

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ENGLISH BICKNOR CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Coleford, Gloucester

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115621

Headteacher: David A C Phillips

Reporting inspector: Margaret Cooper  
15175

Dates of inspection: 4 - 6 March 2002

Inspection number: 225728

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior  
School category: Voluntary controlled  
Age range of pupils: 5 to 11 years  
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: English Bicknor  
Coleford  
Gloucestershire

Postcode: GL16 7PG

Telephone number: 01594 860367

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Helen Rodwell

Date of previous inspection: 27 March 2000

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15175	Margaret Cooper	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities Special educational needs Design and technology English Geography History Physical education Religious education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
1112	Peter Oldfield	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22390	Claire Fagan	Team inspector	Foundation stage Art and Design Information and communication technology Mathematics Music Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is a popular voluntary controlled school in the Forest of Dean. It is much smaller than average and serves the immediate village and surrounding rural area. There are currently 76 boys and girls on roll, aged from four to 11, all of whom attend on a full-time basis. All pupils are of white UK heritage. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language and this is low compared with schools nationally. Taken together, children show average attainment when they join the school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is close to the average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (17.1 per cent), including Statements of Special Educational Need, is also broadly average. Special needs include moderate and specific learning difficulties and hearing impairment.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The school provides a sound quality of education. It is led and managed satisfactorily by a team that has established a Christian caring ethos in which good relationships are established at all levels, behaviour is very good, and pupils are taught well. As a result, pupils achieve well whilst they are in the school to attain above average standards by the age of 11. There has been sound improvement since the last inspection and therefore the school is no longer judged to have serious weaknesses. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the age of 11.
- Standards are good in information and communication technology (ICT) by seven, and music by 11.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are very good.
- Teaching is good.
- The school has established a strong partnership with parents, who hold the school in high regard.

#### **What could be improved**

- The rate of progress of pupils in the junior years.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities for some pupils, particularly in foundation subjects.
- Arrangements for monitoring and improving the school's performance.
- Preparing pupils to live in a culturally diverse society.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in March 2000. The school has dealt successfully with the main areas requiring development, including those found to be serious weaknesses. Leadership and management of the school have improved at all levels, although the subject co-ordinator role requires further development. The school now works closely with parents, standards are higher in writing by the age of seven, and the school makes satisfactory provision for ICT for junior pupils. The school continues to maintain above average standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and its success in raising standards in national tests was recognised when the school received an award from the Department for Education and Employment<sup>1</sup> in 2000.

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<sup>1</sup> Now known as the Department for Education and Skills

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A	B	A	A*
Mathematics	A	B	B	B
Science	A	C	C	C

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics at 11, and results in the 2001 national tests for English were in the highest 5 per cent of similar schools. Although average, standards in the science tests were weaker because the percentage of pupils attaining standards above those expected for their age was below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. The school was successful in achieving its targets in English and mathematics, and improvement in performance since 1997 has been above the national trend. Variations from year to year are largely related to differences in the abilities of pupils within each year group.

In the 2001 national tests, at the age of seven, standards were in line with the national average in writing, above average in reading, and well above average in mathematics. Compared with similar schools, standards were average in writing, above average in reading, and very high in mathematics. Teachers' assessments in science show that, when compared with the national picture and results in similar schools, the percentage of pupils attaining the level expected for their age was average and the percentage who attained above the expected level for their age was well above average. Improvement in performance over the last five years has been in line with the national trend in writing and mathematics, and below the national trend in reading from a high point in 1997.

The evidence from inspection shows a similar picture. Pupils achieve well, overall, making particularly good progress in the reception year to attain or exceed the expected levels by the end of the year in all areas of learning. This good progress is continued in the infant years to attain, overall, above average standards. In the junior years they make sound progress and attain above average standards by the age of 11. However, progress is not as good in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. Pupils achieve satisfactorily and attain the levels expected for their ages in all other subjects, except for ICT by the age of seven and music by the age of 11, where standards are above those expected. There was insufficient evidence to form a judgement about standards in art and design. Boys perform slightly better than girls compared with the national picture, and pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy coming to school and show positive attitudes to their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils respond to the school's high expectations of them and behave very well both in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and	Pupils respond well to opportunities to take on responsibility. They are

relationships	polite, friendly and helpful to adults and to one another.
Attendance	Above average, overall, although the rate of unauthorised absence is above average. Pupils arrive punctually at school and lessons.

The school makes considerable efforts to reduce the level of unauthorised absence that is related to a small minority of pupils with a poor attendance record.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Satisfactory

*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.*

In the reception year, teaching is good in all areas of learning for children at this stage, and this prepares children well for their learning in the infant years. For infant pupils, teaching and learning are at least satisfactory in all subjects, and good in English, mathematics, science and ICT. In the junior years, teaching and learning are satisfactory in all subjects except for music, where they are good. No judgement is made about teaching in art and design. English, including literacy, and mathematics, including numeracy, are taught well in the infant years, and satisfactorily in the junior years.

Teachers throughout the school have good levels of subject expertise, and pupils' good attitudes towards learning have a positive impact on the progress they make. Good account is taken of special educational needs and these pupils achieve well. A shortcoming, within lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, is that work is not matched closely to the needs of all age groups within the class, so that some do not make as much progress as others. Higher-attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they might when the tasks they are given are insufficiently challenging.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides an appropriate quality and range of learning opportunities, and the curriculum meets statutory requirements for National Curriculum subjects and religious education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. As a result, pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets on their Individual Education Plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good, overall, and the school promotes spiritual, moral and social development well. Pupils learn satisfactorily about their own cultural traditions, but are not prepared well enough for life in a culturally diverse society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The strong caring ethos of the school helps pupils feel secure, and fosters the positive behaviour and relationships which help pupils' learning.

The school has worked hard to establish a strong partnership with parents, who are very appreciative, and their involvement in the work of the school has a positive effect on their children's learning. There are shortcomings in the curriculum for pupils in the junior years, particularly Year 4, and teaching time is below the minimum recommendation for pupils of their age. Planning does not provide enough guidance

to help teachers ensure that pupils make sound progress in all elements of each subject. The curriculum is enriched through educational trips and visitors to the school and good opportunities for pupils to join extra-curricular clubs. There are sound arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' standards and progress, but insufficient use is made of this information to make sure that learning experiences are planned well to match the needs of all pupils and raise standards.

### **HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is led and managed satisfactorily. The headteacher gives a strong emphasis to establishing good relationships at all levels, and this contributes to the caring ethos of the school. He is supported well by teaching and support staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are active, give good support to the headteacher and staff, and have good arrangements for becoming informed about the work of the school. They fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There are shortcomings in arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance to identify and deal with key areas that require improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its resources satisfactorily to provide a sound quality of education for its pupils and to secure improvement.

There has been significant improvement in the role of subject co-ordinators since the last inspection but further development is required in arrangements for them to monitor provision and standards in subjects. The school is well provided with teachers and a satisfactory number of support staff whose help contributes to the good progress pupils make. The staff team share a commitment to improvement and sound capacity to succeed. The school makes good use of its accommodation, although the hall and reception classroom are of only adequate size and there is no dedicated outdoor area for reception children. The school has a sound quality and range of learning resources for all subjects. The school makes good efforts to ensure good value for money when making financial decisions.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children enjoy school.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• Children behave well.</li> <li>• The school helps children become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• Children are expected to work hard and achieve their best.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about their children's progress.</li> <li>• The amount of homework.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> <li>• The way the school works closely with parents.</li> </ul>

The inspection agreed with the parents' positive views of the school. The evidence showed that the school provides good information about children's progress, and that the school works closely with parents. It is unclear whether parents think there is too much or too little homework, but the inspection found homework arrangements to be satisfactory. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular clubs, but these are primarily for the older pupils. The school is now reviewing whether some could be made available to younger pupils.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Children enter the reception class with attainment that is broadly average. They achieve well in the reception and infant classes to attain above average standards by the end of Year 2. Pupils build steadily on their earlier learning in the junior classes and attain above average standards at the end of Year 6. This good overall progress is the result of good teaching in most years, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and pupils' positive attitudes towards learning, which means that they work productively and try hard to achieve well in all they do.
2. Standards in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 2 were in line with the national average in writing, above average in reading, and well above average in mathematics. Compared with similar schools, standards were also average in writing, above average in reading, and very high in mathematics. Teachers' assessment of science shows that the percentage of pupils who attained the level expected for their age was in line with the national average and the average for similar schools, and the percentage who attained above the expected level was well above the national average and the average for similar schools. Taking the last three years together, boys have performed slightly better than girls when compared with the national picture.
3. In the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 6 standards were in line with the national average in science, above average in mathematics, and well above average in English. Compared with similar schools, standards were average in science, well above average in mathematics and very high in English. However, the percentage of pupils who attained standards above those expected was very high in English, average in mathematics, and below average in science. Taking the last three years together, boys have performed significantly better than girls when compared with the national picture. Care must be taken in considering national comparisons in a school with such a small number of pupils in each year, as one pupil's result can have a considerable impact on overall percentages. Variations from year to year are largely linked to the abilities of the particular pupils in each year group. However, over the last two years, standards in science in Year 6 have not been as high as in English and mathematics. In 2001, this was because the number of those who attained above the level expected for their age was below the national average. The school's targets for English and mathematics in the 2001 tests were both achieved successfully, although the English target was not very challenging.
4. The evidence from inspection shows a similar picture. Children make good progress in the reception year because they are taught well, including literacy and numeracy, and respond positively to their learning experiences. This provides a secure basis for their later work in the National Curriculum in Years 1 and 2. They achieve well and attain above average standards in all areas of learning for children of their age. Children are interested in their learning experiences and soon learn the classroom routines. They establish good relationships with adults and with one another, and convey meaning clearly when talking to others. Children enjoy reading, recognise an increasing number of words by sight, and are beginning to express their ideas in writing. They begin to use simple addition and subtraction and have a good grasp of mathematical language.
5. Pupils continue to make good progress in the infant classes, because teaching is of good quality and pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They attain above average standards by the end of Year 2 in English, mathematics, science and ICT. They make sound progress in all other subjects with the single exception of art and design, where there was insufficient evidence to form a judgement. Pupils aged seven listen carefully and communicate well when talking to others. They read simple texts accurately and fluently, and express their ideas in writing in a sequence of sentences, which are often imaginative and grammatically correct. In mathematics, they show a good understanding of addition and subtraction and the capacity to solve simple problems. Pupils

use scientific vocabulary and methods confidently and show a good understanding of how to build a simple electrical circuit.

6. Pupils make sound progress, overall, in the junior classes because of satisfactory teaching and learning, and attain above average standards by the end of Year 6 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and also in music. They broadly attain the levels expected for their age in all other subjects with, again, the exception of art and design where there is insufficient evidence to form a judgement. Pupils aged 11 show well-developed speaking and listening skills, read junior novels accurately and with good levels of understanding, and explain and develop their ideas well in their writing. In their mathematics they show good skills in using a variety of strategies to solve problems, and higher-attaining pupils work competently with decimals and fractions. They show a developing understanding of magnetism in their work in science.
7. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets on their Individual Education Plans and Statements of Special Educational Needs. This is because teachers plan well for these pupils and make good use of support staff to help them achieve. Year 4 pupils achieve less well than older pupils in the senior class because planning does not take sufficient account of their needs. There is no substantial evidence from inspection of a variation in overall progress between any other groups, including gifted and talented pupils. However, girls achieve less well than boys in some lessons in the senior class because they are grouped inappropriately, and the achievement of higher-attaining pupils is sometimes limited because experiences are not always sufficiently challenging.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

8. The good attitudes stated in the last report have been well maintained. Behaviour, then stated to be very good, has also been sustained. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and are keen to join extra-curricular clubs. They show positive attitudes to their learning, especially in well-planned lessons as seen in a Year 1 ICT lesson during the inspection week.
9. Children settle well into the reception class, become familiar with class routines and quickly conform to the high expectations of behaviour. Their behaviour is very good and they play and work well together. Pupils share equipment and co-operate well with teachers and each other. These positive attitudes, which are seen throughout the school, have a positive impact on pupils' learning.
10. Behaviour is also very good in classes and at break times. Pupils conduct themselves well, always meeting the demands of a particular play-area designated on a daily rota for the class, and taking care not to infringe upon one another's space. This shows a very high regard for neighbours, which contributes very well to the very strong relationships throughout the school.
11. Pupils are pleased to help in the daily life of the school, including acting as monitors in a variety of tasks. Older pupils give very good practical help by helping to serve dinner to younger children, and by tidying and clearing away the dining-hall furniture. Lunch-time is a very pleasant social occasion, almost family-like, and much enjoyed. There were few opportunities seen during the inspection for pupils to fully discuss their work as part of a group or engage in drama, role-play or debate. There is no forum for the older pupils to have a say in the way the school operates, through, for example, a school council.
12. Pupils know each other well, and it is rare for unkind words or poor attitudes to be displayed towards others. Generally pupils are co-operative and compliant, respecting adults' opinions and instructions. There is, thus, an orderly atmosphere; the rules of good behaviour are known and understood, and this helps establish a positive learning environment.
13. Attendance at the school is about the national average but the very high levels of unauthorised absence are largely confined to two pupils whose attendance record could be much improved and contribute more effectively to their learning opportunities. The school and authorities have tried hard to give a positive lead in this direction. The high levels of unauthorised absence are not a

reflection on the vast majority of parents, who comply very well with the school's requests to take holidays at appropriate times and provide notes to explain absences. Most pupils are very punctual and arrive at school and lessons on time. Registers are not consistently maintained well by teachers and daily totals are inaccurate in some cases.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

14. The quality of both teaching and learning are good throughout the school as a whole, although with some variation. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons seen, and was good in over half of them. This is not such a positive picture as at the last inspection when teaching and learning were found to be at least good for all age groups, and much of the teaching was very good, particularly for junior children. Teachers have good levels of expertise in the subjects they teach, establish a good working atmosphere in their classrooms, and manage pupils skilfully so that no time is lost in inappropriate behaviour. Pupils of all ages show positive attitudes towards their learning experiences and this has a strong impact on the progress they make. They are interested in their activities, concentrate well on the tasks they are given, and make significant gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding as they move through the school.
15. There is variation in the quality of lesson planning, which is sometimes unsatisfactory, particularly for junior pupils. In the best examples, work is carefully planned to meet the needs of each year group within the class. The timing of each element of the lesson is judged skilfully, and also delivered at a good pace, and this enables pupils to make good progress within the time available. In weaker examples, the timing of lesson elements is either inappropriate in the planning, or not managed at a brisk pace. This limits the rate of pupils' progress within the lesson, including, in some cases, missing a learning experience that has been intended. In the three year-group class, insufficient account is taken of the needs of Year 4 pupils who, as a result, do not achieve as well as older pupils within the class. Similarly, higher-attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and this puts some constraints on the progress they make.
16. Teaching is good in the reception year and promotes children's good achievement in all the areas of learning for children at the Foundation Stage. The teacher and support assistants work well together to provide a secure learning environment in which children settle quickly and soon learn the classroom routines. As a result, they approach their activities with increasing confidence and concentration, and begin to make good gains in their learning. Although only one of the teachers of this shared class was observed during the period of the inspection, evidence from planning shows that teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the needs of young children and plan lessons carefully. Reception children are prepared well for their work in National Curriculum subjects in Year 1.
17. Good teaching for infant pupils ensures that they build well on their early learning experiences and continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Teaching for these year groups is at least satisfactory in all subjects, and good in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Teachers plan carefully for the different year groups in the two younger mixed-age classes and use well-chosen teaching methods so that pupils achieve the gains in learning expected of them. In a Year 2 science lesson, for example, work on electricity was matched well to pupils' differing ages and stages of learning, and practical activities were managed at a good pace. As a result, all groups of pupils worked very productively. They knew what was expected of them and worked co-operatively to support and extend each other's learning. They showed confidence in sharing their findings with the rest of the class at the end of the lesson.
18. Teaching in the junior classes is satisfactory, overall, but good in music. In lessons where teaching is good, as seen, for example, in history and music, teachers plan good quality activities that are matched well to the learning intended by the end of the lesson. They also provide opportunities for pupils to collaborate to help each other make gains in their knowledge and skills. As a result, pupils achieve well. For example, Year 3 pupils increased their knowledge of school in Victorian times and their use of primary evidence in history, and Year 6 pupils developed their composing skills in music.

19. There are shortcomings in the management of boys and girls in the junior years. There is insufficient awareness of the adverse effect of boys and girls working in separate groups on the social inclusiveness of the learning environment, and how this can result in differences in achievement between the two groups. In an English lesson, for example, where only one of the four table groups had both boys and girls, girls contributed significantly less than boys to sharing their ideas with the rest of the class. In many lessons, pupils spend too much time listening to teachers' explanations, questions and instructions, and have too few opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. As a result, pupils are not sufficiently aware of their own learning and do not achieve as well as they are capable.
20. Teachers take good account of special educational needs in their planning, and the effective use of support assistants enables them to achieve well. Literacy and numeracy are both taught well, overall, so that pupils make good progress in these skills by the age of 11. Greater use could be made of ICT to support learning across the curriculum, but teachers make appropriate use of homework to promote progress.

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

21. The school provides a satisfactory quality and range of learning opportunities, and the curriculum meets statutory requirements for subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. However, there are shortcomings in the balance and relevance of the curriculum provided, particularly for pupils in the junior years. Teaching time for junior pupils is below the minimum recommendation and there is an imbalance, both within and between subjects. Timetables are vague in their allocation of time to each subject and there is insufficient monitoring of the use of time to guide teachers' planning. As a result, insufficient time is given to learning in some subjects as seen, for example, in music. For pupils up to Year 3, good account is taken of the curricular needs of both age groups within each class. In the senior class, planning takes greater account of the older pupils' needs and, as a result, the curriculum for Year 4 pupils is not as relevant and appropriate as that provided for Years 5 and 6. In contrast, the school has responded well to the recommendation from the last inspection to raise standards in some aspects of ICT. This has been addressed successfully and ICT shows good improvement.
22. The curriculum provided for reception children is of good quality and makes appropriate provision for the six areas of learning for children at the Foundation Stage, with a strong emphasis on literacy, numeracy, and personal and social development. There is an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-chosen activities, as well as opportunities for practical and creative tasks and for play. The school has recently introduced nationally recommended guidance on planning for subjects other than English and mathematics for infant and junior pupils and, in most cases, these are taught through topics on a two- or three-year cycle to take account of mixed-age classes. This is at a very early stage of development, and there is insufficient guidance to help teachers plan steady progress in all elements of each subject as they move through the school. At present, for example, pupils have gaps in their skills and knowledge at the age of 11 in both geography and history.
23. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are now well-established, and 'booster' support provides the opportunity for the oldest children to be taught in smaller groups of Year 6 pupils only. There are instances of good examples of numeracy being used across the curriculum, as in the geography theme on water when older pupils measured amounts of water used at home and calculated its volume. However, the evidence from pupils' work scrutiny, lessons observed and displays indicates that the skills pupils learn in literacy and numeracy are only adequately developed in other subjects. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to write or record their work in science or to use ICT across the curriculum. The heavy reliance on worksheets in many subjects restricts challenge and opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and work independently.

24. The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs. They receive their entitlement to a balanced and relevant curriculum that meets the provision as set out in Statements of Special Educational Needs and Individual Education Plans. The school has identified provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) as an area for development. At present, planning is not sufficiently structured throughout the school, although provision for sex education is in line with the governors' policy, and attention is given to the dangers of the misuse of drugs. Older pupils benefit from the opportunities provided by a good number and variety of extra-curricular activities. All teaching staff volunteer to run lunch-time or after-school clubs, which include chess, music, choir, sporting activities, computers and a nature club. The school is reviewing its provision to consider making these available to a wider age group.
25. The curriculum is enriched through trips to places of educational interest, such as the Black Country Museum, and by visitors to the school. For example, visitors to the school in recent years include African dancers and Turkish drummers, and these opportunities help pupils learn to appreciate the music and dance of other countries. There are sound links with the local community. The adjacent church, for example, offers good support and partnership with the school and pupils view the church building as an integral part of their learning environment for history, art, and for public performances. The vicar is a regular visitor to school assemblies and supports school functions well. Good use is made of the local vicinity as a learning resource, including the motte and bailey castle on which the school is built, and walks to the nearby River Wye.
26. There are satisfactory links with playgroups and other schools, including the nearby secondary school, and this helps pupils make a smooth transfer to the next stage of their education. Pupils also benefit from links with a further education college which provides extra sports tuition. The local cluster of schools, of which English Bicknor is a member, obtain additional funding for curriculum projects, and Year 3 and Year 5 pupils are currently benefiting from the current initiative in music. Strong priority is given to developing children's confidence and social skills through carefully planned activities in both their PSHE lessons and during the whole-group carpet time. Children are interested in their activities, maintain concentration well, speak confidently in a group and enjoy good relationships with both adults and other children. Children communicate and co-operate very well with one another during activity time, and take turns patiently. Children are given opportunities to take responsibility for their own choice of activities through the regular use of a planning sheet. However, pupils' choices are often too heavily directed by the teacher and this limits pupils' opportunities to play an active role in decision-making.
27. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school promotes spiritual development well through its Christian ethos and traditional events and festivals of the Christian calendar, as well as opportunities for prayer and reflection during assemblies. It is also promoted through learning experiences in the curriculum, including religious education and music.
28. Provision for moral development is good. The school promotes very effectively the principles that distinguish right from wrong, fairness and honesty. Pupils respond by keeping to the rules as seen in the playground marking areas. Rewards are given to encourage good behaviour, including, for example, being considerate to others in the dining-hall. There are also appropriate sanctions, although these are rarely needed. Pupils respect the school's high expectations of their honesty and truthfulness. Opportunities are used in assemblies and in lessons to discuss moral issues, and pupils contribute well towards making the school a friendly and supportive community.
29. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop socially and to increase their understanding of living in a community. Within their classrooms, pupils willingly carry out a range of tasks that encourage them to take responsibility and help each other. Older pupils help younger pupils, in the dining-hall, for example, and this promotes a happy 'family' community. Young children play well with partners and share equipment. Teachers and other adults provide good role models in the respect and consideration they show towards each other and towards pupils. In lessons, pupils are given opportunities to work collaboratively to help support each

other's learning. The organisation of reading and spelling partners, for example, helps pupils develop their literacy skills but also fosters good relationships.

30. There is satisfactory provision for pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions, enhanced by participation in local musical festivals, but there are limited opportunities for them to appreciate the richness of other cultures. Pupils learn about Western European culture through their work in subjects such as English, history and music, and through educational visits. A planned link with a French school has the potential for further increasing pupils' knowledge of European cultures, and the school has been involved in an aid initiative for Zambia. Opportunities to learn about world faiths, notably Judaism and Islam, are provided through the religious education curriculum. Experiences such as Turkish drumming and singing African songs help pupils learn about other cultural traditions, but they are given insufficient opportunities to appreciate the diverse cultures of modern-day Britain.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

31. There have been improvements in aspects of the school's care for its pupils since the last inspection, including the procedures for child protection, which are now very good. The teacher with responsibility is trained appropriately, and other staff are aware of procedures. The school offers a safe and friendly environment where pupils of all ages are highly valued. A good example of this care is seen at the end of a school day when teachers supervise pupils' leaving, and pupils are not allowed to leave the site until their parents or carers are present. Good procedures are in place for ensuring pupils' welfare. The headteacher is trained appropriately in first aid, and the school has good procedures for carrying out checks on electrical equipment and fire-fighting apparatus, and for regular fire drills to take place. The caring ethos of the school makes pupils feel very secure.
32. The school has satisfactory procedures for monitoring and improving attendance, although registers are not always completed fully each day. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are also good, as demonstrated by the good behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school, which has a positive impact on the quality of learning.
33. The school has good procedures for identifying and meeting special educational needs. Individual Education Plans are prepared by class teachers in collaboration with the co-ordinator, and they are reviewed at least twice a year. The school is planning to involve pupils more closely in developing their Individual Education Plans in line with the revised code of practice for pupils with special educational needs. Good use is made of guidance from external specialist agencies, such as an educational psychologist and teacher of the deaf, to support provision.
34. There are satisfactory arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. A variety of assessments are made and recorded, starting with a home-school liaison sheet, which is begun for young children before entry to the reception year and built upon during their time at school. Base-line assessment is carried out in the reception year and is used to plan learning experiences that build on the prior attainment of children. However, variations in teachers' understanding of base-line data put some constraints on how this information is used to monitor pupil progress. Other assessments include non-statutory tests in Years 3, 4 and 5, and regular tests of reading as well as pupils' standards at the end of each mathematics unit. This information is used to identify pupils for additional support where appropriate, such as early literacy support. Arrangements for assessing standards and progress in most subjects other than English and mathematics have only been introduced recently and are at an early stage of development. The school does not yet make sufficient use of assessment information to ensure that all pupils make steady progress in each area of the curriculum.
35. In contrast, pupils' personal development is monitored and supported well. The biggest advantage being that in such a small school, the teachers and adults know the children well. This knowledge enables them to respond promptly and appropriately to any concerns. The very good

relationships enjoyed throughout the school between adults and pupils contribute very well to the happy environment and strong pastoral support, and promote pupils' progress.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

36. The school has established a strong partnership with parents, who hold the school in high regard, and this shows a substantial improvement since the last inspection. Parents showed their appreciation for the school in the pre-inspection meeting and parental questionnaires and inspectors agree with their positive views. The co-operative relationships between parents and staff help to establish and maintain the good attitudes pupils have towards school.
37. A large number of parents help regularly in school, and most help their own children with their homework. This support is valued by the school and contributes well to pupils' learning both at school and at home. The school's commitment to establishing very good links with parents is seen in their involvement in the Family Education programme. The very active Friends Association has provided a wide variety of social and fund-raising events, and the funds raised have contributed very well to the purchase of equipment for the school, including computers and geography CD-ROMs, as well as a water fountain in the playground. The parent community has given good support to some of the events organised by this association including, for example, auctions of promises. The association has helped to achieve the very good relationships now enjoyed between parents and the school, and issues an open invitation to all parents to attend their meetings or help with events. They believe the current staff form a very happy team which contributes very effectively to pupils' learning.
38. Although a minority of parents are dissatisfied with the arrangements for homework, inspection evidence shows that homework is set regularly, and some parents have used the homework diary as an effective means of communicating concerns or comments. Homework guidelines published by the school and made available to parents make sure parents understand what is expected of their children. Parents are kept well-informed about school matters through regular letters and newsletters, including a detailed end-of-year letter from the headteacher. The good quality of the school brochure and governing body's annual report gives parents a good knowledge of school life and events.
39. Although a number of parents do not particularly like the computer-generated style of pupils' annual reports of progress, the evidence shows that these are of good quality and keep parents well-informed as to how their children are getting on. They include targets, so parents know what their children need to do to improve and, where standardised tests have taken place, there is a careful explanation of the levels gained against what is expected for their age. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well-informed of their children's progress and of targets on their Individual Education Plans so they are able to provide support at home to help their progress.
40. Formal opportunities are also provided three times each year for parents to discuss their children's progress with teachers. The evidence from inspection did not support the view of a minority of parents who feel that the school still does not work closely with them. Teachers and headteacher make themselves freely available at any reasonable time to discuss parents' concerns, and make sure parents know this. They also consult parents through a questionnaire and act upon parents' views.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

41. The school is led and managed satisfactorily by the headteacher and key staff. This has enabled the serious weaknesses found at the last inspection two years ago to be dealt with successfully. The headteacher puts appropriate procedures into place for addressing key priorities that require improvement. He gives a strong emphasis to establishing good relationships at all levels and this contributes to the caring ethos of the school. He is supported well by teaching and support staff and, together, they share a sound commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed.

This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. There has also been development in the subject co-ordinator role, and further improvement is planned when co-ordinators take responsibility for their own budgets in the next financial year. Co-ordinators now prepare annual reports on their subjects, and all contribute to the development of the school improvement plan. However, the arrangements for gathering evidence about provision and standards in subjects are largely informal, and the identification of areas for development is not yet founded on a secure evidence base.

42. There has also been improvement in the effectiveness of governors, who demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting the headteacher and staff. They now have a clearer understanding of their roles and have established good arrangements for becoming informed about the work of the school. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. An error in publishing attendance statistics in the school brochure, and minor omissions in the governors' annual report, require improvement. All statutory requirements for special educational needs are met fully, and provision for pupils with special educational needs is managed well by the co-ordinator.
43. There are shortcomings in arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and taking effective action. The school is developing good systems for recording assessment data, which make it possible to monitor standards and progress. However, this information is not yet used satisfactorily to diagnose strengths and weaknesses and plan appropriate steps to secure improvement in the school's provision and pupils' achievement. For example, procedures to compare the relative progress of different groups such as boys, girls, and lower- and higher-attaining pupils have not yet been introduced. The school has implemented appropriate arrangements for performance management that meet requirements, and is also working towards receiving accreditation from the 'Investors in People' initiative. The programme of monitoring teaching, however, lacks rigour and does not provide enough support to help teachers sustain and improve the quality of their teaching.
44. The school has a secure financial base and financial planning is satisfactory. A significant balance is being maintained appropriately to take account of projected numbers and known costs, as well as plans for improving the accommodation. Financial planning is linked satisfactorily to educational priorities, although not all developments are costed. In some cases, success criteria are neither specific nor measurable, and this limits the extent to which the effectiveness of financial decisions can be evaluated at a later stage. The school takes good account of the principles of best value in using its financial resources. Specific grants are used well as, for example, in the support provided for pupils with special educational needs. The secretary manages day-to-day financial procedures efficiently, and the school makes satisfactory use of new technology, including the use of electronic mail and the Internet.
45. The school is well provided with experienced and suitably qualified teachers, and a satisfactory number of classroom support staff whose help contributes to the good progress pupils make. Close liaison between teachers who share a class ensures there is no discontinuity in provision. Plans are in hand to provide a full-time classroom assistant for each class in the future, and this development has the potential to improve provision in mixed-age classes, particularly for the early years class where reception children and Year 1 pupils have different curricular needs, and in the senior class where planning needs to take account of three different year groups.
46. The school now makes better use of the accommodation than at the last inspection, although the hall and early years classroom are of only adequate size. There is no dedicated outdoor area for use by reception children on a daily basis, although the school is developing plans to provide one. Pupils benefit from a wildlife area to support learning in science, and an extensive grassed area for physical education and relaxation when the weather is suitable. There is sufficient hard-surface area for the numbers of pupils, and this is attractively laid out with sports markings, games and benches. The school has a sound quality and range of learning resources for all subjects.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

47. In order to continue to improve, the governors, headteacher and staff should now:-

(1) Improve the rate of progress of pupils in the junior years by

- matching work closely to the needs of all groups, particularly different year groups and higher-attaining pupils
- improving the quality of lesson planning, matching teaching methods more closely to learning objectives, and providing more opportunities for pupils to work independently
- ensuring that pupils are grouped appropriately

*(Paragraph numbers 3, 6-7, 15, 19)*

- (2) Ensure that the quality and range of learning opportunities is at least satisfactory for all pupils, particularly in foundation subjects, by
- developing schemes of work to give sufficient guidance to teachers on how to increase pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding from year to year in all elements of each subject
  - ensuring that short-term planning takes good account of each age group in all mixed-age classes
  - increasing the amount of teaching time for junior pupils, and reviewing and monitoring the time allocation for subjects for all pupils
  - increasing opportunities for developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum
- (Paragraph numbers 21-23)*
- (3) Monitor and improve the school's performance more effectively by
- establishing a more rigorous programme of monitoring teaching
  - using all the information available about the school's performance more effectively to identify areas for improvement
  - implementing systematic procedures for subject co-ordinators to monitor provision and progress in their subjects, so that the identification of strengths and weaknesses is based on secure evidence
- (Paragraph numbers 41, 43)*
- (4) Prepare pupils to live in a culturally diverse society by
- planning systematic opportunities through the curriculum to help pupils appreciate the cultures and contributions of minority ethnic groups to be found within the UK
- (Paragraph number 30)*

#### **Other minor issues which should be considered by the school**

- Pursue current plans to improve the accommodation, particularly in respect of a dedicated outdoor area for reception children.
- Ensure that the school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents includes all statutory requirements.
- Continue to work with parents whose children have a poor attendance record.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	22
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	17

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	0	12	10	0	0	0
Percentage	0	0	55	45	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	76
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	13

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	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.1

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.3

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	6	6	12

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	11	11	12
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (90)	92 (90)	100 (90)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	11	12	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (90)	100 (90)	92 (90)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	4	4	8

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	7	7	8
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	88 (86)	88 (86)	100 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	7	8	8
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	88 (86)	100 (93)	100 (100)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	64
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21
Average class size	25.3

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000-01
	£
Total income	174,655
Total expenditure	173,136
Expenditure per pupil	2,839
Balance brought forward from previous year	24,538

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	76
Number of questionnaires returned	36

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	25	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	29	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	72	28	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	39	8	11	0
The teaching is good.	74	26	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	43	29	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	14	6	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	28	0	3	0
The school works closely with parents.	51	31	17	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	72	22	6	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71	29	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	31	11	6	11

### Other issues raised by parents

No other issues were raised by a significant number of parents

## **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**

48. The school makes good provision for children in the reception year, and this has been maintained since the previous inspection. The quality of both teaching and learning is good in all areas of learning for children at the Foundation Stage and, as a result, they achieve well. Effective systems of assessment based on a 'stepping-stones' record ensures that planned activities for all children are suitably challenging, take good account of children's ability, and are firmly based on nationally recommended curriculum guidance for the early learning goals and the stepping-stones towards them. Teachers have good levels of understanding of the needs of young children, and lesson planning is effective in ensuring that learning experiences are matched well to the needs of reception children within the mixed-age class. Classroom assistants support children well and lead groups effectively.
49. The children enter the school with average levels of attainment and, by the end of the reception year, have made good progress in reaching the early learning goals expected for their age in all areas of learning, and many children exceed them. Over three-quarters of the children have part-time pre-school experience in local nurseries and playgroups before starting full-time school.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

50. This area of learning is taught well so that pupils make good progress to attain standards above those expected by the end of the reception year. Strong priority is given to developing children's confidence and social skills through carefully planned activities in both their personal, social and health education lessons and during whole-class carpet time. As a result, children are interested in their activities, maintain concentration well, speak confidently in a group and enjoy good relationships with both adults and each other. Children communicate very well with one another during activity time, and demonstrate that they can work co-operatively, taking turns patiently. Children record their own activities through the regular use of a planning sheet, although they are given insufficient opportunities to make their own choices and to take responsibility for their own learning.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

51. Children's language skills are well-developed when they join the reception class, and good teaching enables them to build well on their skills to attain standards above those expected by the end of the year. Children hold simple conversations, often constructing and using full sentences and mature vocabulary for their age. They readily use the language being developed in the role-play area of the Bicknor 'toy factory' and can recognise their names and help others in order to 'clock-in' on time. In their literacy lessons, the children achieve challenging levels in both word and text level work through well-planned games and they are beginning to understand the difference between fiction and non-fictional writing. They make good progress in their knowledge of sounds and letters, and in using language for communication. In their reading, children enjoy stories and handle books well, with a growing number of words they recognise on sight.

### **Mathematical development**

52. Teaching is good in this area of learning and promotes the good progress children make to attain standards above those expected by the end of the year. Lesson planning takes good account of national guidance, and many other spontaneous opportunities are used well to reinforce counting, simple addition and subtraction and mathematical language. Activities are organised so that the reception children have many consolidating practical experiences based upon play and supported effectively by the classroom assistant. The children can count confidently to 20, and a few carry on accurately to much larger numbers.

## **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

53. Reception children demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of their world, and make good progress in this area of learning as a result of good teaching. The planned programme for this area of learning is broad and relevant and is currently linked to the class theme of emergency services. Lesson planning encourages children to explore and examine objects, for example, using the home corner with lights on and off to understand the effects of light and dark. Children are encouraged to investigate construction materials with adult support and to use appropriate tools. Children enjoy using the computer and demonstrate good levels of knowledge and practical ability. They can manipulate the mouse, carry out simple word processing activities accurately and show increasing knowledge of the keyboard. Lesson planning evidence shows an appropriate balance of the use of a word recognition program alongside opportunities to promote a growing understanding of the use of everyday technology and how to program a moving toy.

## **Physical development**

54. This area of learning is taught well and pupils achieve well, particularly through well-planned opportunities to develop their fine motor skills. Children have many opportunities to use a wide range of tools and equipment. They demonstrate very mature manipulative skills when junk modelling in using scissors to cut very accurately, and using a glue stick with care and precision to assemble parts of a model. Children show good co-ordination and use of space when they enthusiastically join in outdoor games. Although teachers plan two sessions each week for pupils to work with large toys and equipment in the playground, the lack of a dedicated outdoor space for reception children to use on a daily basis puts some constraints on their learning experiences.

## **Creative development**

55. Although no taught lesson offering creative development was seen during the inspection, evidence from displays shows that there is much emphasis upon art and imaginative play and that the quality of teaching and learning is good. Displays show a variety of art techniques that children have experienced, including weaving, drawing, painting and printing. The role-play area of the Bicknor 'toy factory' is well-equipped and children play enthusiastically in there, developing their creative imaginations. No music was seen during the inspection.

## **ENGLISH**

56. Pupils achieve well in this subject and attain above average standards. The evidence from the inspection provides a similar picture to test results, with some variation in standards from year to year related to differences in the abilities of pupils within each particular year group. When children join the school they show average levels of attainment, and make good, overall, progress by the end of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.
57. Pupils aged seven listen carefully and effectively to teachers' explanations and instructions. They convey their ideas clearly when talking to adults or one another. Pupils read simple texts accurately and fluently. They use their knowledge of letters, sounds and meanings to read words that are unfamiliar as, for example, when they read Victorian school records in a history lesson. Pupils communicate meaning effectively in a range of written forms, including story, poem, and retelling a traditional tale. Writing is organised in a sequence of sentences, mostly marked by capital letters and full stops. Appropriate vocabulary is used, with frequently used words and words of one syllable spelt correctly, and errors plausible. Letters are clearly formed. High-attaining pupils' writing is imaginative and grammatically correct. Vocabulary is well-chosen and words are used precisely. Pupils spell most familiar words accurately, and use a style of handwriting that is joined and legible.

58. By the age of 11, pupils demonstrate good speaking and listening skills. In discussion, they listen carefully, making contributions and asking questions that are responsive to what they have heard. Pupils of average ability read junior novels with sound levels of accuracy and fluency, and show understanding of significant ideas, events and characters. Higher-attaining pupils read more demanding texts, for example, a novel with some archaic use of language and vocabulary. They are familiar with a number of authors and poets, and demonstrate good information retrieval skills including using the library and the Internet.
59. Pupils write in a range of written forms, including letter, poem, story and biography. Pupils of average ability communicate their ideas clearly, taking good account of purpose and audience. They use grammatically complex sentences and select words carefully to achieve the intended effect. Standards in punctuation and spelling are satisfactory. Higher-attaining pupils develop their ideas well in writing that is varied and interesting. They use vocabulary imaginatively and organise their writing in paragraphs. Spelling is generally accurate, including that of irregular words, and punctuation is mostly correct, including the use of commas and speech marks.
60. The quality of both teaching and learning is good, overall, although with some variation. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons seen, and good in a minority of lessons. Teachers have good expertise in the subject, which enables them to give effective support and guidance to extend pupils' learning. In lessons where teaching is good, planning takes close account of the differing ages and stages of learning of pupils within the class, so that all groups achieve well. They use a variety of well-chosen teaching methods so that pupils benefit from opportunities to work in a whole-class group, as a member of a small group, and individually. This was seen for example, in a Year 1 lesson in which good teaching enabled pupils to make good progress in their knowledge of letters, sounds and spelling patterns, and also in using books to find information. The teacher explained what they were expected to learn during the lesson so they understood the purpose of their activities. Both year groups were keen to take part in the whole-class introduction because word work was taught through the use of 'Bicknor Bear' and a game, which made it a very enjoyable activity. The opportunity to find information in books showed high expectations of Year 1 pupils' achievement, and the effective guidance and support they received enabled them to succeed.
61. Significant weaknesses in lessons where teaching is, overall, satisfactory include pupils spending too high a proportion of the lesson listening to the teacher. This limits the extent to which individuals can consolidate and develop the skills, knowledge and understanding that are the learning focus for the lesson. Another significant weakness is insufficient attention to ensuring that work and the grouping of pupils meets the differing needs of all pupils within the class. As a result, there are differences in the quality of learning between girls and boys, and between year groups within the same class. In a literacy lesson seen, for example, the H.G. Wells text was too demanding for the Year 4 pupils to analyse and, in consequence, they did not achieve as well as the older pupils in their class.
62. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, including development in the standards of writing by the age of seven, the use of ICT to support learning in English, and the role of the co-ordinator. The curriculum is based appropriately on the National Literacy Strategy framework, and supplemented by a commercial scheme. It is enriched through opportunities to celebrate special occasions such as World Book Day and National Poetry Day, and to listen to storytellers invited to the school. The subject is managed satisfactorily, and there are sound arrangements for assessing individual standards and progress. The co-ordinator's report on the school's performance in the subject contributes to plans for school improvement. However, procedures for analysing assessment information and identifying strengths and weaknesses within the school's provision require further development.

## **MATHEMATICS**

63. In the 2001 national tests, Year 2 pupils attained well above average standards. Year 6 pupils attained above average standards, although the percentage of pupils who attained levels above

those expected for their age was average. The evidence from inspection shows a similar picture, with the current Year 2 and Year 6 pupils on track to attain above average standards in the 2002 tests. The slight variation for pupils aged seven is linked to differences in the abilities of pupils from year to year.

64. Pupils achieve well in the infant years. By the age of seven, most have a good understanding of the relationship between addition and subtraction and understand how to use a number line to demonstrate that division is repeated subtraction. They can halve and double large numbers using hundreds, tens and units. They use addition and subtraction to solve money and measure problems and write their own word problems to show their understanding of new ideas and its application in life. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and planned for in order to make good progress matched to their abilities.
65. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the junior years, and attain standards above those expected by the age of 11. Work in 'booster' groups enables the school to match learning more closely to the needs of Year 6 pupils, and to prepare them for the procedures of the national tests. Pupils have a growing understanding of the different written methods of calculation to determine a perimeter and can measure volumes of water consumed at home over a short period of time. They show a developing capacity to use a range of strategies for solving problems. A significant minority do not know that 0.027 is smaller than 0.27, although higher-attaining pupils work competently with decimals and fractions. They are often insecure in their knowledge of the properties of simple shapes, such as the number of sides on a pentagon, or how to calculate the angles of a triangle. Pupils with special educational needs work at appropriate levels and make good progress to achieve just below the national expectation.
66. The quality of both teaching and learning is good in the infant years and satisfactory in the junior years. Teachers have good levels of subject expertise, which enables them to help pupils make, overall, good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding. Lessons are carefully planned with three elements in line with guidance from the National Numeracy Strategy, and mental and oral starters to mathematics lessons are generally used well. In the best lessons these actively involve all pupils through, for example, using equipment such as individual white boards so that everyone is expected to answer problems. Where relationships with teachers are warm and friendly, pupils are prepared to make mistakes and contribute their ideas enthusiastically. Teachers prepare work at different levels to meet the needs of all pupils. However, in some cases, insufficient use of assessment information results in tasks not being matched well to all the different abilities of pupils within the class. In a Year 4 and 5 lesson, for example, a number of pupils had initial difficulty in using calculations to work out the perimeter of shapes, because they were not given enough opportunity to use a new method confidently before applying it. Evidence from pupils' work shows there is a heavy reliance on commercially printed materials and this often limits pupil's challenge and initiative in taking responsibility for their own learning, particularly for the higher-attaining pupils. In the lessons seen there was insufficient use of ICT to support and extend pupils' learning in the subject.
67. Planning is based on National Numeracy Strategy guidance, and some attention is paid to ensuring that pupils understand the purpose of their learning. A sound foundation of basic skills is given in Year 1, so that pupils know their number bonds securely to ten, can count on to calculate subtraction and select simple strategies to write simple subtraction sentences. Teachers ask challenging questions, assess pupils' knowledge and encourage them to think for themselves. Consequently, pupils are attentive and eager to answer questions. Teachers usually have good relationships with their pupils. They use games to motivate pupils and vary activities for the youngest pupils. The best lessons make sure that the learning is made relevant through links to situations in everyday life.
68. There has been sound improvement since the last inspection, including development in the co-ordinator role. The subject co-ordinator prepares an annual report on the subject, which contributes to producing the school improvement plan for the forthcoming year. However, current arrangements for her to monitor provision and pupils' progress throughout the school are not ensuring accurate identification of areas requiring development in order to raise standards further.

The co-ordinator has involved classroom assistants effectively in mathematics training and this is contributing to pupils with special educational needs being more involved in the mental starters and making good progress in their mathematics lessons. There are satisfactory learning resources for the subject

## **SCIENCE**

69. In the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 6, pupils attained average standards compared with those attained nationally and by similar schools. However, the percentage that attained the level expected for their age was very high, whilst the percentage that attained a higher standard was below average. Inspection evidence from inspection shows that pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 are on track to attain above average standards by the end of the year. This shows they make good overall progress by 11 from entry to the school.
70. Pupils aged seven build a simple electrical circuit and recognise the properties needed to make this work. They use relevant scientific vocabulary and are able accurately to hypothesise as to why some circuits will not work. Lower-attaining pupils know which objects are powered by mains electricity or which are battery powered. Year 3 pupils show a higher level of understanding about electricity to know which materials can be used as conductors and which as insulators of electricity. There is a limited amount of recorded work in pupils' books. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 demonstrate knowledge about magnets but limited opportunities for research, together with little opportunity to freely explore the materials, put some constraints on the progress they make in their understanding of how and why magnets behave as they do. This is linked to the overuse of worksheets from a commercial scheme, which restricts challenge and opportunities to research answers in depth. Most pupils show the capacity to learn new concepts in science easily.
71. The quality of teaching and learning in this subject is good in the infant years and satisfactory in the junior years. In a lesson seen in which teaching was good, the teacher demonstrated good subject knowledge, and used effective questioning techniques to stimulate pupils' thinking. Work was matched well to the differing needs of two age groups within the class, and activities were managed at a good pace. As a result, Year 2 and Year 3 pupils made good gains in their knowledge and understanding about electricity. In a junior lesson in which teaching was satisfactory, work on forces was appropriate for the ages and stages of pupils within the class, and good quality resources were made available to support their learning. Although pupils made sound progress, a weaker element within the lesson was the choice of teaching method that gave a strong emphasis to pupils acquiring knowledge directly from the teacher's explanations and from following the instructions on worksheets. As a result, limited opportunities to experiment and to practise the skills of scientific enquiry put some constraints on the gains they made in their skills, knowledge and understanding within the lesson. Teachers take good account of special educational needs in their planning and, as a result, the support given to these pupils enables them to make good progress for their abilities. The evidence from inspection indicates that higher-attaining pupils do not make as much progress as they could by the age of 11 because the work they are given is not always sufficiently challenging.
72. There has been some improvement in the co-ordinator role since the last inspection, and in introducing nationally recommended planning. Further development is required so that planning gives teachers sufficient guidance to ensure that teaching builds systematically on previous learning in all elements of the subject, and to make greater use of ICT to support learning in this subject. There is also a need to establish systematic procedures for monitoring provision and standards throughout the school to ensure that the school continues to improve its science provision and raise standards in the subject.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

73. There was insufficient evidence to make a firm judgement on standards of attainment in art and design. It was not possible to see any lessons during the inspection, a limited amount of work was available, and there is no portfolio of examples to show pupils' work over time. Discussion with older pupils showed that they enjoy their weekly lessons. They know the names of a few famous artists, are familiar with some of their work, and have had opportunities to use their styles to create their own artistic interpretations. They know, for example, that Escher used abstract themes. Pupils are taught a variety of techniques with paint, such as colour mixing and the correct use of paint-brushes, but have had limited recent opportunities to develop the skills of working in three dimensions with media such as clay. Although pupils from Years 2 to 6 have art sketch-books, these are undeveloped in that learning intentions are not clear, and work is neither dated nor marked in order to judge progress over time.
74. There has been some improvement in the role of the subject leader since the last inspection and in introducing nationally recommended guidance on planning. Further development is required to provide sufficient guidance to ensure that pupils make steady gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding in all elements of the subject. There is also a need to establish systematic procedures for the co-ordinator to monitor provision and standards throughout the school. Arrangements for assessing pupils' standards are currently being developed. The lack of dates and marking in art sketch-books used by pupils from Years 2 to 6 limits their potential as a source of evidence of progress over time. Development in art and design is not included in the current school improvement plan, and an intended policy review has not yet taken place.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

75. Pupils throughout the school attain the standard expected for their age in this subject, and make sound progress. There is no evidence of significant variation in achievement between any groups related, for example, to prior attainment. It was not possible to see any lessons during the period of the inspection, and so judgements are based on scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning, and discussion with pupils. Pupils aged seven have designed and made a sandwich and a Christmas tree decoration. By the age of 11, pupils have designed a Christmas cake decoration, made moveable vehicles with motors, and designed and made a wallet or purse to given criteria. The level of skill and quality of finishing techniques is satisfactory for the pupils' ages but there is scope for improvement. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to create their own designs, make products for a variety of purposes using a range of media and techniques, and to evaluate their own work. This sound provision and progress indicates that both teaching and learning are satisfactory in design and technology.
76. There has been recent improvement in the curriculum, which is based on nationally recommended guidance for planning and meets statutory requirements. Plans are in hand for the revised curriculum to be evaluated at the end of the year and further improved. It is enriched through opportunities for pupils to take part in competitions. Good use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning. The subject is managed satisfactorily. Arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' standards and progress are currently being developed. Assessment information will then be available to enable strengths and areas for development within the subject to be identified more easily and future improvement planned.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

77. Pupils in the infant and junior classes make satisfactory progress in this subject and attain the standard expected for their age. There is no evidence of significant variation between any groups related, for example, to prior attainment. It was possible to see only one geography lesson during the inspection and so judgements are based on the evidence from this lesson, scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning, and discussion with pupils.

78. By the age of 11, pupils have monitored water usage in the school and written up their own findings from their investigation into water usage in their own homes. They mark the annual rainfall of various areas on a world map, and use atlases to identify countries and capital cities within Europe. They are aware of some of the changes that have taken place in their own locality, and how human actions can have positive and negative effects on the environment and people's lives. Pupils use the Internet to find information about places they choose as holiday destinations. There are shortcomings in their geographical skills, such as the use of a key on maps and labels on a diagram, and they do not demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of an area that contrasts with their own locality.
79. The evidence from pupils' standards and progress in this subject indicate that the quality of both teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the school. In the lesson seen, teaching was good and Year 1 pupils achieved well in the mixed-age class. This was because interesting mapping activities were planned well to build on previous learning. The opportunity to work with a partner also enabled them to support each other's learning. As a result, they made good progress in their mapping skills, particularly in understanding the bird's-eye view convention of maps. They made the connection between features on a map of their school and parts of the buildings and outdoor areas that they were familiar with.
80. There has been recent improvement in introducing nationally recommended guidance for planning. The curriculum is extended through opportunities to join the nature club, and to carry out fieldwork on visits. Good use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning, and work in the subject is used to promote numeracy skills. The subject is managed satisfactorily, but arrangements for ensuring that pupils make sufficient progress in all aspects of the subject as they move through the school are unsatisfactory.

## **HISTORY**

81. Pupils throughout the school attain the standard expected for their age in this subject, and make sound progress. There is no evidence of significant variation in the achievement of any groups related, for example, to prior attainment. It was possible to see only one history lesson during the inspection and so judgements are based on the evidence from this lesson, scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning, and discussion with pupils.
82. Pupils aged seven show a developing sense of chronology, as well as knowledge about aspects of life in Victorian times, and the lives of prominent people such as Queen Victoria and Lord Shaftesbury. By the age of 11 pupils demonstrate knowledge about the Vikings, including knowledge of the Viking world and some of the reasons they attacked monasteries in England. They are aware of differences in living conditions between periods, but are unclear about the chronological order of periods they have studied. They have limited knowledge about prominent people and events from different periods, or the breadth of evidence that can be used to find out about the past.
83. The evidence from pupils' standards and progress indicates that the quality of both teaching and learning is satisfactory in this subject. In the one lesson seen, teaching was good and promoted the good progress made by both Year 2 and 3 pupils. Pupils developed their skills of using primary evidence as well as their knowledge about life in Victorian times through studying a Victorian log-book from their own school. They learned, for example, that school was stricter in those days and that children were caned for minor acts of naughtiness. Others learned more about what it was like to be a child in a Victorian school by practising a traditional joined style of handwriting using slates and markers. All groups worked on practical activities that engaged their interest, and good quality support from the teacher and support assistant enabled pupils of all abilities to learn effectively and at a good pace. The final few minutes of the lesson were used well to consolidate and develop learning. For example, pupils were encouraged to find both the similarities and differences between events in the Victorian log with current school practice.

84. There has been recent improvement in introducing nationally recommended guidance for planning, and the curriculum is extended through opportunities to visit sites of historical interest in the locality, as well as the Black Country Museum. ICT is used to support learning in the subject, notably through use of the Internet. The subject is managed satisfactorily. Arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' standards are currently being developed. Attainment and progress across the school are monitored through studying teachers' planning, pupils' work, and discussion with teachers and pupils. However, arrangements for ensuring that pupils make sufficient progress in all aspects of the subject as they move through the school are underdeveloped. The subject has only adequate resources, but is able to borrow artefacts from a loan service as well as from people in the locality.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

85. Pupils make satisfactory progress and attain a standard in this subject which is broadly in line with national expectations by the end of Year 6. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. In reception and Year 1, pupils make good use of the latest technology through using the 'Intel' microscope. The standard by the age of seven is above the national expectation. Year 2 pupils use computers with growing confidence, word processing their work and being able to write a simple program for the 'Roamer'. By the end of Year 6, pupils have some experience of using spreadsheets, can log on to and access information from the Internet as well as use the 'Roamer'. Most pupils come to school with some understanding of the use of ICT. The majority have regular access to computers at home, and their learning experiences at home contribute to the overall progress they make in their knowledge and skills.
86. No dedicated ICT lessons for junior pupils were seen during the inspection period, and little use was made of computers during lessons. Therefore, judgements are based on the evidence from displays in classrooms, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils. Computers are now networked, but there was no evidence of the effectiveness of this during the inspection. Teaching is good in the infant years, and pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve well by the age of seven. In the one lesson seen, Year 1 pupils made good progress in their keyboard skills as the result of good teaching. The lesson was well-planned, the teacher had good subject expertise, managed the pupils well, and organised the activities at a good pace so that pupils maintained their interest and concentration well. By the end of Year 2, pupils use the hand-held mouse efficiently, use the shift key to make upper case letters, and can locate the print icon in order to print their work. They create and write a simple program to control the 'Roamer' on a short journey, including right-angled turns. The pupils clearly had lots of experience in this area, as was demonstrated by the speedy learning and recording of their new work.
87. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in developing the subject co-ordinator's role and in implementing planning that ensures that pupils are taught all elements of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. The commercial scheme supports teachers' planning and also provides an assessment grid to record pupils' experiences. There has also been improvement in the quantity and quality of computers available, and in having the series networked. The evidence from scrutiny of work and lesson observations indicates that insufficient use is made of ICT to support learning across the curriculum. However, the work of older pupils shows regular use of word processing in their English work. Further development is required in implementing systematic arrangements to monitor provision and progress throughout the school.

## **MUSIC**

88. By the end of Year 2, pupils attain standards that are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils aged seven play a steady beat in accompaniment to a sound poem on untuned percussion in a controlled way. The quality of singing is broadly satisfactory. By the age of 11 pupils attain standards above the level expected for their age. Year 6 pupils compose a piece of music in four sections using unpitched instruments, and many show good knowledge of symbols representing musical sounds. They have a good understanding of the capabilities and range of the instruments they play.
89. Teaching and learning are satisfactory for infant pupils, and good for junior pupils. In a lesson seen in which teaching was satisfactory the extent of pupils' learning was adversely affected by only twenty minutes being made available, and the learning experiences planned for the lesson were not completed. The lack of a clearly pitched note before pupils began to sing made it difficult for them to attain accurate pitch. Strengths in a lesson where teaching was good included the teacher's good levels of subject expertise, the opportunity for pupils to collaborate to help and extend one another's learning, and an activity that built well on previous experiences and also showed high expectations of pupils' standards. As a result, pupils made good progress in

composing and performing a piece of music in four sections.

90. Music continues to be a strength of the school, although, in this inspection, it was not possible to hear the choir or orchestra. It is well-resourced with a wide range of high quality instruments that reflect world music. There has been improvement in introducing improved planning, although further development is required to ensure that there is sufficient guidance for teachers without specialist musical expertise, and to ensure that ICT is used appropriately to support learning. The curriculum is extended through opportunities for pupils to take part in local festivals and concerts such as 'Music for Youth' and to perform for parents. Pupils also benefit from opportunities to join extra-curricular clubs, or to have specialist instrument tuition. Arrangements for the subject co-ordinator to monitor provision and standards across the school require further development.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

91. Pupils make satisfactory progress in this subject and attain the standard expected for their age. There is no evidence of significant variation in the achievement of any groups related, for example, to prior attainment. It was possible to see only two games lessons during the inspection and so judgements are based on the evidence from these lessons and scrutiny of teachers' planning. There was no evidence available of standards in dance, gymnastics or swimming.
92. Pupils aged seven show good control of throwing and catching bean bags, and good skills in kicking a ball accurately through a gap. At the age of 11, pupils also show good control of hockey sticks and a puck. They work collaboratively as a team, and show developing capacity to find a space, and shield a member of the opposing team.
93. The evidence from pupils' standards and progress indicates that the quality of both teaching and learning is satisfactory in this subject. In the two lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory in one and good in the other. Lessons were carefully planned, and activities managed at a good pace, with high expectations of pupils' achievement. As a result, Year 5 pupils were keen to participate and to improve their skills and made significant progress in, for example, developing their defence and attack tactics for hockey. Good attention was paid to safety rules to avoid accidents. A weaker element within the lessons was the lack of appropriate provision for pupils who could not take part, either for medical reasons or because they had not brought their kit. Similarly, pupils awaiting their turn in the hockey skill lesson were left unoccupied, and with insufficient clothing to sit out of doors for more than a minute or two on a cold day.
94. There has been recent improvement in introducing nationally recommended guidance for planning. The school provides an appropriate curriculum that meets statutory requirements, including provision for swimming. It is extended through opportunities to join a football or sports club, depending upon the season, and to compete against pupils from other schools. Pupils also take part in a local country dance festival. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in reorganising the accommodation so that a hall is available for physical education lessons for all pupils throughout the year, and also the purchase of gymnastics apparatus. The subject is managed satisfactorily, and arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' standards are currently being developed.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

95. Although no lessons were seen in this subject during the inspection, judgements are based on scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work. This evidence indicates that the quality of both teaching and learning is satisfactory and that pupils make sound progress to attain the standards expected by the ages of seven and 11. Year 2 pupils, for example, show considerable knowledge about the life of Moses. They write their own prayers, and consider special annual occasions in their own lives, including those of religious significance such as Advent and Easter. Year 6 pupils consider commitment in some depth, including the level of commitment shown by others such as

Grace Darling. They prepare their own questions to learn more about the life and work of an Anglican vicar, and demonstrate growing knowledge about the typical features of a parish church, including their purpose and symbolism. Pupils also learn about the beliefs and practices of other religions, particularly Judaism and Islam.

96. There has been satisfactory improvement in provision for this subject since the last inspection, notably in the development of planning, which is based on the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Pupils benefit from the school's close links with the adjacent church and the vicar who is a regular visitor to the school. He contributes to assemblies and has demonstrated a mock 'baptism' for younger pupils.