enthusiastically with the shared reading of a poem and improved their knowledge of how the structure of poetry uses rhyming words in a particular way.

16 Teachers in both key stages have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects of the National Curriculum. They use the correct language to develop the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the particular subject. This was particularly evident in English, mathematics and science where specific technical language was used well. For example, in a Year 3/4 science lesson pupils understood the concept of "food chains" and the teacher illustrated well the way the chain works for the tadpoles in the class water tank. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the teaching of English and mathematics and they use good observational assessment of pupils to build upon the areas that pupils need to develop. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 5/6 the teacher used well chosen questions to check that pupils understood the key elements they needed to identify when solving problems involving weight. The teacher kept all pupils interested and enthusiastic in the session and used good examples to ensure that pupils could work out the weights of objects using different scales.

17 Teachers know and manage their pupils well and provide good support for different activities. The very good relationships between staff and pupils create a secure climate in which to learn. Teachers use their daily observations of pupils' work to set challenging tasks but this is not done consistently throughout the school. For example, particularly in English and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, pupils capable of higher attainment are not always challenged as well as they could be. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they often start lessons from the same point and pupils capable of higher attainment are given extension tasks if there is time, instead of more challenging work at the start of the lesson. Most teachers include positive comments when marking but do not consistently provide precise comments on what pupils need to do in order to improve. This makes it more difficult for some teachers to assess how well pupils are learning from their mistakes. Parents' response to the questionnaire showed that a number of parents were concerned about the amount of homework given. The school has an established homework policy that teachers use consistently and as a result the amount of homework given is about right for pupils' ages.

18 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. All staff have a very positive attitude towards these pupils and know their strengths and areas for development well. The school ethos characterised by high expectations of behaviour and very good relationships between adults and pupils, means that pupils learn well. Pupils with special educational needs learn effectively due to the good support they receive. Teachers have a clear understanding of how to use support staff in group activities so pupils are fully involved in most lessons. In literacy lessons teachers modify the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and use different parts of the national guidance for literacy well. Clear records are kept on each pupil's attainment and this information is used effectively to guide future planning and teaching.

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

19 There have been satisfactory improvements made to the curriculum since the last inspection, when aspects of the curriculum were under emphasised and statutory requirements in information technology were not being met. The school has implemented the most recent National Curriculum guidelines for all subjects so all statutory requirements are now met, except in one strand of information and communication technology. Religious education follows the locally agreed syllabus. Due to the mixed age classes, most of the foundation subjects, such as history and geography, are taught in topics that are planned over two years. These plans are being developed from the national guidance, gradually being written as the individual aspects arise on the cycle.

20 The curriculum is satisfactory and the good use of the local area in subjects such as geography, history and religious education means it is particularly relevant to pupils. At the time of the last inspection, aspects of history and geography were under-emphasised. The implementation of the new guidelines for the National Curriculum has improved these shortcomings. However, the time gap between topics is too long to help pupils gradually build on and consolidate their skills in history and geography. Considerable investment in new resources has helped the school develop the information and communication technology curriculum so that it provides a much wider range of activities than at the time of the last inspection. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided for children in the Foundation Stage are good so they make good progress towards their targets. This is particularly the case in areas such as personal development, communication, language, literacy and mathematics.

21 The literacy and numeracy strategies have been implemented satisfactorily. This has had a positive effect on the progress pupils make and demonstrates that the curriculum enables the school to "add value" to their previous attainment. Teachers' planning is clearly linked to the requirements of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. However, there are inconsistencies in the approach taken by teachers, which leads to some pupils capable of

higher achievement not being fully extended. There is a very good emphasis on pupils' personal, social and health education. This has developed well since the last inspection and reflects the school's policies towards sex and drugs education. It now makes a very good contribution to pupils' attitudes, behaviour and their ability to accept responsibility for their actions. The co-ordinator is developing guidelines for this area and has provided teachers with appropriate resources. This aspect of the curriculum complements the religious education lessons well.

22 The curriculum effectively meets the needs of all pupils in the school and pupils have equal access to all activities. Pupils are treated as individuals and their particular needs are known and catered for in the caring and supportive environment of the school. This has a particularly positive impact upon pupils with special educational needs. Although the policy for special education needs has shortcomings in the detail relating to how the school's procedures operate in identifying and providing for pupils, in practice the provision for these pupils is good. There are individual education plans for each pupil on the register of special for educational needs, but the links between the targets and strategies are not always clear so that staff cannot effectively check their impact upon pupils' learning and progress. However, because the relationships between staff and pupils are very good they benefit from effective support so they make good progress. The individual education plans are reviewed termly and parents and other adults involved are invited.

23 Lessons are supported by a satisfactory range of opportunities for extra curricular activities in sport and music. These are open to all pupils. An interesting range of educational visits to local places, such as Burghley Hall and further afield, enrich and support pupils' learning. The effective use of the local area means that activities and experiences are relevant to pupils' interests. The broad scope of these visits, such as the residential visits in Year 5/6, offers pupils the opportunities to learn about the world in which they live and broadens their experiences to include places beyond their immediate area. Social inclusion is a strength of the school and the importance of developing pupils' social skills is threaded throughout the work of the school.

24 The school makes good use of the local community and has a variety of visitors in school, for example, the local nurse talks about health issues including drug abuse and general health care, and the chair of governors comes in regularly to take assemblies. There are many and various trips and visits made each year which enrich pupils' education. These include taking part in the Rutland Festival, services at the local church such as Christingle, an African drumming project, the Exton Stitches, quizzes, cycle courses and many more. These all help pupils personal development, widen their horizons considerably and enhance the school's image in the local community. The community involvement within school has a positive effect on pupils' learning. For example, many of the school's trips and visits are joint projects with other schools in the area.

25 The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Clear values underpin the work of the school and contribute to an atmosphere of care and consideration for others. This is a considerable improvement on the previous inspection when the provision was judged to be satisfactory.

26 The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. It is developed through the daily assemblies and religious education, which provide pupils with knowledge and understanding of other major faiths as well as Christianity. Pupils visit the village church in Exton and good use is made of music and singing in assemblies which make a significant contribution to the positive ethos in the school. The lighting of a candle at the start of assemblies creates an atmosphere of reverence and pupils have moments to reflect upon what has been discussed before the final prayer. Pupils celebrate the Christian festivals of Christmas, Easter and harvest, but are made aware of celebrations of other faiths such as Diwali. Pupils respond well to new experiences. For example, the children in reception are enthusiastic and intrigued that the seeds they have sown have grown into plants and they

have an appreciation of the beauty of flowers and the wonders of the natural world around them.

27 The provision for moral and social development is very good. There is a strong emphasis on good behaviour throughout the school. Teachers consistently reinforce their expectations of good behaviour in classrooms, the dining hall and outside so the school is an orderly community. All adults in the school set a good example to pupils, treating them with fairness and consideration whilst reinforcing their understanding between right and wrong. All staff work hard to build up a sense of community in which each member is valued. Opportunities are taken in lessons to consider moral and social issues such as prejudice and discrimination. This was well demonstrated in a Year 5/6 literacy lesson where the text "Iggie's House" raised these issues. The teacher used the closing session very well for discussion and to identify groups of people in society, such as religious groups and travellers, who suffer from discrimination due to misunderstanding of their lifestyles and beliefs. This was reinforced effectively in the personal, health and social education lesson that followed later in the week. Collective worship makes a valuable contribution to pupils' moral development. During the inspection, no instances of bullying were observed. Pupils play happily together at break times with boys and girls, older and younger pupils playing ball games together or just talking. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to show initiative. This begins in the reception class where children are expected to tidy away their equipment and to do things such as move papers or toys without being asked. This is developed well as pupils move up the school and there are a good range of jobs pupils do such as helping clear the dining room at lunchtime. All pupils have the opportunities to have responsibility. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and those who attended the meeting before the inspection expressed their support for the values the school promotes.

28 Provision for pupils' cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Literacy lessons, art, music, religious education and history introduce pupils to different cultures past and present. All pupils are encouraged to appreciate their own culture through studying the immediate area and visits are used well to support this work. Pupils in Key Stage 1 visited Burghley House, including the Sculpture Garden. Class discussions in lessons and the use of texts and music from around the world develop pupils' awareness and understanding of different cultures and the important role they play in modern society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

29 The procedures for child protection are good as are the procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development, although the latter is not always recorded. The educational and personal guidance for pupils is good and the monitoring and management of behaviour are very good, resulting in the very good behaviour seen in school. This high level of support to pupils has a significant impact upon their learning. There are well organised booster classes for those pupils who need more time to develop their skills. The staff have high expectations of the pupils and are good role models.

30 Effective child protection procedures are in place and the school is well supported by a variety of outside agencies which it calls upon whenever necessary. The staff know the pupils very well and have very good relationships with them. They provide a high level of welfare support to all pupils. The relationship between staff and pupils has improved since the last inspection and is now a strength of the school. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and parents are fully involved at all stages of their children's provision. Teachers recognise pupils' needs in class and support them well to quickly resolve any difficulties. Several governors, some of whom are parents, help in the classroom and their support is used well. Personal development is enhanced when pupils are given time to reflect on moral and spiritual issues. There is good coverage of multi-cultural issues and many different religions are covered in religious education. Pupils are given time to reflect

and appreciate complex issues, for example in assemblies. The school's sex education policy is in draft form and there are plans for it to be adopted in the autumn term.

31 Health and safety awareness is satisfactory. All procedures are in place and school security is good. There is need for a more detailed accident book to be kept. Good health care is promoted throughout the school. For example there are notices on hygiene near the dinner queue and teachers explain the need to drink more when the weather is hot. Outside agencies are used effectively to reinforce the work done in school. Absences are monitored and contact is made on the first day of absence. Parents understand the rules about holidays in term time and the registers are closed promptly and monitored. The school works with the educational welfare officer whenever necessary to encourage good attendance. The school's monitoring and management of behaviour are very good. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection and is now a strength of the school.

32 The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. Since the last inspection the school has introduced assessments into the reception class, which give a good base from which to judge children's progress, particularly in English and mathematics. The statutory National Curriculum tests are supplemented by additional tests in reading used regularly to check pupils' progress and this year the school has introduced the optional National Curriculum tests into Year 4. The use of the assessment data is satisfactory. The school has begun to use the data from assessments to track pupils and to identify those who need additional support before the National Curriculum tests in Year 6. The information is also used to set targets for pupils, particularly in literacy, but this use of assessment is in its early stages.

33 The school has consistent procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress. This is gradually being introduced across the whole curriculum as the topics in the two year curriculum plan arise. Teachers record pupils' achievements against the topic objectives and use the information to write reports, although the amount of information is not sufficient in all subjects to have a major impact upon teachers' planning. The assessment and monitoring of children in the Foundation Stage is good for language, literacy and mathematics, but limited in other areas of the curriculum. The nursery nurse uses the information well to plan lessons and activities.

34 The school provides a good level of personal support for pupils to raise achievement. The support for pupils with special educational needs in the classroom is good. Support staff have very good relationships with pupils and they encourage, guide and support their academic and personal development. They have a good awareness of the personal as well as the academic needs of their pupils, helping to create a safe and secure environment for them which has a good effect on the progress they make. The school has established good links with a range of external support agencies who provide support and guidance when needed. The school provides the support outlined in the statement of special educational need.

35 A good rewards and sanctions system is in place based on praise and linked to the behaviour policy. Pupils and parents who recognise recent improvements in behaviour appreciate this. Parents' views that there are not sufficient extra curricular activities were not supported by inspection evidence and the range of opportunities is appropriate for a small school. Pupils are introduced into school satisfactorily and this is done through direct contact with the parents. All the necessary information is passed on to the secondary school to ensure a smooth transfer that aids pupils' continued learning and development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

36 The school has good links with parents and their views of the school are very positive. Parents are encouraged to come into school and the information sent home is mostly good and very informative. However, the information that parents receive about the curriculum is

limited and there are several statutory items missing from the school brochure and the annual governors' report to parents. The brochure does, however, have very positive statements about the home/school partnership, with responsibilities and benefits given for all concerned. There is a regular newsletter and parents are encouraged to write comments in their children's logs and questionnaires, which go home with homework.

37 Parents' ideas are listened to and acted upon. Pupils' progress reports are very clear and give parents knowledge of their child's development and helpful guidance on how they can help in that development. There are two parents' evenings per year, which are well attended and parents get the opportunity to talk to staff about the end of term reports if they wish. There is a home school agreement in place that most parents have signed. Where parents help within school they have a positive effect on learning but this help is limited mostly to those parents on the governing body. Their example has a positive effect upon the pupils' learning and they can see that these committed adults value their education. The involvement of parents of pupils with special educational needs is good. They are invited to review meetings, kept fully informed of what is being done in school to help their child and, on occasions, have particular roles to play in the individual education plans.

38 Most parents are very pleased with what the school offers their children and pupils are keen to come to school and settle well. The pupils' good behaviour is a result of the work done to promote a good learning atmosphere and consistent use of the effective behaviour policy. There is a good partnership between the school and parents which benefits the pupils.

39 Many parents help their children at home and this is an important part of their education. The school encourages parents to listen to their children read and to comment upon work done at home. The school has an open-door policy towards parents and they appreciate this. The Life Long Learning Project has been very successful in promoting learning within the community and is now being used as an example of good practice within the county. The school has benefited from this and parents and the wider community have seen this as a very positive asset to the village. Much needed money is raised by Friends of Exton School and their events provide good social and financial assistance to the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

40 The good quality of leadership and management has been maintained since the last inspection. The head teacher has implemented the action plan to deal with most of the issues raised in the last inspection effectively. These have been well supported by staff and governors. Co-ordinators observe teaching and learning in the core subjects of English and mathematics and lead discussions on recent initiatives, for example the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Educational priorities are well supported through the school's financial planning. There have been satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. The cost of educating each pupil is well above the national average. There is good leadership by the head teacher, key staff and governors, good financial management and very good relationships in school. Pupils' attainment is improving and their learning is at least satisfactory and sometimes good when compared with their previous attainment. Despite the high cost of educating each pupil, the school is giving satisfactory value for money.

41 Exton Primary School is going through a difficult time because of the absence of the head teacher and the employment of temporary, short term replacements. The temporary head teacher and all staff are managing this very well and they are well supported by the governors. The school's development plan, prepared by the head teacher who was absent during the inspection, provides a clear educational direction for the school which has a positive impact on pupils' improving standards. For example, the school has highlighted the fact that information and communication technology is an area that needs further development. There are courses for teachers to increase their knowledge and understanding of the use of computers to develop pupils' skills and in how to use them effectively to support

learning in other subjects. This development of information and communication technology is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

42 The school has worked effectively to resolve most of the key issues from the previous report and is well placed to maintain the strengths of the school and build effectively upon them. There is a family atmosphere where all pupils are valued and their efforts well supported. The governing body takes its responsibilities very seriously. Governors make a good contribution to the effective running of the school and are committed to maintaining and raising standards further. The roles and responsibilities of all staff have been reviewed and now teachers have a clearer idea of what their roles involve. The observation of teaching and learning by the head teacher and subject co-ordinators is regularly discussed with governors who are well aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. Subject co-ordinators are taking much more responsibility for their subjects. For example, they review guidelines for pupils' work, undertake a regular audit of their subjects and recommend training needs, regularly scrutinise teachers' planning and pupils' work and observe teaching and learning.

43 The head teacher and governors work together closely and manage the school well. There is clear direction for the work of the school, ensuring that strategic decisions determine the financial and educational development of the school. The school works very closely with the bursar to ensure that all decisions relating to the budget are closely linked to the development plan, are manageable and the principles of "best value for money" are applied effectively. There is a healthy surplus at the moment but governors have clear plans for its use to extend part of the building and so create much needed storage space. Detailed analysis of children's attainment on entry to the school is undertaken regularly and the results are used effectively to set realistic targets for children's future attainment. The staff meet regularly, both formally and informally, to discuss curriculum matters. Curriculum co-ordinators undertake their roles conscientiously. For example, there has been a thorough audit of teachers' skills in information and communication technology. A small area has been developed in the upper Key Stage 2 classroom as a computer suite and a good action plan drawn up to identify a training programme that will develop teachers' skills further.

44 The head teacher and staff work together on the school development plan. This working document is then fully discussed with governors before becoming the action plan for future years. It is an effective document, which clearly identifies the priorities and targets to be tackled and guides the work of the school. It provides a baseline against which future development can be measured and is having a positive effect on the future direction of the school. Educational and financial planning are clearly cross-referenced. Priorities include the continued observation by co-ordinators to check on the quality of teaching and learning across the school intended to improve further pupils' attainment and learning. The school knows its strengths and areas for development and has a good grasp on how to improve. All staff work hard to improve their own performance and the educational opportunities presented to pupils. The school has clear targets for improvements. For example, the school is aware that further resources are required for information and communication technology to allow pupils to fully develop their skills in all aspects of the subject.

45 All staff have a shared commitment to raising standards. They have succeeded in creating a learning environment where relationships are very good and pupils feel secure and valued. A positive ethos reflects the school's commitment to achieve the highest educational standards and equal opportunity for all pupils. In the day to day life of the school the principles of equal access and opportunity are well observed. The governors are committed to improving the school building, where funds allow, and maintaining standards in the school. They keep themselves well informed. The good committee structure enables them to support the head teacher and meet their statutory responsibilities, except in information and communication technology and certain aspects of their annual report to parents. The chair of the governors works very closely with the head teacher and they meet regularly to discuss the

school and its work. The governors have a clear picture of the work of the school and are pleased with the improving attainment of pupils.

46 There is a sound match between the number, experience and qualifications of teachers and the needs of the curriculum. Previous training has ensured that the teachers are competent to teach the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Issues relating to staffing raised in the last inspection have all been resolved. There is an effective staff handbook that is a useful point of reference, an induction policy for newly qualified staff and effective systems to support and develop staff new to the school. Most lunchtime supervisors are first aid trained, have had opportunities to attend courses in child protection issues and have been fully involved in meetings to discuss the whole school behaviour policy. As a result, all staff are aware of the procedures in place for behaviour management and now provide good support for behaviour at lunchtimes.

47 The school's accommodation is satisfactory, although limited in some areas. There is little space to store things but this is overcome well in the hall. The school manages its limitations well and all equipment that cannot be put away is carefully secured. Displays of pupils' work are used to enhance the learning environment, in classrooms, corridors and shared areas. As a result, the displays of pupils' work are effective as a learning resource. Resources for all subjects are satisfactory. There is good provision for safe play in areas immediately outside the Foundation Stage classroom and the field provides a good area for games. Resources have been improved since the last inspection, particularly in the provision of equipment and programs for information and communication technology. The school library has an adequate supply of books and is used effectively to promote learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48 In order to further improve the quality of education, standards and progress in the school, the head teacher, staff and governors should:

A. Extend the assessment and planning of work for all areas of education for children under five, now called the Foundation Stage, so that it reflects the good practice already in place for communication, language, literacy and mathematics, do this by:

- improving the planning of the curriculum by the co-ordinator, so that there is a clear overview of activities to guarantee that children receive their full entitlement;
- using the assessment information on children's progress, for all areas of the curriculum, to build on previous learning more effectively.

(Paragraphs 14, 33, 52, 58, 59, 60.)

B. Improve the challenge for pupils capable of higher attainment, particularly in English, mathematics, history and geography, in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 by:

- clearly identifying what these pupils are expected to know, understand and be able to do by the end of a lesson, or sequence of lessons;
- providing more challenging activities from the beginning of the lesson and so give pupils more opportunities for independent learning;
- improving teachers' marking of pupils' work so that it provides guidance to help pupils improve their work by setting, specific, achievable targets to concentrate on in the next piece of work.

(Paragraphs 3, 4, 13, 17, 18, 21, 65, 66, 72, 73, 77, 89.)

C. Raise pupils' attainment in information and communication technology by providing the resources necessary for pupils to use sensing equipment. In addition, use computers more consistently to give all pupils more regular opportunities to practise and improve their information and communication technology skills by using them in other subjects.

(Paragraphs 1, 3, 6, 19, 44, 47, 92, 94, 95.)

In addition to the key issues above, governors should include the following issues as part of the action plan.

- Ensure that both the governors' annual report to parents and the school brochure meet statutory requirements.

(Paragraphs 36, 45.)

- Ensure that the governors' plans for the use of the surplus in the school budget are fully implemented.

(Paragraph 43)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	21
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	14	48	38	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		70
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		11

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	7	7	14

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	12	13	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86(80)	93(90)	100(100)
	National	83(82)	84(83)	90(87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	13	14	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93(90)	100(100)	93(100)
	National	84(82)	88(86)	88(87)

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

Figures are not given for boys and girls as there were fewer than 10 of each taking the tests.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	2	2	4

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	75(70)	72(69)	85(78)

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	70(68)	72(69)	79(75)

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

Figures are not given because of the very small number of pupils taking the tests.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – Afro heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	63
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5
Average class size	23

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	2.2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	169,666
Total expenditure	162,405
Expenditure per pupil	2,354
Balance brought forward from previous year	16,916

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

70

Number of questionnaires returned

35

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	37	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	43	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	43	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	51	11	9	0
The teaching is good.	63	37	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	51	9	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	26	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	29	0	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	46	46	8	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	54	40	6	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	43	3	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	23	26	20	11

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

49 Children start full time education in the school in the September before their fifth birthday. Children's attainment on entry to the school is below what might be expected nationally. Most children have weaknesses in all the areas of learning. This is confirmed by initial school assessments made within a few days of the children entering the class. Social and personal skills are often limited and some children have a limited knowledge and understanding of the world. Very few of the children have extensive pre-school experience. During the inspection, there were seven children in the Foundation Stage. Responsibility for overseeing the organisation and planning of the reception class lies with the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator. However, the nursery nurse does much of the day-to-day planning, teaching and assessment, particularly in language, literacy and mathematics. This is done well.

50 At the time of the last inspection, children made good progress in most of the areas of learning and their attainment exceeded the expectations for their age. This position has been maintained and the provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Children with special education needs are identified early so their needs are met effectively. Consequently, all children achieve well and most achieve the outcomes expected of them in physical and creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world, but they exceed expectations in aspects of their personal and social development, communication, language, literacy and mathematical skills. The curriculum is based on the six areas of learning and provides the children with a good range of experiences.

51 Where the nursery nurse teaches the children as a class, the quality of teaching is good and frequently very good. Although aspects of all the areas of learning are developed, the main focus is on personal development, communication, language and literacy and mathematics, areas in which children make good progress. The nursery nurse plans carefully for language, literacy and mathematics lessons. She maintains detailed records for each child to check on their progress, has a very good understanding of how young children learn and knows what they should be achieving by the age of five in these areas. The relationships between the children and adults are very caring and supportive, creating a secure and positive learning atmosphere. Praise and encouragement are threaded throughout all activities and children's contributions are clearly valued and respected. The use of questions is particularly effective to check that the children have understood and illustrate ideas in different ways. For example, when teaching the children about addition, they are encouraged to count on using their fingers. This is then reinforced by providing each child with a picture of the "Monster in Bath" and the children add and count the number of sponges the monster had. The children were familiar with the book about the monster so this interested them and fuelled their enthusiasm. The pace of learning is good and children make good progress towards the targets set for the Foundation Stage. This provides a firm basis for learning in Key Stage 1.

52 The planning for developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development is not secure. There are no detailed plans on how the different elements of each area of learning will be developed in the lessons children have with pupils in Key Stage 1 and no links are made to assessment or recording procedures. Although evidence from lesson observations and children's work shows that all areas are addressed and children achieve well, the teacher responsible for the Foundation Stage does not have a secure overview of the progress children make or the curriculum provided for them. For example, the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator has not devised a planning or monitoring process that ensures the curriculum is fully balanced or checks children's progress in areas of learning other than literacy and mathematics over time. The lack of the clear view means that links between lessons where children are taught as a reception class and those with older pupils are not clear. The difference between the teaching in the two settings is the focus on

the needs of young children. When they are taught with the older pupils, the teacher does not always vary the activity to suit their needs. The oral parts of lessons are well structured and involve the children well, but extra guidance is not always given to help the children in practical tasks. Consequently, there are occasions, such as physical education lessons, when the provision does not adequately meet their needs and they do not make the progress they could.

Personal, social and emotional development.

53 Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Many children enter the class with immature skills; some find it very hard to adapt to the classroom environment and to play and work alongside others. The adults, in particular the nursery nurse, give them very good support and relationships are helpful. There are high expectations of children and the approach is consistent. Similarly, the teacher in Key Stage 1 has consistent expectations of behaviour. Both adults insist that children listen to them and to each other. They are taught to take turns when speaking and to share equipment so children learn to listen and to respond to adults' instructions. Their concentration grows and they gain confidence. They are expected to take on responsibility so that by the end of the Foundation Stage they clear up activities and use their own initiative to tidy equipment away without asking. Some activities have a social skills focus, for example taking turns with toys and dance lessons with the older pupils. Children are very keen to take part in activities and enjoy their learning. A major contribution to their personal development is the consistent approach used by the nursery nurse. Every day children have a literacy and numeracy lesson, both of which contain elements of the National Strategies. This prepares them well for the next stage of their education in Key Stage 1 and gets them used to school routines and expectations.

Communication, language and literacy.

54 Some children do not find communication easy when they first come to school, but there is a very strong emphasis on this aspect of learning so by the end of the Foundation Stage all children are willing to join in and express their ideas. Children capable of higher attainment are very confident and want to contribute to any discussion taking place. The lower attaining children are keen to join in and do so to the best of their ability, choosing their words carefully albeit from a limited vocabulary. The nursery nurse makes the most of any opportunity to encourage children to talk and regularly digresses from the main theme of the lesson to reinforce what has been discussed in previous sessions, which helps give children confidence. Children make a very good start with reading. They all enjoy books and know how they are organised. The good emphasis placed on basic skills is reflected in the pace of children's learning. Most of them tell stories from pictures and retell the main points of a familiar story in the correct sequence. The teaching of basic skills is very good so that by the end of the Foundation Stage all children have a secure understanding of letter sounds and names. Children capable of higher attainment read simple books without help and understand what they have read. This gives children a very good platform from which to develop their skills in Key Stage 1.

55 By the end of the Foundation Stage, children's writing skills are well developed and they achieve standards above those expected for their age. All children write their name and have a good understanding of letter names and sounds. They form letters consistently so their writing is legible and easy to read. They hold a pencil correctly. From copy at the start of the year, children become confident writers, although at times the whole class approach to recording places constrictions upon the higher attaining children who are capable of more free writing than they are consistently allowed to do.

Mathematical development.

56 Numeracy skills are weak as children enter school. Few children have a good grasp of basic number and counting objects above five. By the end of the Foundation Stage, they

have made good progress so that most children recognise and write numbers up to twenty. They count objects up to ten accurately and do simple addition sums combining numbers up to ten although some children need to use their fingers or other objects to check their answer. Children capable of higher attainment do simple addition above this, and also do mental addition, adding one or two to a specific number accurately. The majority of children begin to understand simple subtraction. Every day, children have a numeracy lesson and their secure understanding of basic mathematical language rewards the emphasis placed on developing this area of learning. They sort and compare objects using the words smaller, taller, longer and shorter. They recognise a square, circle, rectangle and triangle and know the number of sides and corners these shapes have.

57 The teaching of mathematical skills is good. Lessons follow the pattern of the national guidance for numeracy that introduces children to mental mathematics and prepares them for work in Key Stage 1. Expectations are high and a consistent approach to management and clear instructions are strong features of teaching that introduces and reinforces basic skills of counting and number. Daily activities are carefully planned to build on the previous day's work and notes are taken of what each child has learned to help set activities for the future. Opportunities that arise in other activities are used well to reinforce this knowledge, such as counting the number of sides on a shape or building towers. The whole class approach, on occasions, stifles the children capable of higher attainment, but the constant reinforcement of the basic understanding means that children make very good progress in this area of learning. The links with literacy are used well to put the activities into a familiar context. For example, during the inspection the text for literacy was the story of Rapunzel. This story was well used to build towers with different building blocks to compare sizes.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World.

58 Many children have a limited knowledge of the world when they first come to school. However, the activities in the reception class effectively develop their understanding in this area of learning so by the end of the Foundation Stage children are achieving in line with the expectations for their age. For example, by planting seeds children learn that plants need water and light to grow. They develop an interest in the world around them and learn to appreciate it. For example, one child commented upon the "lovely, bright red geraniums" in the play area. They build with different construction toys and explore with sand and water. They use the computer and by the end of the Foundation Stage have good mouse control. They move objects by clicking and dragging them with the mouse and they open programs. However, the planning of activities in this area of learning is not detailed and is complicated by some of the teaching taking place with the pupils in Key Stage 1. There is no process whereby the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator can check what aspects of learning the children have covered and make sure that the children's experiences build on, reinforce and complement each other so they steadily develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.

Physical development.

59 Children have access to a secure play area opening from the classroom. Part of this is grassed and is attractively decorated with container plants. They have access to large play equipment, which makes a good contribution to their physical development, so that by the end of the Foundation Stage they attain in line with the expectations for their age. However, these activities are not effectively supported by physical education lessons. They have these lessons with pupils in Year 1/2. The planning, equipment and activities do not effectively meet the needs of young children. Although these sessions make a good contribution to their social skills by giving them opportunities to work with older pupils, insufficient variation is made in the activities to account for their smaller size and less well developed skills in, for example, throwing or striking a ball. However, children move confidently in running, jumping and taking part in basic dances whilst singing traditional songs or nursery rhymes. Children develop an awareness of the space around them and find a space when asked to do so. In the classroom, they handle tools, such as scissors, well to cut out basic materials.

Creative development.

60 Children are provided with an appropriate range of opportunities to explore materials creatively and to use their imagination. However, the development of their skills is not planned in detail and there is no procedure in place to evaluate the progress they make. As a result, the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator cannot easily identify exactly what each child can do and what aspects of this area of learning need further development. They draw plants and portraits of each other putting in some detail accurately. Children have a good understanding of colours and use a range of different media such as crayon, pencil and paint to create pictures. Music is an important part of the work. The nursery nurse uses nursery rhymes and simple songs to develop children's confidence and communication skills whilst the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator's enthusiasm for singing and dance communicates itself to children. This is an aspect of the curriculum where children benefit from working with the pupils in Key Stage 1. They take part in dance and singing sessions enthusiastically, which makes a positive contribution to their learning.

ENGLISH

61 Pupils' standards of attainment in the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 7 year olds were below the average for reading and in line with the average for writing. These results reflect the fact that very few pupils achieved the higher levels. The results for pupils aged 11 were very low. Due to the small numbers and variation in the ability of pupils, the school's results fluctuate considerably from year to year. These results therefore have to be viewed with great caution. For example, only four pupils took the tests for 11 year olds. Of these, two pupils had significant special educational needs, and one had a statement of special educational needs. Most of the current pupils aged 7 and 11 are attaining close to the levels expected for their ages in speaking, listening, reading and writing which reflects the position at the time of the last inspection.

62 By the ages of 7 and 11, attainment in speaking and listening is close to the national average and reflects the satisfactory progress that pupils make as they move through the school. By the age of 7, pupils are confident enough to express their ideas when discussing books in literacy or what they feel is fair or unfair in personal and health education lessons. They listen carefully to their teachers and other pupils in discussions as they make up lines of a shared class poem. In Key Stage 2, pupils build effectively on their skills. For example in Year 3/4 pupils discuss the significance of Islamic prayer mats using appropriate subject vocabulary. In Year 5/6, pupils display good knowledge of particular issues related to "Iggies House" and confidently take on the role of a particular character in a class reading of an extract from this book. In discussion, they demonstrate a very good understanding of the whole aspect of prejudice and how particular groups of people can be isolated by others due to their race, lifestyle, clothing or religion. Personal, social and health education lessons make a good contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills.

63 By the age of 7, pupils' standards in reading are close to the national average. Pupils enjoy shared reading activities during the literacy lessons and join in with enthusiasm when reading stories or poems such as the "Apple and the Worm". By the age of 7, lower attaining pupils have gained a basic knowledge of letter sounds, but they are not fully confident about the full range of sounds made when letters are combined, which limits the pace of their reading when faced with new words. However, most pupils enjoy reading at home and school, have secure understanding of letter sounds and read their books confidently with some expression. Their reading is generally fluent and they have a secure understanding of the alphabet so they can use basic dictionaries to check the spelling of simple words, use the index and contents to find information in non-fiction books. Pupils capable of higher attainment have a good vocabulary and have a secure understanding of how to use

punctuation and expression to add interest and sense to the story. By the age of 11, pupils attain standards close to the national expectations for their age. They develop a good range of strategies to decipher meaning from print and most break down words into syllables and use contextual clues effectively. Pupils enjoy reading and they recount the significant ideas, events and characters in stories or literature. Lower attaining pupils read at a steady pace, but with limited expression. However, they use their knowledge of letter sounds and understanding of the illustrations to work out unfamiliar words. Pupils capable of higher attainment read good quality fiction with fluency, expression and understanding. They cope well with the more complex narrative structures of these stories. Out of school, they read a range of literature including magazines and children's novels. Most pupils have a secure understanding of how to use the index, glossary and contents pages in non-fiction books and dictionaries.

64 By the age of 7, pupils' attainment in writing is close to the national average for that expected for pupils of their age. Lower attaining pupils' writing is legible and they use a series of sentences to develop their ideas logically. Capital letters and full stops are used, but not consistently accurately. Pupils retell stories or particular events such as a recent visit to Burghley Hall to look at the sculpture gardens. Most of their writing is legible, but the quality of presentation is variable reflecting the teacher's low expectations in this aspect of writing. Minor errors such as the use of capital letters in the middle of sentences and words are commonplace and more complex punctuation, such as exclamation marks are rarely evident. The content of the writing is satisfactory with pupils writing in different styles such as telling stories, writing simple poems or writing a postcard, but most of the writing is narrative and written from one perspective. The few pupils capable of higher attainment have a much more developed style and use a broader range of punctuation and describing words to add extra interest to their work, although there are still errors in basic skills and the quality of their presentation is very variable. Most of the writing by older pupils is joined and they are developing a personal style. The use of capital letters and full stops to denote sentences and the use of capital letters for proper nouns is consistent. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to use a wide range of punctuation including commas, exclamation and speech marks consistently within their work. Most common words are spelt correctly. All the pupils write for a variety of purposes and vary the style to match the audience or subject and use some writing devices such as simile and adjectives to add interest to their work. Higher attaining pupils' writing is full of interest. They develop their ideas well and use adventurous vocabulary to add interest. A broad range of writing conventions and devices is used to write for a range of purposes.

65 The teaching of literacy is good. This reflects an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, although the weaknesses identified at the last inspection such as the teachers' expectations not always being high enough for all pupils are still evident in Key Stage 1 and the lower years of Key Stage 2. Consistent strengths of the teaching are the clarity of the instructions given to pupils so that they are very clear about what they have to do, and the very good management of pupils. Teachers ask good questions that require pupils to look at the books and to use their knowledge from previous lessons. The lessons generally follow the national guidance for literacy and have satisfactory pace. These aspects of the teaching ensure that lessons are well organised, pupils behave well and they achieve well. Literacy is effectively used in other areas of the curriculum. There are examples of good practice by introducing specialist vocabulary to pupils, for example, when working in mathematics, science, art or music and this helps to broaden pupils' language.

66 Pupils' work and teachers' planning show that over a period of time the pace of learning is not as high as it could be due to a number of inconsistencies, for example, between the approach to planning by teachers to cater for the mixed ages and abilities in each class. The Year 1/2 teacher plans differently from other staff. These differences in planning mean that not all pupils, particularly pupils capable of higher attainment in the Year 1/2 and 3/4 classes, are fully extended by the work. For example, in one class the text on "Animal homes" was not used to look at any aspect of punctuation or grammar and was too

easy for the older and the higher attaining pupils. Consequently, in the closing session they were more interested in getting on with their work than revisiting a task they found too easy. In contrast, in a good lesson, the teacher made very good use of the text, "Iggies House", as the focus for class reading and for developing pupils' understanding of how prefixes alter the meanings of the root word. The group activities that followed built directly upon the text and grammar so by the end of the lesson all pupils had developed a much more secure understanding of prefixes and the relationships between the characters in the story. In addition, issues around racial prejudice were tackled sensitively and effectively in the closing discussion. These variable expectations of pupils are also reflected in the lack of emphasis that some teachers place on the presentation of work, correct punctuation and spelling. Marking, particularly in the lower classes, rarely addresses these aspects or gives pupils enough help in what they need to do to improve their work by setting very clear achievable targets. Special provision for lower achieving pupils and pupils with special educational needs is good. For example, good use is made of support staff both in the classrooms and to teach the additional literacy sessions for certain pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5. Consequently, the good learning is sustained and pupils achieve well relative to their ability. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.

67 The teacher in charge of the subject, with the support of the head teacher and the local authority consultant, has worked hard since the last inspection to introduce the National Literacy Strategy across the school, including the reception class. Due to teachers' high expectations of behaviour the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. However, information and communication technology is not yet used to its full potential for pupils to record and present their work in a variety of ways. The monitoring of teaching and standards has improved well. Lessons have been observed and comment given to staff to develop and improve their practice. Resources have been bought carefully to match the needs of the curriculum. In addition, the school has developed a comprehensive assessment and monitoring process that includes setting targets for pupils based on looking at work and their achievement in the end of year or term tests.

MATHEMATICS

68 By the age of 7 and 11, pupils' attainment is in line with the level expected for their ages. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. The National Curriculum test results in Key Stage 1 in 2000 show that pupils' attainment in mathematics was below the national average, mainly because few pupils achieved the higher levels. However, there were so few pupils taking the tests, and even fewer taking the tests at the age of 11, that any comparisons either with national figures or those for similar schools are not statistically safe. The school has set realistic targets for improvement in mathematics in future years. The satisfactory and sometimes good progress, from a below average start, of most pupils is due mainly to good teaching, which has strengthened pupils' abilities in number and measurement and the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. During the inspection, there was no significant variation noted in the attainment of boys and girls.

69 By the age of 7, pupils are quite confident in handling number. For example, they understand that numbers up to 99 are divided into tens and units. Pupils accurately add and subtract one and two digit numbers up to 100 and sometimes higher. For example, in a Year 1/2 lesson, pupils successfully added numbers up to 100 both horizontally and vertically. They also used different methods when adding tens and units by breaking the numbers down into tens and units. For example, one pupil explained how to add 32 and 41 by adding the tens to 70 and the units to 3 and joining the two answers to write 73 correctly. Most pupils recognise that 185 can be broken down to show one hundred, eight tens and five units. They then use this knowledge to successfully explain how to add and subtract large numbers. They understand how to multiply by two, three and ten, sequence numbers in different patterns and recognise the difference between odd and even numbers. Pupils appreciate the relative values of fractions, such as halves and quarters, and use this to good effect when telling the time. By using correct mathematical language when handling problems, pupils

compare numbers that are “greater” or “less” than others. They measure everyday objects correctly using standard measurements of centimetres. They recognise common two and three dimensional shapes, such as cubes, pyramids and cylinders.

70 By the age of 11, most pupils have a broad mathematical knowledge. Most pupils have a sound grasp of their times tables, can multiply and divide properly and are using long multiplication. They understand how to work out percentages of whole numbers, such as 80 per cent of 200. Pupils calculate accurately with fractions and add and subtract them correctly. When setting out their workings correctly on paper, for example, in a Year 3/4 lesson, pupils made good suggestions on how to break up larger numbers and so make the addition easier. Pupils build effectively on the work in Key Stage 1. They recognise two- and three-dimensional figures such as a rectangle, pentagon and octagon by the key features of sides, corners and angles. They construct and measure acute angles in geometric shapes. For example, pupils in Year 6 measure angles accurately and know that the four internal angles of a quadrilateral add up to 360 degrees. Pupils know how to present mathematical findings in bar and line charts. For example, pupils in Year 6 create block graphs to show the heights and weights of classmates and use computers well to create their graphs. There is good use of mathematical strategies to answer problems and confidence improves when pupils use patterns of thinking that can be applied to different situations. For example, in a Year 5/6 mental mathematics introduction, pupils explained how the holding of a weight helped them to estimate the comparative weight of an apple. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress when compared to their prior attainment, especially in upper Key Stage 2. This is shown in the analysis of pupils’ results in school based tests over the last seven years.

71 The quality of the teaching in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory, it is good in Key Stage 2, particularly for the older pupils. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when a fifth of lessons were unsatisfactory. In effective lessons, teachers have very good relationships with the pupils, which produce positive working environment and guarantee good levels of concentration and behaviour. Teachers maintain a brisk pace to lessons, particularly during the mental mathematics sessions. For example, they conduct a quick fire question and answer session to keep pupils focused. Teachers use support staff well to help groups of pupils and individuals in need. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the teaching of basic skills; lessons are brisk and sometimes challenging, with time managed well. However, particularly in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, the scrutiny of pupils’ previous work shows that many of the exercises are the same for all pupils. This is successfully raising some pupils’ attainment but there is a need to set more challenging activities for the pupils capable of higher achievement to extend their learning further.

72 The successfully implemented Numeracy Strategy is having a positive impact on both teaching and pupils’ learning and is beginning to raise standards in both key stages. There have been improvements in assessment procedures since the time of the last inspection. Teachers collect a good deal of information on each pupil. A variety of tests and assessments are undertaken at suitable intervals. Teachers make effective use of programmes to analyse data and use this information to set new class targets. Teachers planning shows the specific target for each lesson and this is shared with pupils. For example, in a Year 5/6 lesson, pupils were told that the aim for the lesson was to use different scales to identify the weights of objects. This was a successful lesson because each ability group was given work that was challenging for them and they understood what was expected by the end of the lesson. There is evidence of some good, thoughtful marking to guide pupils but often marking has few comments that pinpoint areas for development. Teachers establish effective classroom routines that encourage pupils to listen constructively and participate eagerly. They are enthusiastic about mathematics and value pupils’ contributions. This leads to good learning where pupils are keen to contribute to discussions and concentrate well when given their different tasks. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and pupils respond accordingly.

73 The mathematical curriculum is appropriate. All teachers have been trained for the National Numeracy Strategy and it has been successfully implemented. The head teacher and co-ordinator observe teaching and learning throughout the school. This provides useful feedback to teachers, which is improving the quality of the teaching of mathematics throughout the school. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection. The school's strategy for the development of the subject is good and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. For example, pupils use numeracy skills well in other subjects. They use data handling to record the measurements of their own body in science and use co-ordinates to map shapes on a grid chart. However, there are occasions when computers are not used as often as they could be to support pupils' work both in mathematics and in information and communication technology. This is an area that needs to be addressed as staff continue in their efforts to raise standards for all pupils. Although teachers use assessment information effectively for most pupils, there is still a need to set more challenging targets for pupils capable of higher achievement. Nevertheless the school is well placed to make further improvements in the standards achieved in mathematics

SCIENCE

74 The school's teacher assessments in 2000 show that pupils' attainment at the age of 7 was in line with the national average. It was below the average when compared with similar schools. However, the number of pupils taking the tests was low. It was an even smaller group in Year 6 and so comparisons with either national or similar schools are not statistically safe. By the age of 7 and 11, pupils' attainment in science matches the level expected for their ages. The school has maintained standards since the previous inspection. Pupils' attainment is improving because of the focus the school has placed on improving the investigative and experimental aspects of science particularly for the oldest pupils in the school. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and they make satisfactory progress in both key stages. As a result, there is a good capacity for further improvement. During the inspection, there was no significant variation in the attainment of boys and girls.

75 In Key Stage 1, pupils experiment with different materials and have a sound knowledge of the requirements of growth in plants. Pupils understand that plants need sun and water to grow and their work shows that they have a good understanding of the requirements for life. In Year 2, this work is developed well and is extended to the human life style and pupils recognise that a balanced diet is important for healthy growth. Pupils' work shows appropriate ways to record the results of their experiments. For example, they draw accurate diagrams to show different light sources such as a torch, electric light bulb and the sun. They conduct simple experiments with materials and show which ones stretch and which do not. They use their knowledge to record the materials used to build houses and explain that glass is best for windows because it is transparent. Pupils in Year 1/2 study the effects of materials and link their work well to art when they create imaginative designs using wool, beads, straws and ribbons. In their recording of simple experiments, they sometimes make predictions and indicate why the test is fair.

76 In a Year 3/4 lesson, pupils were set the task of recording food chains following discussion with the teacher about how animals adapt to their environment. For example, they explained why a polar bear would be out of place in a desert because it eats fish. Pupils used reference books to find their own chains and one used the correct terminology to identify the "predator" and "prey". Pupils accurately record their results in an experiment to compare friction when rolling toy vehicles over different surfaces and they explained that to make the test "fair" they must use the same slope for every vehicle. Pupils in Year 3/4 developed their scientific knowledge and improved their computer skills when creating an imaginary habitat for their creatures. The colourful display included such creatures as "fluffy fly", "clever buttercup" and "mega dead metal". They linked this work well to real life situations when describing the habitats of butterflies and worms. Pupils in Year 5/6 understand the concept of a fair test and explain that only one element in an experiment is changed to make the test fair. For example, they conducted an experiment into the size of shadows and knew that only the object blocking

the light could be moved to make the comparison fair. These results were carefully recorded and pupils explained how the results could easily be seen on a graph.

77 The satisfactory science teaching in both key stages and the range of stimulating scientific activities contribute well to the improving quality of pupils' learning. In the lesson seen and in discussions with pupils it is clear that their attitudes and behaviour are prime reasons why their learning is improving. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject contribute to the well planned provision for pupils, such as the improving use of investigations to encourage pupils to use scientific skills in a practical way. In Key Stage 2, good use is made of the basic skills of writing and measuring in experiments on air resistance when testing parachutes that were different sizes. A good element of teachers' planning is the emphasis placed on the correct use of scientific vocabulary, such as "artery" and "vein" when describing the circulatory system. In Year 5/6 work, there are good examples of how to record the results of experiments with electric circuits and how to show what happened when wires of differing thickness were used to connect a battery to the bulb. In Year 3/4, pupils' understanding of the requirements of plants was enhanced in their work preparing their own "perfect" plant. Most teachers include positive comments when marking but do not consistently provide precise guidance on what pupils need to do in order to improve. This makes it more difficult for some teachers to assess how well pupils learn from their mistakes.

78 The school has responded to the latest changes in the National Curriculum and introduced new guidance for teachers. The head teacher undertakes a regular audit of the subject and checks teachers' planning and pupils' work to ensure that all aspects of the subject are covered. Resources for the subject are satisfactory and used well to improve pupils' learning, for example, when testing circuits, magnetic fields or how forces affect objects. The curriculum for science covers all the required aspects. The breadth of the curriculum ensures that pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good gains in learning as they move through the school. The good attention to the use of appropriate scientific language and the use of charts and graphs ensures that the work makes a positive contribution to the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills.

ART AND DESIGN

79 By the age of 7 and 11, pupils' attainment in art and design matches that expected for their ages. Pupils' progress and learning are satisfactory and the quality of some art work on display is good. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils in Key Stage 1 demonstrate a good knowledge of colour and understand the difference between primary and secondary colours. They work well using different resources. For example, pupils in Year 1/2 use special effects with "marbled" paper to create attractive pictures of flowers. Pupils work happily in both two and three-dimensional media to create pictures, murals and models. For example, their models in wood were created after studying the sculptures of Henry Moore and Picasso. They paint portraits and use computers to mix text and art in good links with information and communication technology. All classes contribute to the attractive displays of work in classrooms and corridors.

80 Pupils continue to develop their skills and understanding of art and design in Key Stage 2 as they explore an ever increasing range of media. Drawing skills are developed as they explore the effects that can be obtained when using different pencils and shading. For example, in Year 5/6, pupils' books showed good sketches of an imaginative toy. The work on still life pictures using delicate water colours showed good observational skills and built effectively on work completed in Year 3/4. Teachers ensure that pupils' studies include looking at the work of famous artists. For example, Year 3/4 pupils study Van Gogh and in a good link to both history and design and technology draw pictures of chairs imaginatively. By Year 5/6, pupils' drawings are detailed, well executed and varied in content. Pupils use the techniques of Cezanne to create their own still life studies and this work was enhanced by the visit of a local artist. A good link was made to science and design and technology when pupils in Year 5/6 examined containers. They made paper cups and clay pots and their

drawings showed good work on perspective. Many pupils tackle this difficult aspect well in the drawings of how to make the cups.

81 Pupils thoroughly enjoy their art and design and take great pride in their work. They work with care and are willing to try new ideas in order to achieve the best results. Pupils in Year 6 were very keen to explain what they were doing in a lesson when the “Exton Stitchers” visited to help them make a series of pictures from the story of Peter Pan using a variety of materials. This subject makes a positive contribution to pupils’ cultural and spiritual development, as they learn about art in different societies and appreciate the range of feelings they experience in creating their own art works. The quality of teaching in art is good, especially for older pupils in the school. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and understand how to help pupils develop the range of skills needed to master a wide range of media. Teachers base their planning on clear guidelines and the progress of both knowledge and skills is informally monitored by the head teacher. Resources are used effectively to encourage pupils to experiment and enjoy finding new ways of creating works of art. Display is linked to art and design and teachers create a colourful and stimulating environment that celebrates pupils’ work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

82 By the age of 7 and 11, pupils’ attainment is in line with that expected for their ages. Standards have improved in Key Stage 1 and been maintained in Key Stage 2 since the last inspection. In both key stages, pupils use a good range of resources and apply the basic skills of measuring, cutting, joining and decorating materials. By the time they are 7, pupils understand how to consider ideas before putting them into action. They make simple diagrams to guide their thinking. Before making a winding mechanism to make their “Incy Wincy Spider” model move up and down, pupils sketched plans on paper. Pupils produce effective designs, which give them the opportunity to think carefully about the design process and what they are trying to achieve. For example, in a Year 1/2 class, pupils discussed how they would design a plate of healthy food for a picnic. They understood the need for a clean classroom and spotless utensils when preparing food safely. Pupils were enthusiastic in their contributions and thought that a well designed meal would encourage others to eat more fruit and vegetables. Pupils evaluate their own finished work. This good element of the design process encourages them to think of how improvements could be made to their finished product. For example, one pupil wrote “I liked the shiny pipe cleaners and next time I would use more colourful beads”.

83 Pupils in Key Stage 2 accurately measure, cut, fold and join, using a range of strategies suited to different materials. They use a variety of techniques to join materials together, such as glue, wire and string. Pupils’ skills in other subjects are used effectively. For example, pupils in Year 3/4 used their skills in art to design a chair and they looked at the ways that Van Gogh used chairs in his paintings. Another good link was made to science in their work to design a perfect plant. Their displayed work was good and their knowledge of the needs of growing plants improved. Pupils make more sophisticated designs and models as they move through the school, for example, in Year 5/6 there were good design plans for a “Ghost Castle” biscuit. Pupils worked enthusiastically to create good designs incorporating the ingredients and the methods to be used to make the biscuits. Discussions with pupils show a very good link was made to science by pupils in Year 5/6 when they designed and made model “fairground rides”, which had to move using power from batteries. Pupils have an appropriate regard for others’ safety and use tools sensibly. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in the targets set for them.

84 Only one design and technology lesson was seen during the inspection and this was satisfactory. Pupils in Year 1/2 responded enthusiastically to the challenge of designing a healthy meal using fruit and vegetables. The teacher made sure by leading a discussion well, that all pupils understood the need for cleanliness when preparing food. Teachers’ planning shows they have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject which they use to

ensure that the full curriculum is available for pupils. They plan their lessons with good consideration for health and safety issues and provide good links with other subjects such as English, mathematics and science. Relationships in the school between teachers, pupils, support staff and volunteer helpers are good and make a significant contribution to pupils' attainment, progress, personal and social skills. For example, pupils are encouraged to work together to make models and to critically evaluate their own and each other's work.

85 The design and technology curriculum is effective. There is a clear policy and scheme of work following national guidelines. The guidelines are used effectively by teachers in their planning of the curriculum to ensure that pupils improve their knowledge, skills and understanding at an appropriate rate. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The quantity and quality of resources are satisfactory. The school's capacity to improve further is good.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

86 In both subjects, standards of attainment are better now than they were at the time of the last inspection when they were judged to be below expectations at the end of both key stages. Pupils of all abilities achieve satisfactorily, so by the ages of 7 and 11 most pupils reach standards that are at the level expected for pupils' age. This better picture is mainly due to the recent introduction of clear guidelines based on the national guidance so that the curriculum covers a broad range of the suggested topic areas, although it has not had sufficient time to fully impact upon all the aspects of the subjects. Good use is made of the local environment and settlements such as Exton itself and the neighbouring village of Greetham mean that topics are relevant to pupils and enable them to use their own knowledge as the basis for some work. However, there are still areas of comparative weakness such as pupils' ability to use and understand maps and to empathise with people's lives in the past.

87 In history, by the age of 7, pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of the lives of people in the past such as Florence Nightingale and of important events in the history of the United Kingdom such as the Fire of London. Pupils use appropriate subject vocabulary such as past, present, old and new when describing the contribution of these people and events in their writing. On a local basis, they learn how the use of buildings in the village has changed over time such as shops or the dairy becoming homes. These skills are further developed in Key Stage 2. By the age of 11, pupils have a secure understanding of different periods in their own history such as the Saxons and the Tudors. Pupils develop a secure understanding that people's lives change over time, for example, they appreciate how the invention of washing machines has affected people's lives. On a local basis they learn how human activity has brought about changes in the local area, for example, the creation of Rutland Water and how a village was destroyed so that a local aristocrat did not have the view over his estate spoiled.

88 The links between the two subjects are well used by the school to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. The same study in Year 1/2 where pupils look at the village buildings is also used well to develop pupils' understanding of where important buildings are on their route to school and their mapping skills. They know their names and addresses and create a pictorial map of their route to school on the computer showing important landmarks and detail such as post boxes and lampposts. At the time of the last inspection, pupils' research skills were under developed. Evidence from books and from talking to pupils shows that this aspect of their work is now better. They have a secure understanding of how to use the library, textbooks and the Internet to find out about specific topics. This was reflected in history where the oldest pupils carried out a personal study about one aspect of the social changes since 1950. By the age of 11, pupils have built satisfactorily upon the basic knowledge of their own town and places around the world that they learn in Key Stage 1, so they have a secure understanding of different environments and communities. They use their skills in numeracy to plot graphs of rainfall and temperature well to illustrate these differences,

but their mapping skills in terms of the use of grid references and their understanding of map symbols are not secure. Literacy skills are used effectively when pupils contrast the lives of people in different countries, such as Pakistan and have a good understanding of how they differ from their own.

89 Pupils' work and teachers' planning indicate that teaching of history and geography is satisfactory. Teachers use the schemes of work to plan topics that develop pupils' skills and knowledge based on the most recent national guidance. However, there is too little variation in the breadth of the activities that pupils are given to fully reflect the mixed age, mixed ability classes. For pupils in Years 5 and 6, worksheets form the basis for much of the work in geography, although in contrast, they are given good opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills to interpret rainfall and climate graphs. The Year 5/6 teacher uses information and communications technology well in history to give pupils opportunities to record their work and research topics. The marking notes give pupils clear ideas on what they need to do to develop the project further. They respond well to this approach and the teacher's high expectations, producing work that is well presented, extensive and detailed. However, this approach to developing pupils' independent learning skills and their interest is not used in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 to the same extent. Activities tend to be very similar for all pupils and consequently some pupils, particularly those capable of higher attainment, are not given enough opportunities to fully extend their knowledge and understanding at their level in aspects of the subjects such as empathising with how people in the past might have felt about their experiences. Marking reflects this lack of clarity about what teachers in the lower classes expect different groups of pupils to learn. Although praise is used well and work is marked regularly, very little guidance is given to help pupils improve their work or to set them targets to concentrate on in the next piece of work. The literacy targets set for each pupil are not used to plan tasks to use and practise writing skills or marking, although there are potentially plenty of opportunities to reinforce these through both history and geography topics. This lack of rigour is also reflected in the variability of pupils' presentation of work.

90 Since the last inspection, the school has introduced the most recent national curriculum guidance on a two year programme as the basis for the guidelines for teachers. This is an improvement on the position at the time of the last inspection and, on a long term basis, appropriately reflects the mixed age class structure. The range of topics and the effective use of the local area drawing on pupils' own experience ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop the full range of skills, knowledge and understanding in both history and geography. However, although the school has carefully analysed the topics and time required to study the chosen units so the curriculum is appropriate, the programme is not sufficiently balanced over the two years, particularly in Key Stage 1. The time gaps between subject units are too long so pupils do not have regular opportunities to build on and develop their understanding. A consistent whole school assessment process has been introduced which gives teachers useful information about what pupils can do, but this procedure has not been in place long enough for teachers to use the information effectively to influence subsequent planning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

91 Standards in information and communication technology have improved significantly since the last inspection. This is because of the change to different computer systems, the introduction of a small computer suite in the Year 5/6 class, improved programs, the adoption of a good policy and written guidance and the leadership of the co-ordinator. Information and communication technology is valued as an essential part of the curriculum, although the time given to it still varies from class to class. For example, computers are still not used sufficiently consistently by all teachers to support pupils' work in information and communication technology and in other subjects.

92 Pupils' attainment, by the age of 7 and 11 is in line with the expected level for their ages, except in Key Stage 2, where a lack of resources means that one element of the curriculum is missing. Key Stage 2 pupils reach satisfactory standards in the elements that are taught, for example, in word processing, conducting research using the Internet and a few use e-mail confidently. Although older pupils understand the use of sensors in the real world, for example, their use to control traffic lights, the school does not have the equipment for pupils to conduct their own experiments with sensors, for example, to sense how much light is falling on objects or to measure temperatures over a period of time when using computers. The school is aware of these shortcomings and has a good action plan for the use of the new computers recently installed. Teachers are already booked for two training days this term and they expect to improve their own expertise during these sessions.

93 Where computers are used, pupils are keen to explain what they have been doing, for example, in Year 1/2, pupils use their skills to change the size, shape and colour of text they have typed into the computer. In discussions, they explained how they used a program to write a sentence and then selected a picture to illustrate it using an art program effectively. Pupils use art and design programs to create an imaginary friend and by using "clicking and dragging" techniques they select the shape and colour of facial features. These skills were used effectively to support their studies in geography when they made a map of Oakham. Pupils in Key Stage 1 enjoy using computers and their skills are improving. For example, in discussions they understand which screen icons save and print their work and they know that information can be shown in text or pictures.

94 Pupils in Key Stage 2 build effectively on their skills and knowledge with more frequent use of the new computers and programs in school. For example, pupils in Year 3/4 use a spelling program to improve their understanding of letter combinations. They support their work in history by using an art package to make repeating patterns with Egyptian masks. Pupils in Year 5/6 build effectively on previous work using data bases. In the pupils' work folders, good skills were used to give the importance and cost of the imaginary list of purchases in response to the prompt "If I won the lottery". Discussions with pupils in Year 5/6 showed they have a good understanding of a wide range of programs now being used in the school. For example, they talked confidently about their use of the Internet when finding information for their geography topic on Europe. They used a specific program well for their history topic on "Changes in Technology since 1950". They also explained how to use a special program that allowed them to control the movement of a helicopter to lift a box. In discussions, pupils explained how they load and save their work, how to bring up the various menus available, for example when changing the size or colour of their work when writing stories straight onto the screen. However, during the inspection computers were not always sufficiently well used, especially in the mornings, to further develop pupils' information and communication technology skills, for example, to support work in mathematics and English.

95 There were no lessons seen during the inspection. However, discussions with teachers and pupils show that teaching is satisfactory when using the programs available. Staff are all well motivated, keen to develop their skills and have a desire to improve teaching further and so raise standards. Planning is satisfactory and teachers share the learning objectives with pupils at the beginning of sessions. Pupils of all ages enjoy learning about information and communication technology. Year 5/6 pupils give it "ten out of ten" and talk with knowledge and enthusiasm about their work at school and at home. They are keen to learn more and to fully develop their skills and knowledge. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are keen and work with enthusiasm, diligence, perseverance and adaptability. Although information and communication technology is valued as an essential part of the curriculum, the computers are not used consistently by all teachers to support pupils' work in other subjects.

96 The subject has been a priority for development and is currently managed by the head teacher, whose planning for its development shows a good understanding of pupils' needs. Shortages in software and training have been identified and a detailed development plan for the subject has been drawn up. However, the curriculum for information and communication

technology does not meet statutory requirements because of the lack of sensing equipment and there is an urgent need to address this issue.

MUSIC

97 Pupils sing enthusiastically in assemblies and on the occasions in lessons when the teacher incorporates some singing such as at the end of the day. By the age of 7, pupils know a good range of nursery rhymes such as Little Miss Muffet, simple songs and hymns by heart. They sing in tune and have secure understanding of rhythm and tempo. They are enthusiastic and behave well in the sessions. This also reflects the enthusiasm of teachers and support staff who lead by example doing any actions or dance that is part of the song. Pupils' response is infectious and helps generate the positive atmosphere in the classrooms.

98 By the age of 11, pupils continue to improve their singing, developing confidence when performing or singing in assembly. They learn about different sorts of musical instruments and use untuned percussion to accompany specific songs. Teachers' assessment records indicate that pupils choose appropriate instruments to match the sound that they feel would match the song

99 The curriculum for music is based upon the national guidance. Since the last inspection, the school has adopted the new national guidance for the subject and introduced a whole school process for assessing pupils' achievements. Teachers' planning indicates that the curriculum is appropriate and includes the use of computers for pupils to practise combining different instruments to compose simple tunes. The range of songs sung by pupils and the good range of instruments mean that the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development. However, the lack of written work when pupils demonstrate their appreciation of different types of music and their understanding of composition indicates this aspect of the curriculum is not as well developed as the practical aspects and reflects the lack of a specialist teacher for music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

100 During the inspection, younger pupils were observed in games and dance. From the limited evidence available, pupils' standards of attainment by the age of 7 are close to those expected nationally. In a lesson in Year 1/2, pupils were observed learning how to send and receive balls of different sizes by throwing and catching. They were also practising how to hit a stationary ball and one thrown gently to them. Pupils compete in a variety of simple, but interesting games, which help them develop their skills in an enjoyable way. They worked well in pairs and small teams following the teachers' instructions well and enjoying the competition with their friends. In dance they move with poise and understand how to vary their movements in time to the songs. Pupils develop awareness of space and of each other so they move around in all activities safely.

101 In Key Stage 2, older pupils were observed swimming, but in no other aspect of physical education so few judgements on their attainment can be made. In swimming the majority of pupils enter and move confidently through the water and most swim at least 25 metres using front crawl. Younger pupils are confident and although a number need floats to help, they swim well and develop a good technique.

102 The quality of teaching in swimming is good where pupils benefit from the extra help the swimming pool staff give to their teachers. In lessons in school, the quality of teaching is satisfactory so pupils learn the full range of skills and understanding outlined in the national subject guidance. This reflects an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have secure subject knowledge so lessons are well structured with opportunities for pupils to gently warm up at the start and relax at the end of lessons. Instructions are clear and expectations of behaviour are consistently reinforced so pupils behave well. The activities are generally

appropriately matched to the purpose of the lesson so pupils acquire the skills of the subject satisfactorily. As they practise, the majority of pupils gradually improve the skills intended in teachers' planning. In the lesson seen for pupils in Years 1/2, which also included the reception class children, the teacher did not vary the activities sufficiently to match the wide range of age and ability in the class. Consequently, the youngest children struggled whilst some of the older pupils became a bit frustrated at the limitations placed on them. However, pupils enjoy the lessons and take part in them enthusiastically. The emphasis teachers place on group and paired activities gives pupils good opportunities to work with each other and they work well with pupils much younger than themselves and so reinforce their social skills. Physical education makes a very good contribution to pupils' social development and personal regard for others.

103 Since the last inspection, the school has improved the provision for the subject significantly. The most recent national curriculum guidance has been adopted as the basis for planning lessons. In addition, during the year there are opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 2 to take part in extra-curricular activities in various sports such as netball and football. The school takes part in local leagues and competitions. For example, on the final day of the inspection a number of Year 6 pupils took part in the local primary schools athletics championships. The residential trips in Years 5 and 6 provide pupils with opportunities to do more adventurous activities. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved reflecting the more secure curriculum. This is linked well to a good whole-school assessment procedure introduced to monitor pupils' progress in the subject, although it is in its early stages and is not yet used effectively to influence teachers' planning of lessons. The quality of resources has been maintained since the last inspection and the large playing field and marked playground provide good accommodation for outdoor activities, although the small hall, with equipment stacked around the edges only provides satisfactory opportunities for indoor activities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

104 By the end of both key stages pupils reach the standards in religious education expected by the locally agreed syllabus. They develop a secure understanding of Christianity and other world religions. Personal, health and social education lessons make a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development as they develop, through discussion, a good understanding of broader issues such as friendship, prejudice and fairness. Assemblies have a strong Christian theme and make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development as well as reinforcing their understanding of religious themes.

105 Much of the work in Key Stage 1 is discussion, when they learn about the Christian faith and the main festivals such as Christmas and Easter. They learn about the life of Jesus including some of the miracles such as the "Feeding of the five thousand". Through a visit to the village church, they discover the importance of special places in the building and the role that the altar and the font have in worship.

106 In Year 4, this basic knowledge is developed further and their understanding about the main Christian festivals becomes more detailed. For example, they learn about the essential figures in the events that lead up to the crucifixion such as Judas Iscariot, Pontius Pilate as well as Jesus. They also learn some stories from the Old Testament such as David and Goliath. As pupils move through Key Stage 2, the Christian foundation of the subject is developed to include other world religions. In Year 4 they learn about the key aspects of the Muslim faith, for example, that the holy book is the Qu'ran and the importance of the patterns and symbols on the prayer mats used by Muslims to pray. In Year 5/6, pupils' understand the five themes of worship, praise, thanksgiving, repentance, petition and adoration within a Christian context. They learn about the main philosophies underpinning Hinduism and Sikhism and how the main festivals of these religions relate to these.

107 Religious education is taught well and sensitively. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and make good use of resources. For example, in one lesson the teacher used the Muslim prayer mat on display in the Year 3/4 classroom to reinforce pupils' understanding of key ideas, such as no images of humans or animals are depicted because Muslims believe only Allah can create life. There are opportunities in each assembly for pupils to reflect on the meaning of what they have learnt from the well chosen stories used by the teacher leading the assembly to illustrate an idea. For example, the head teacher used a native Canadian Indian story to illustrate the idea that we are never alone, that a guiding spirit is always looking over us. Pupils respond well to these stories and listen attentively. The secure and supportive environment and very good relationships between pupils and adults which form the basis of the school's ethos help pupils feel confident to ask pertinent questions and make constructive and sensitive comments. They have respect for the views of the different religions and appreciate the comments made by other pupils in discussions. Class discussions are particularly well handled to deal with delicate issues such as fairness and discrimination, but the follow up activities, particularly in Key Stage 2 do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to express their feelings freely.

108 Religious education was not reported on in the last inspection report, but discussions with the co-ordinator indicate that there have been some developments mainly in buying more resources for teachers to use so they are now good. The new locally agreed syllabus, which has been developed from the Northampton scheme, has been introduced and the writing of supporting school policies is planned for the next academic year. The curriculum reflects the content of the agreed syllabus but pupils do not have enough opportunities to use information and communication technology for research or to present their work. A whole school approach to monitoring pupils' achievements has been developed, but this has not been in place long enough to have a significant impact upon teachers' planning.