

INSPECTION REPORT

IRTHLINGBOROUGH JUNIOR SCHOOL

Irthlingborough

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121831

Headteacher: Mrs S Drake

Reporting inspector: Mr J White
17242

Dates of inspection: 28th – 31st January 2002

Inspection number: 225915

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	College Street Irthlingborough Wellingborough Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN9 5TX
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Tony Packham
Date of previous inspection:	20 th March 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17242	Jeff White	Registered inspector	Art & design; design & technology; religious education; equal opportunities; English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13526	Richard Barnard	Lay inspector		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?
23566	John Iles	Team inspector	Mathematics; physical education	
22671	David White	Team inspector	Information and communication technology; geography	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
23453	Carole Cressey	Team inspector	English; history	
20911	Judy Dawson	Team inspector	Science; music; special educational needs	
12000	Brenda Iles	Team inspector		Other features of the school

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is located in the small town of Irthlingborough in Northamptonshire. Pupils are drawn from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds but the potential for educational disadvantage is above average. For example, the percentage of adults with higher educational qualifications in the ward of Irthlingborough is below average. The school is bigger than average with 359 pupils on the roll, 171 girls and 188 boys. Pupils are predominantly white. There are very few pupils of minority ethnic heritage and none is at a very early stage of learning English. One hundred and twenty-two pupils are on the special educational needs register, a figure above the national average. Eight pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school does not serve hot school meals and although fourteen percent of pupils are eligible for free school meals the take up is only half this figure. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly below average. Since the school was last inspected two years ago there have been several acting headteachers and eighteen teachers have left the school in the last two years. However, there has been no problem of recruitment. The current, permanent headteacher has been at the school for less than two terms.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is improving quickly after a period of substantial changes in leadership and staffing. Leadership and management are now excellent. Standards are satisfactory or better in the work seen in the vast majority of subjects and, generally, pupils are achieving well in relation to their abilities. Although standards in mathematics and science are below average, they are improving and the school is committed to raising them further. Teaching is mainly good, or better, pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Good value for money is provided.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management are very strong and are ensuring that the school is improving quickly.
- Pupils' achievement is getting better because of good teaching, and the very effective help given by the support staff.
- Pupils' personal development is promoted very well and they respond accordingly. Their behaviour is usually good, relationships are harmonious and they are keen to do well.

What could be improved

- By the age of eleven, standards in mathematics and science are not as good as in English.
- Skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are not developed enough within the whole curriculum.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected in March 2000 it was judged to have serious weaknesses. This is no longer the case. Inevitably, because there was not a permanent headteacher in the period between the start of the summer term 2000 and the end of the summer term 2001, the school's progress was not as good as it might have been. However, since the start of the autumn term 2001, improvement has accelerated markedly and the school's capacity to continue to improve is now very good. The appointment of an experienced, permanent headteacher, and almost a new teaching staff, has virtually given the school a fresh start. New staff and those appointed prior to September 2001 are working well together. Key issues identified in the last inspection report are being addressed well. Because of better teaching, standards of attainment are rising and pupils are now generally achieving well. At eleven, standards in English are now average and in mathematics and science standards are recovering from a

fall in 2000. Behaviour has improved considerably and is good overall. The most significant improvement is in leadership and management. The headteacher, governors and staff share a common purpose in helping the school to move forward. They are well aware that the impetus for improvement has to be sustained.

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	D	D	C	C
Mathematics	D	E	D	E
Science	C	E	D	D

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

The results show that in the 2000 tests, following the last inspection, standards fell in mathematics and science. In 2001, pupils' performance improved in all three subjects but remained below average in mathematics and science. Statutory targets were met in English but not in mathematics where pupils performed least well. The school's trend in performance over time has broadly matched the national trend. In the current Year 6 standards reflect those reached in the 2001 tests but they are set to improve as the measures the school has adopted to raise standards take effect. In comparison with the findings in the last inspection the best progress has been made in English and standards are now average. Standards in other work seen in Year 6 are good in art and design, physical education and information and communications technology. They are broadly satisfactory in all other subjects. However, good teaching and strong leadership are helping standards to rise quickly and pupils throughout the school are now achieving well in the vast majority of subjects. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress and the most able pupils are generally being challenged well, for example, in mathematics in Year 6. The capacity of the school to continue to raise standards is very good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes are good and pupils are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good overall and in a high proportion of lessons is very good. It is excellent in assemblies.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are harmonious and personal development is very good. Pupils undertake responsibility very well, for example, when acting as house team captains.
Attendance	The rate of attendance is below average.

The rate of attendance is affected by the amount of holidays taken in term times.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good

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

The overall quality of teaching is good and in a high proportion of lessons seen it was very good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and in several lessons the teaching was excellent. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught thoroughly and now need to be developed further within the whole curriculum. The range of pupils' needs is met well and, in general, teachers work hard to ensure all have suitably challenging work. Expectations are invariably suitably high. A significant strength is the close co-operation between teachers and the support staff. This ensures pupils' learning is usually effective, including those with special educational needs. Teachers' discipline is effective. Pupils are diligent and interested in their work. They are acquiring key skills, knowledge and understanding well. Consistency in teachers' marking would help pupils to be more aware of their progress and how they could improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad, well planned and enhanced by a range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are very few pupils with English as an additional language and provision is good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good overall but very good in moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are well cared for. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very successful.

The partnership with parents is good and improving.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are outstanding and are ensuring the school is improving quickly.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities very well. They are very supportive of the school and have worked closely with the headteacher and staff to ensure clear direction for the school's improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance are very thorough and action taken to improve standards is being very successful.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used well, especially the teaching and non-teaching staff. Spending is closely linked to the school's priorities for improvement.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good overall. The headteacher, staff and governors have a shared commitment to raising standards. Governors apply the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and are making good progress. • Teaching is good and children are expected to work hard. • Parents find the headteacher and staff approachable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework. • Information on how their children are getting on. • The school does not work closely enough with parents.

Inevitably, because of the school's recent major changes, some parents are uncertain about the school's current situation and have not had a chance to get to know the headteacher and new staff. Completion of the pre-inspection parents' questionnaire was therefore not straightforward as parents were unsure whether to comment on the past or current situation. The headteacher is improving links with parents and is keen to work more closely with them. The inspection team endorses parents' positive views. The policy for homework is suitable and during the inspection there were good examples of homework being set and followed up. Annual reports on pupils' progress are informative.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 In the national tests following the last inspection standards were maintained in English but fell in mathematics and science. In 2001 standards improved in all three subjects but least progress was made in mathematics. The current deputy headteacher was literacy co-ordinator at that time and his work undoubtedly had an impact in raising standards in English. The lack of continuity in leadership and staffing are probable reasons why standards in mathematics and science have fluctuated. However, because of the current headteacher's leadership, and improvements in teaching and co-ordination of subjects, standards, in general, are rising. It will take time before the several initiatives to raise standards have a major impact on pupils' performance at the age of eleven. Standards in the current Year 6 are average in English and below average in mathematics and science. In mathematics and science more opportunities for pupils to investigate problems and make use of information and communications technology (ICT) will help standards to rise further. In no other subjects are standards below expectations and in the work seen in ICT, art and physical education they are above what is expected. Standards are broadly similar to those found at the time of the last inspection but better in English, art and design and physical education.

- 2 In the vast majority of subjects pupils are achieving well because the overall teaching is good or better. Progress over time has been uneven because of the lack of continuity in leadership and staffing but in most lessons pupils make good gains in their subject skills, knowledge and understanding. In English, more focus has been given to improving writing especially in the key skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Guided reading sessions are now very well organised. These initiatives have helped standards to rise. Pupils now write and read for a wide range of purposes. Standards in reading are above average in Year 6 and writing is often good. More planned development of literacy skills in other subjects apart from English would help standards to improve throughout the school. ICT is not used consistently. Recent strategies to raise standards in mathematics are proving to be successful. An extra timetabled session in mental arithmetic is helping pupils throughout the school to improve their speed in mental calculations. In Year 6, excellent teaching of the most able pupils is ensuring that they are achieving very well and attaining high standards. Teaching assistants are very well deployed to help low attaining pupils improve their performance. The overall good teaching in science is ensuring that pupils are making progress, especially in their acquisition of scientific knowledge. Better assessment of pupils' performance is needed to help standards improve more quickly. Each of the subject co-ordinators in English, mathematics and science are excellent teachers of their respective subjects and this augers well for the continued improvement of standards.

- 3 Pupils throughout the school are making good progress in ICT and standards are above average at the age of eleven. The main reason for the maintenance of good standards is that ICT skills are taught regularly and systematically in a computer suite. There is scope for improving the use of ICT within the whole curriculum. Much of the work in art and design is good because the headteacher has taken a lead in developing the subject. There are no significant strengths or weaknesses in the work in other subjects.

- 4 The headteacher and staff are working hard to ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged in their work. In most lessons, pupils' learning is good because they are given work that is matched to their prior attainment. High attaining pupils make good progress overall and usually achieve above average standards. There is scope for them to be challenged more in science. The school has recognised that there have been some differences between the performance of girls and boys in the national tests. Girls have tended to do better, especially in English and raising boys' achievement is a target in the school improvement plan. In the work seen, the inspection found that any difference in performance was not significantly greater than that found nationally. There are very few pupils of minority ethnic background and they are making similar progress to their peers. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress towards their targets. This is due not only to the very good support given by the support staff, who are fully involved in the target setting and the monitoring of pupils' progress, but also to the generally good teaching. Upper junior pupils are involved in setting their own targets and all pupils know what they need to do to improve. Teachers and learning support assistants ensure that the pupils have opportunities to work independently and with other pupils in their classes. There have been some significant improvements in the behaviour and attitudes of pupils with behavioural difficulties.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 5 Pupils' good attitudes, behaviour and very good relationships with staff and each other are having a positive impact on their achievements, especially on their personal development and awareness in relation to citizenship. This is an improvement over the standards described in the previous report when relationships and behaviour were satisfactory. The oldest pupils talk very openly and enthusiastically about the improved standards since the start of the current academic year. Pupils in general say that they enjoy coming to school and this is confirmed by their very lively and keen interest in their work and the general life of the school. Pupils settle to work quickly, try hard to do their best, and sustain interest well throughout the school day. These very positive attitudes were seen in a Year 5 religious education lesson when pupils were bubbling with enthusiasm throughout the lesson as they learned about the Hindu festival of Holi.
- 6 The behaviour of the great majority of pupils is good. There is little evidence of bullying, racist or sexist behaviour and pupils talk very positively about the improved atmosphere in the school and in the playground. They particularly mention the improvement brought about by the introduction of the team points system to reward pupils' achievements. A minority of, mainly, boys are boisterous and sometimes aggressive in the playground and on a few occasions misbehave in class but no significant disruption was observed during the inspection. Eighteen pupils were temporarily excluded last year but there have been none so far in the current year, further highlighting the improvement in standards. Behaviour in assemblies is outstandingly good. For example, the excellent behaviour of all pupils in a whole-school assembly, in which the headteacher introduced the new school charter, had a very positive impact on their personal development and showed their commitment to the charter's aims. Pupils have a good awareness of why there needs to be rules and conventions to regulate behaviour. They show good respect for the feelings and beliefs of others and appreciate their efforts. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils get on well with teachers and support staff and this positive interaction, especially in lessons, benefits their learning. The team captains talk enthusiastically about the staff, saying, "lessons are much more fun now." Pupils are polite, friendly and helpful and enjoy talking about their work.

- 7 Pupils' personal development is very good. They are developing a very good awareness of citizenship. An excellent example is their keen and responsible approach to being elected as team captains. They have a very clear view of their roles as pupils' representatives, mediators and friends in the playground. They speak confidently about their range of responsibilities and the help they give at breaktimes. For example, they comment that; "If little ones have problems they are comfortable talking to us". Pupils show pride in the school's achievements. They enjoy taking initiative and working independently but their opportunities for investigative work in mathematics and science are too few.
- 8 Overall attendance rates are unsatisfactory and are below the national average for junior schools. Levels of unauthorised absences and lateness are not significant and have fallen considerably in the past year. Absence levels are higher in the summer term due to the number of pupils taking holidays. These pupils miss important parts of their learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 9 The quality of teaching is good overall, often very good or better and is contributing significantly to the rise in standards. Examples of very good or better teaching were seen in each year group. In general, lessons are well structured and time is used productively. The range of pupils' needs is catered for well and work presenting different but appropriate levels of challenge is a feature of most lessons. The pace of learning is often brisk and pupils are expected to work hard. Objectives for pupils' learning are usually shared at the beginning of lessons and in the very good or better teaching, for example in ICT, sufficient time is left at the end of the lesson to discuss with pupils what they have learnt. Very good relationships and positive behaviour are promoted and contribute significantly to the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers and support staff work very well together and the quality of support is invariably very good. In lessons where the teaching was mainly satisfactory the pace of learning was sometimes pedestrian and pupils' interest was not always sustained.
- 10 Literacy and numeracy are planned and taught well and some excellent lessons were seen in both subjects. A range of teaching styles was observed but the styles were equally effective. For example, in a first rate literacy lesson in Year 5 the pupils were fired by the teacher's ebullient enthusiasm and all were actively involved in developing their understanding of the characteristics of myths. By contrast, in an outstanding numeracy lesson in Year 6 the teacher's calm, measured and crystal clear explanations helped pupils to improve their understanding of fractions. Less very good teaching was observed in science but in an excellent lesson in Year 6 the teacher's very good use of questions in a discussion on forces captured and sustained pupils' interest. Teachers often make good use of subject specific vocabulary and this is helping pupils to explain their thinking. In the good or better teaching, opportunities for pupils to explain their work and listen to others are helping them to become aware of their own progress. Consistency in teachers' marking would help even further. At its best marking is constructively critical and suggests how pupils can improve. At worst it gives praise too readily and makes only perfunctory comment.
- 11 The inspection of the school included a focused view of the contribution of teaching assistants to teaching and learning in literacy and mathematics. In the two lessons observed the assistants' valuable support to groups of pupils enabled them to participate in discussions, use specific subject vocabulary with accuracy and

understanding, and achieve successfully. They achieved the objectives of the lesson. In numeracy, low attaining Year 3 pupils accurately identified lines of symmetry in shapes and used the terms “symmetrical” and “asymmetrical” correctly. In literacy in Year 6, the teaching assistant enabled pupils with behavioural difficulties and limited concentration to follow a text and identify connectives. Firm, calm insistence ensured that behaviour was good throughout the lesson. In both lessons relationships were very good and pupils’ self-esteem was raised. All contributions were valued and errors were corrected by discussion. Assistants repeated the learning objectives, thereby reinforcing the teachers’ expectations. Instructions were repeated to ensure pupils understood the tasks. These features enabled the pupils to maintain interest and concentration, and the pace of lessons was therefore not slowed by interruptions.

- 12 All adults working with pupils with SEN have a good knowledge of pupils’ individual targets and needs. Lesson plans are shared with the learning support assistants who are skilful in adapting tasks to meet the needs of individual pupils, and fine-tune the work set by the teachers. The co-ordinator supports teachers in the drawing up of individual education plans (IEPs) and the learning support assistants track progress and report outcomes regularly to her and teachers. The quality of the provision is such that pupils’ learning is seamless and consistent throughout the school day. The planning and teaching are further enhanced by the good quality of teachers’ day-to-day assessments. These are mainly in the form of focused questions during lessons. In every class, however, pupils with SEN are fully included in class discussion and teachers are skilful in asking questions at appropriate levels. ICT is used to support reading and writing but there was no evidence of pupils with SEN using computers outside their ICT lessons.

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

- 13 The school has made good improvements to its curricular provision since the last inspection. Pupils are provided with a broad and well-balanced curriculum that meets their needs and interests very effectively. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education and complies with statutory requirements. Acts of worship are now attended by all pupils and play an important role in developing the school’s caring ethos.
- 14 There are policies for all subjects and, in general, the teachers use nationally recommended schemes of work to help them plan lessons. The teachers plan in their year group teams and the quality of planning is good. They identify the knowledge and skills to be taught and this secures pupils’ continuous and progressive learning. Tasks are generally well matched to pupils’ stages of learning and assessment opportunities are clearly identified. The curriculum and its planning are being carefully monitored and evaluated by the subject managers to ensure that they meet the needs of the pupils. Additionally, the subject managers have time away from their full-time teaching commitments to develop, support and monitor their allocated subjects. This is making a significant contribution to raising pupils’ standards of attainment. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The amount of time taught does not meet with the recommended time for pupils of this age. The headteacher recognises this and is addressing the issue.
- 15 The national literacy and numeracy strategies are being implemented successfully. The strategies are rightly given a high priority in the school improvement plan as part of its commitment to raising standards. However, opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills within the whole curriculum are not identified clearly enough. All

classes are regularly taught key skills in ICT in a recently developed computer suite. The use of specialised teaching is having a very positive effect on standards. However, there is scope for improvement in the use of ICT across the curriculum.

- 16 The school's very caring ethos places a high priority on pupils' personal development. This was evident in the assembly that shared the new Pupils' Charter that had been produced by the whole school's involvement. Pupils' views are sought whenever possible and opportunities are provided in lessons for them to ask and answer questions freely. Social skills and self-esteem are developed very well and are helping to prepare pupils for adult life. There is a suitable health education programme with a relevant programme that deals with drugs' use and misuse and sex education.
- 17 Links with the community are increasingly strong. Visitors to the school include the community policeman, St John's Ambulance Corps, the local vicar and the Salvation Army who have talked about their work and have led assemblies. The school's Harvest Festival and Carol Services are closely linked with the local church's celebrations. The choir has taken part in concerts at the local theatre and sang to a Salvation Army group at Christmas. One of the town's pensioner groups used the school whilst their building was closed. Links with local businesses have a positive effect on the life of the school. These include providing resources for projects such as the Walking Bus scheme and the staging for the school hall.
- 18 A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sports, art, music, dance, computer, chess and homework, enhances the curriculum. The clubs provide for all age groups and are well attended at lunchtimes or after school. Pupils are also provided with opportunities to visit places of interest, museums and places of worship. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 have the opportunity to attend extended residential visits to Burwell House, Scarborough and to the Isle of Wight.
- 19 All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and the range of their needs is generally met well. As part of the commitment to raise standards the headteacher and staff have developed initiatives to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently. A good example is the introduction of the Year 6, level 6 group in mathematics. In English and mathematics, the teachers have also modified the learning to accommodate pupils with SEN. When appropriate, pupils are withdrawn from parts of the lesson to concentrate on achieving their targets in their IEPs. This support is very good and enables pupils regularly to achieve their targets. In other subjects, although most teachers plan work for the different abilities in their class, the work set is not always suitable for pupils with SEN and these pupils are only able to complete the work with a lot of support. The timetables for support are good but some lessons are very long, putting a strain on pupils' powers of concentration. The policy for SEN is being reviewed to accommodate recent changes in the national Code of Practice. The draft policy gives parents a clear understanding of the procedures for identifying and supporting pupils and a summary of the external support available and school contacts. The curriculum is suitable for the very few pupils of minority ethnic background and those who speak English as an additional language. A teacher from the LEA's Pupil Inclusion Service supports the one child of Traveller family origin, for a few hours each week.
- 20 Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved and is now good overall. Spiritual, moral and social values are fostered well in the school's very good assemblies. Opportunities for reflection are provided for pupils in

assemblies and during lessons. They are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings in circle time, assemblies, religious education, art and design and music.

- 21 Provision for pupils' moral development was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. It is now very good and a particular strength of the school. Moral values are successfully promoted and contribute to an ethos of respect for one another. Adults consistently promote a clear message of the difference between what is right and what is wrong. Teachers are very effective in the use of reasoned discussion to manage pupils' behaviour. Very good relationships are a feature of the school with adults and pupils showing care and concern for the well being of the whole community. In assembly, pupils are encouraged to talk about their feelings and how they can support one another. Good opportunities are provided in the classroom for pupils to develop moral values.
- 22 The arrangements for social development are very good. There are many opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in the classroom, around the school and on educational visits. Adult role models are strong and social skills are consistently encouraged and reinforced. Opportunities are provided for pupils to contribute to the life of the school, for example, by helping at lunchtime, being library monitors and raising monies for charities as a whole school or by individual initiatives.
- 23 Provision for cultural education has also improved and is now good. Through the many activities provided, pupils learn to value their own and other cultures. They now have a much broader appreciation of artists' work, as displayed in their own interpretation of paintings by Andy Warhol and Vincent van Gogh. Music also makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development. Opportunities to broaden pupils' understanding of major religious faiths are being provided by visits to the local church and to a mosque and Hindu temple. Work in geography is also contributing to pupils' knowledge of non-western cultures. Pupils are adequately prepared for life in a culturally diverse society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 24 The school provides good care for pupils and has enhanced the standards outlined in the previous report. The standards of care and social inclusion contribute well towards pupils' positive attitudes.
- 25 Procedures for ensuring and monitoring health and safety are good and potential risks are identified well. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. First aid arrangements are good and an adequate number of staff have received training. Pupils' personal development is monitored well and staff provide good personal support that enables pupils to develop confidence and self-esteem.
- 26 Good behaviour is promoted and monitored very effectively. The recent introduction of a revised behaviour policy with an emphasis on the use of rewards and praise has had a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Pupils view the team point system as very fair and effective. Procedures to discourage and deal with bullying, racist or sexist behaviour are also very good and any potential racial incidents are monitored and recorded very thoroughly.
- 27 Attendance is monitored satisfactorily and registers are well maintained. The prompt following up of absences has reduced the number of those that are unauthorised. The headteacher is well aware of issues such as pupils taking holidays in term time.

- 28 The general procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good and have improved since the last inspection. The school has worked hard to develop a thorough and informative system that clearly identifies pupils' strengths and weaknesses. The policy for assessment covers recording and reporting procedures effectively. The improvements in academic standards is partly due to the greater focus teachers have given to evaluating pupils' work and setting targets to improve their performance.
- 29 Information about pupils' attainment is collected in a number of ways. National Curriculum optional tests are used in Years 3, 4 and 5, in addition to the statutory tests in Year 6. Also, at the beginning of each year pupils in each year group undertake commercial spelling and reading tests. The results of tests are used well to help teachers in their planning and target setting. For example, pupils' results in the Year 6 national tests have been thoroughly analysed to identify weaknesses in literacy skills and the findings have contributed to targets in the school improvement plan. Teachers are beginning to collect and agree assessments of samples of pupils' work in different subjects, in order to provide each pupil with a record of their achievements. Assessment opportunities are identified clearly in teachers' written planning. Any information on pupils' progress, including staff's informal jottings from lessons, is transferred into the individual pupil records. In addition, class and cohort records are maintained to enable teachers to track pupils' attainment and to set future targets.
- 30 Individual assessments of the progress of pupils with SEN are good. Teachers and support staff discuss pupils' progress weekly or at any time when there is an improvement or a problem with their work or attitudes. IEPs are reviewed at least termly and new targets are set when needed. This applies to all pupils on the register of SEN. Teachers take account of IEPs in literacy and numeracy lessons and behavioural targets are consistently referred to. The IEPs do not refer to other subjects and literacy targets are less closely matched to other work across the curriculum. The procedures for pupils with statements of SEN are met in full. Physical care is very good; for example, a learning support assistant works alongside a pupil in the swimming pool.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 31 Partnership with parents is good; the standard has been improved since the previous inspection. Although the headteacher has not been at the school long enough to be well known by parents she has taken very good recent initiatives to involve them further in their children's education.
- 32 The completion of the pre-inspection questionnaire for parents was not a straightforward task because of the lack of continuity in the school's leadership since the last inspection. Parents were clearly uncertain whether to comment on the current or past situation. However, the replies from the parental pre-inspection questionnaire, together with the evidence from the pre-inspection meeting for parents, indicate that parents have mostly positive views about the school. They feel that their children like school, are making good progress and work hard. Inspection evidence supports these views. About a quarter of those parents who expressed a view would like to be better informed about their children's progress, have some concerns about inconsistency in setting homework, and don't feel the school works closely with parents. Several indicated that they thought the school was improving quickly.

- 33 Annual reports provide good detail on pupils' attainment and progress especially in relation to English, mathematics and science; good targets for improvement are included in some reports but others are too general. Newsletters give parents very good information about the life of the school and also about work to be undertaken each term. The homework policy is suitably clear. The school provides very good information and encouragement to parents to be involved in their children's education. The recently introduced home-school liaison booklet is a very helpful tool in enhancing the two-way communication between teachers and parents but not all parents or teachers are yet using this. Staff are readily available for parental consultation at the beginning and end of the day.
- 34 Parents give good help in the school, for example, in the library. The majority of parents ensure their children come to school regularly and promptly, although a significant number have taken their children on holiday during term time. The school works hard to ensure that the parents of pupils with SEN are fully informed about their children's learning. IEPs are shared with parents and they are encouraged to discuss their child's progress with the teachers and the SEN co-ordinator. Almost all parents of pupils with statements of special educational needs attend their child's annual review. Pupils with SEN have regular homework in line with their peers.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 35 The headteacher has achieved a great deal in a very short space of time and has given extremely effective leadership. She has the full support of governors and they share with her and the staff a commitment to the school's improvement. Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher is well supported by a very able deputy and a hard working senior management team. Established staff and new staff are working well together to help the school move forward. Funding has been used very effectively to enable subject co-ordinators to develop key aspects of their subjects quickly. For example, curricular planning has been improved speedily to help achieve continuity and progression in pupil's' learning. Good use has been made of the help given by the local education authority's consultants and inspectors. The weaknesses in leadership and management, identified in the last inspection report, have been fully addressed. Standards of attainment and achievement are improving.
- 36 Strategic planning is very clear. The school improvement plan is a very useful tool for guiding the school's future direction. Its targets for raising academic standards are precise and manageable. The overall priorities for development, and how they will be implemented, funded, monitored and evaluated, are very clear and appropriate. Governors discuss the progress of the improvement plan regularly. A clear programme for auditing, monitoring and evaluating the school's work is now in operation.
- 37 Following the last inspection, governors improved their strategies for accounting for the school's work and these have continued to improve. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities very well. The chair of governors and the headteacher work very closely together. Governors are well informed about the life of the school. Each is linked to one or more subject co-ordinator, meet with them and also observe lessons, using a common format to record their observations. The headteacher and governors' vision for the school's continued progress is very clear.
- 38 Finances are controlled efficiently. A very recent financial audit was favourable and its few recommendations were acted upon speedily. The headteacher and governors apply the principles of best value well, for example, they are well aware of how the

school's performance compares with others. They are also carefully reviewing the options open to them for improving the ICT provision. Finance has been committed to maintaining a considerable number of support staff. This has proved to be a very efficient decision because the quality of the support is very good.

- 39 The inspection of this school included a focused view of how effectively teaching assistants are managed and trained to contribute to the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy. Opportunities for teaching assistants to attend training are good and organised to ensure that they can attend accredited courses as part of a rolling programme. The management of their performance is informal at the present time. A future priority, identified in the school improvement plan, is to extend the monitoring of staff performance to include teaching assistants. All assistants have been trained to support the teaching of literacy and numeracy and have attended school-based and local courses. Courses to support pupils who have fallen behind in these important areas have also been attended. Programmes such as 'The Additional Literacy Strategy' and 'Springboard' have been successfully introduced and parents have praised the school's efforts to support their children. Access to training has enabled teaching assistants to develop greater confidence in their work. Teachers show their appreciation and offer good support. Regular meetings with senior teachers provide opportunities to discuss how to improve provision and celebrate successes.
- 40 The SEN co-ordinator manages the provision for SEN very well and is very effective in ensuring that all concerned adults communicate regularly. Individual records are up to date and maintained well. Although pupils know when their last target has been met, the records now need to be co-ordinated so that teachers and pupils can easily track progress over time. The SEN co-ordinator supports the teachers in the drawing up of IEPs. She regularly provides in-service training at staff meetings and has a weekly meeting with the learning support assistants. An improvement would be the opportunity to work alongside teachers and learning support assistants not only to help them but also to evaluate the quality of the support.
- 41 Accommodation, staffing and resources are good overall. The teaching staff is suitably qualified with a very good range of experience. The accommodation is suitable for the demands of the curriculum. Space is being used well to create a new library area. In the current library the provision of books is better than at the time of the last inspection.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 42 The governors and headteacher should:
- (1) Raise standards in mathematics by:
 - setting targets for individual pupils' performance;
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to investigate problems;
 - making more use of ICT.¹Paragraphs 1-2, 7, 57, 61.
 - (2) Raise standards in science by:
 - improving assessment and the use of assessment findings;

¹ Denotes an area already recognised by the school and included in the current school development plan.

- providing pupils with more opportunities for scientific enquiry.
Paragraphs 1-2, 4, 7, 64, 66-7.
- (3) Ensure regular use is made of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT within the whole curriculum.
Paragraphs 2-3, 15, 46, 48, 57, 82, 84.

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL FOR INCLUSION IN THE ACTION PLAN .

- Make sure that marking consistently gives pupils advice on how they can improve their performance
Paragraphs 10, 52, 61, 66, 102.
- Continue to improve the rate of attendance.
Paragraphs 8, 27, 34.
- Enable the SEN co-ordinator to monitor the SEN provision in classrooms.
Paragraph 40.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	83
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	26

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	25	28	20	0	0	0
Percentage	12	30	34	24	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.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	359
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	27

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	122

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7

National comparative data	5.7
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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 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	50	47	97

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	33	27	42
	Girls	38	37	41
	Total	71	64	83
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73 (68)	66 (66)	86 (80)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	30	29	34
	Girls	36	37	37
	Total	66	66	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (52)	69 (61)	74 (39)
	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	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	-
Indian	1
Pakistani	-
Bangladeshi	-
Chinese	1
White	355
Any other minority ethnic group	-

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.8
Average class size	27.6

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	281

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	20
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	-	-
Black – African heritage	-	-
Black – other	-	-
Indian	-	-
Pakistani	-	-
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	-	-
White	18	-
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.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	648,560
Total expenditure	657,632
Expenditure per pupil	1,788
Balance brought forward from previous year	53,080
Balance carried forward to next year	44,008

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	359
Number of questionnaires returned	153

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	48	8	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	50	9	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	54	15	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	58	18	3	1
The teaching is good.	37	52	5	1	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	50	21	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	41	9	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	44	3	2	3
The school works closely with parents.	23	49	22	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	35	46	5	1	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	51	10	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	46	10	2	5

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

ENGLISH

- 43 Since the previous inspection attainment at the age of eleven has improved and is now average. This level of attainment was reflected in the 2001 national test results, which showed that standards were similar to the national average and to those of pupils in similar schools. The percentage of pupils achieving the above average National Curriculum level rose by sixteen percent. Although the present Year 6 pupils entered the school with standards which were just above average, frequent staff changes and low expectations have had an effect on standards and pupils have not always achieved as well as they should. However, recent changes in staffing and organisation have ensured that Year 6 pupils of all attainment levels, including those with SEN, now make good progress and are achieving well. This upward trend looks set to continue. Girls have performed better than boys in the tests. The school has responded to this by setting targets to raise boys' achievement. In the work seen, differences between the attainment of boys and girls were not significant.
- 44 Areas of weakness highlighted at the time of the last inspection have been addressed very well. Literacy is now given a very high priority. All aspects of the National Literacy Strategy are being implemented thoroughly and this has had a very positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The Additional Literacy Strategy has also been implemented and booster classes have provided additional support for those pupils needing extra help to reach the expected standard. Good use has been made of expertise from the local education authority to help identify areas of weakness and improve the teaching and learning. Writing has been given particular focus, especially in ensuring pupils develop the important skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Guided reading is now very well organised and this has contributed to raising standards in reading which are now above average in Year 6. The school is now very well placed to continue to raise standards.
- 45 Pupils with SEN receive good support and as a result make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. There are very few pupils for whom English is an additional language. They make good progress and achieve similar standards to their peers.
- 46 Pupils make good progress in their speaking and listening skills. A well-planned scheme of work guides the teaching that, together with the very good relationships throughout the school, encourages pupils to share conversations with adults and each other. Pupils are interested in other people and readily initiate conversations. In assemblies, they listen attentively to music and stories and join in when it is appropriate. In lessons, they listen carefully to their teachers and appreciate the contribution other pupils make to the lessons. By the age of eleven the pupils are becoming confident speakers, eager to answer questions and to talk and evaluate their work. Pupils' responses to teacher's questions are not always extended and teachers sometimes accept one-word answers or simplistic responses without encouraging more complex thought provoking responses. Opportunities for pupils to extend speaking and listening skills in other subjects are not always explored sufficiently. For example, in mathematics low attaining pupils often find it difficult to explain their thinking and need more help.
- 47 Pupils make good progress in reading. They are encouraged to read for a wide variety of purposes including information and pleasure. Within literacy lessons the

guided reading tasks are very effective in extending pupils' reading skills. Pupils' understanding of texts is deepened and their skills in reading unfamiliar and complex words are improved. Books are very well matched to pupils' attainment and interest levels and they are very enthusiastic readers of a wide range of texts. In Year 6, high and average attaining pupils express a preference for certain authors and choose books because of particular interests. They understand plot, setting and characterisation and show a mature understanding of different writers' styles and accounts. Pupils discuss the nuances of the text and make deductions and inferences from their reading, making links with their own experiences or with other books. They are developing mature tastes in their reading. Their wide interest in reading is very apparent as pupils choose books such as *Star Wars*, Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* or Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*. When reading aloud, pupils do not always read with sufficient expression and this is an area for improvement. They are developing independent research skills as they use dictionaries, thesaurus, encyclopaedias and CD-ROMs. The school library is very well organised and books are now of good quality and attractively arranged. An even better library is being organised and the school is aware of the need for a wider range of books in classrooms.

- 48 Pupils make good progress in writing. Literacy lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to use their basic skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling to develop their writing for different purposes and audiences. Throughout the school pupils learn to write poems, diaries, letters and accounts using a wide range of skills and styles. During the inspection Year 5 pupils demonstrated very effective skills and understanding as they wrote very imaginative stories in the style of myths. Their work showed an awareness of the need for a particular style and very good use of well-chosen vocabulary captured the imagination of the reader. In Year 6, writing is improving quickly. High attaining pupils use paragraphs, correct punctuation, complex grammatical structures and rich appropriate vocabulary to enliven their writing. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to improve their writing skills in other subjects. For example, during the inspection pupils were very successful in developing their understanding of the need for a particular style and vocabulary when presenting a reasoned argument. However, there were no planned links with other subjects such as science, history or religious education when these newly learned skills could be developed further. Although the upper junior pupils have opportunities to use their ICT skills, in the production of the school newspaper, there is little evidence of ICT being used consistently across the year groups to support the teaching and learning of literacy skills.
- 49 In English lessons behaviour is invariably good and pupils respond well to the generally effective discipline. Pupils show favourable attitudes to learning and enjoy very positive relationships with their teachers. These make a considerable contribution to their rate of progress and the improved standards of attainment. Pupils are eager to learn and show good levels of independence and concentration. Opportunities to work collaboratively and to develop personal skills are well used. Pupils enjoy English lessons and respond very well to the structure of the literacy hour.
- 50 Teaching is almost always good and is frequently very good. In a fifth of lessons it was excellent. The spread of good and very good teaching across the school ensures that all pupils make good progress. Lessons are very carefully structured and well planned to meet the needs of pupils of all attainment levels. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are given a particularly high priority. Teachers are aware of the need to engage the interest of both boys and girls to ensure they reach the

standards of which they are capable. Books and topics for writing are carefully planned to capture the imagination of both sexes and this has been successful in raising the achievement of boys. Teachers use praise, comments and questions very effectively to check understanding and extend thinking. Expectations are generally high and the teachers' enthusiasm, clear explanations and secure knowledge have a very positive effect on attainment and progress. Plenary sessions check that pupils have understood the learning and in very good lessons teachers also use the plenary to challenge pupils just that bit further. However, there are occasions when the learning objectives are not shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons to ensure they are clear about what it is they are expected to learn. A weakness in the satisfactory lessons was that teacher's explanations were not as clear as they could have been and consequently some pupils were confused.

- 51 In outstanding lessons, learning is a shared experience and there is an added expectation that all pupils will be actively involved in the lessons. Clear, precise explanations provide pupils with strategies to be successful and ensure they make rapid progress in acquiring new skills and understanding. Question and answer sessions are very challenging and pupils are helped to arrive at the right answer by very sensitive support. They are encouraged to 'have a go' and 'making a mistake' is seen as an acceptable and essential part of learning. In one very effective lesson, the teacher showed pupils how to write the opening section of a myth and then discussed with pupils the vocabulary, style and grammar needed to produce an interesting story. All pupils were skilfully involved and together they bounced ideas around in an exciting and challenging way until the end result pleased everyone. Pupils made rapid gains in their literacy skills and produced work of a very high standard.
- 52 Procedures for assessment and record keeping are good overall. National Curriculum tests and school tests are now being used effectively to track individual progress in order to raise standards and to identify areas for school development. Teachers mark work on a regular basis but not all provide pupils with helpful suggestions on how they can improve their work. Although assessment is being used to set targets for individual pupils the targets are used inconsistently. Homework is used well to extend work done in lessons and to check that pupils have fully understood new learning.
- 53 The newly appointed co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subject and is committed to improving standards. The previous co-ordinator, who is now the deputy headteacher, had a very positive impact on raising the profile of the subject and improving standards. Formal monitoring of the teaching and planning takes place and staff are given feedback on how to improve the quality of the teaching and learning.

MATHEMATICS

- 54 Standards in mathematics, at the time of the previous inspection, were below average. However, in the national tests following the inspection, standards at age eleven fell even further and were well below average. Results in the 2001 tests showed some improvement but not as much as in English and science. Only eight percent of pupils achieved the above average National Curriculum level. However, under the new leadership, there is now a strong commitment to raising standards. The newly appointed co-ordinator has been in post for just over a term and in this short period significant initiatives have been taken. A notable initiative is the formation of a group of the most able Year 6 pupils who are being provided with work of a very high standard. Although standards in Year 6 remain below average, they are improving quickly. The school improvement plan identifies a number of achievable targets to support higher standards in the subject. These targets are being implemented but it will take time for the benefits to impact fully on the work of the school. Although girls have performed slightly better than boys in the national tests, over a three-year period, the difference in performance has not been significant.
- 55 In general, throughout the school, pupils are achieving well. Year 3 pupils understand place value in numbers up to a thousand and recognise patterns of number sequences that go up or down. Their mental recall of times table facts is increasingly used in their calculations. Strategies for adding and subtracting two digit numbers are identified and applied successfully. The high attaining pupils find fractional parts of shapes and numbers and are aware that fractional values can be expressed in different ways. Pupils understand the properties of symmetrical patterns and identify horizontal and vertical lines of symmetry in a rectangle. They measure using centimetres and most can tell the time accurately. Collections of data are expressed using bar charts and pupils enjoy explaining the significance of this work. Working with railway timetables encourages the able Year 4 pupils to consider the advantages of using the 24-hour clock. They quickly learn to translate times into the more familiar 12-hour representation. They enjoy developing their skills using analogue and digital time. Able pupils in Year 5 discover the flexibility of working with decimal fractions. They accurately place a group of decimals in order and find midway values between two amounts. Pupils in Year 6 work well with fractions. They understand that fractional values can be expressed in many different ways and high attainers explore the relationship between fractions and percentages. The latter pupils demonstrate very good knowledge of how to express fractions over a common denominator and use this strategy to add, subtract, order and find halfway points. Identifying the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes and explaining rotational symmetry extend Year 6 pupils' knowledge of shapes.
- 56 Pupils throughout the school build up good mathematical vocabulary which they increasingly use with confidence to describe and explain their work. They work hard to build up strategies to calculate and problem solve, for example, using the technique of doubling. All classes benefit from the recent introduction of weekly mental arithmetic lessons to promote quick and accurate recall of number skills. The need to be accurate in their work, provides a very good incentive for exciting competition and good quality learning.
- 57 Insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to develop an investigative approach to problem solving. The school has rightly prioritised other areas of the mathematics curriculum but the subject co-ordinator has recognised the need to review approaches to developing pupils' investigational skills. There is some evidence of mathematical skills being applied in other subjects, for example in the use of

symmetry in physical education and, in ICT, the use of formulae to produce spreadsheets. However, ICT is generally under-used but the school development plan identifies staff training in the use of ICT as a target for development.

- 58 Pupils in each year group are organised into sets according to their prior attainment. This organisation is successful, in the main, and enables teachers to plan work to match the needs of different groups of pupils. The previous report was critical that the provision for the low ability pupils was insufficiently well met. This issue has been addressed well. Additional support is now provided for low ability pupils by the strategic use of teaching assistants and weekly additional tuition before morning school commences.
- 59 Improvements in the quality of teaching are making a significant contribution to raising standards. Teaching is good or better in nearly nine out of ten lessons and is very good or better in almost sixty per cent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Very good relationships between pupils and teachers promote learning well. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall and contribute significantly to the good quality of their learning. Teachers remain calm and focused on pupils' needs and this helps to build up trust. Lessons are meticulously planned using an agreed format. Teachers have confident subject knowledge and ensure that appropriate resources to support pupils' learning are used. Time is used productively. A strength of the teaching is the recognition of the range of pupils' knowledge and skills within the ability groups and these differences are consistently addressed through planned differentiated work. Group activities are often supported by well trained and highly skilled teaching assistants who meet the learning and emotional needs of some challenging pupils very effectively. Teachers and assistants work closely together and this has a positive effect upon the quality of learning. Pupils with SEN are particularly well supported. For example, in a Year 4 set, where every pupil is on the SEN register, the quality of teaching is very good. In a very good example of inclusion, the class teacher, together with three teaching assistants, ensured pupils took a full part in the lesson and the outcome was that all pupils made good progress. The needs of high achievers are met well and often very well. The specially formulated group for the very high attainers in Year 6 has motivated them to achieve even further. They demonstrate a very high level of computational skill and their positive responses to the challenging work fully justifies the organisational changes.
- 60 There are examples of excellent teaching. In Year 5 pupils were set a series of challenges to change improper fractions to mixed numbers. Success was rewarded with a newly implemented team points' system that has captured the imaginations of pupils. Opportunity was presented to pupils to try out their own ideas and this contributed to their knowledge of their learning. They listened carefully to the points of view of others before testing their hypotheses. At appropriate points, the teacher brought the class together to discuss and re-enforce the learning. This strategy also helped the teacher to assess the effectiveness of his teaching strategies and ensure pupils were making progress. In Year 6, the teachers' high expectations and clarity of exposition helped the high attaining pupils to make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of fractions.
- 61 The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator, who is an excellent teacher, has monitored teaching and discussed the findings with staff. This has enabled areas for improvement to be identified and measures are being taken to modify practice. Her influence has contributed significantly to the good standard of teaching in mathematics. The quality of teachers' marking is too variable and the school has not fully developed an approach to setting pupils individual targets.

An additional area for development is the monitoring of the placement of boys and girls in the ability sets. For example, in Year 4 there is a disproportionately high number of boys in the high ability group and a disproportionately high number of girls in the low ability group.

SCIENCE

- 62 At the time of the last inspection standards in science were judged to be average. There was, however, a significant drop in standards in the national tests in the summer of 2000, the year of the inspection, and pupils' achievements were well below those of pupils in similar schools. At the end of Year 6, in 2001, standards were higher, although still well below the national average and below those of pupils in similar schools. Pupils have made progress and standards have continued to rise although they remain below the national average at the end of the juniors. Standards throughout the rest of the school are now appropriate for the age of the pupils. This improvement is a result of the significant improvement in the attitudes of the pupils and predominantly good teaching. Over the last two years, girls' achievements have been higher than those of the boys but this has not been a consistent trend over time.
- 63 Pupils in Year 6 have a sound understanding of features of plants and the functions of each part. They know what plants need in order to germinate and the importance of plants in the food chain. Pupils of all abilities are aware of the way plants and animals adapt to their habitats. Their studies of materials have included properties such as porosity and saturation. However, pupils in Year 6 have not had enough time for the impact of the improvement in attitudes and teaching to raise their standards to the appropriate levels for their age. In an excellent lesson taught by the subject leader, challenging questions encouraged the pupils to define "force" and to hypothesise about the effects of gravity on weight. Pupils had to apply their initial understanding of the effects of gravity on weight to predict the effect of the teacher's weight and mass should she be standing on the moon. Learning was rapid as good-humoured banter firmly established the formula $\text{mass} + \text{gravity} = \text{weight}$. As the teacher is new to her role, her expertise has not yet had time to influence overall standards throughout Year 6.
- 64 Younger pupils have an appropriate knowledge of life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes. There are occasions when pupils carry out their own investigations and record them in their own way. In Year 5, for example, pupils recorded their observations of shadows throughout the day in a variety of ways. In the same year, pupils carried out their own investigations in a lesson about the solubility of solids, selecting their equipment and recording their results in their own ways. However, this is not a feature of most lessons and an analysis of pupils' work shows that most of the practical work and the method of recording results are directed by the teacher. Pupils have made appropriate progress in the acquisition of knowledge and often make good progress in their lessons. There has not been enough improvement in pupils' scientific enquiry throughout the school since the last inspection when it was identified as a weakness. There is a need to fine-tune the planning for science so that the more able pupils have access to work at higher levels to enable all pupils to realise their full potential.
- 65 Pupils with SEN make good progress in their lessons. The learning support assistants give very good support and are completely in tune with the teachers' objectives for the lessons. In most cases the pupils are provided with tasks that are matched to their particular needs. They often work in mixed ability groups and learn

from their peers as well as the adults in the class. Their work is valued so they are encouraged to do their best.

- 66 The teaching has improved since the last inspection. In all the lessons observed it was at least satisfactory while almost two-thirds was at least good and a third was very good or excellent. A feature of all the very good or excellent lessons is the way the teachers provide opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and have some responsibility for the way they work. This means that pupils have to use their initiative to complete the task and their learning is a result of their own investigations. Knowledge acquired in this way is rarely forgotten. The relationships between the teachers and their pupils are very good throughout the school and pupils feel valued. Teachers expect the best of their pupils and this is reflected in the work the pupils produce. Almost all the written work is well presented and completed. Teachers in each year group plan the work together so all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. The objectives for each lesson are shared with the class so pupils know what they have learnt in each lesson. However, the quality of the teachers' marking is too variable throughout the school. One or two teachers tell pupils how they can improve their work but most either just tick the work or praise effort and presentation. Some teachers provide too much support for their pupils. In one lesson, for example, the Year 6 teacher dictated the outcomes rather than expecting the pupils to think for themselves. Sometimes all the pupils in a class fill in the same worksheet instead of recording in their own way.
- 67 The subject leader has been in school for only four months but has a good grasp of the way the subject should develop and is an excellent role model for teaching the subject. The school has rightly focused on improving standards in literacy and mathematics and she has not yet had the opportunity to monitor the teaching and curriculum planning or to share her expertise beyond responding to requests for advice. The school does not yet monitor pupils' progress in science and there are no systems to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum planning or to identify any weaknesses in the subject provision. The need to identify what the pupils can do and adjust the curriculum to meet their needs, especially in the development of scientific enquiry, is of paramount importance. Many of these features have already been identified as areas for development and the potential for future improvement is very good.

ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 68 At the time of the last inspection standards in art and design were below expectations. They have improved considerably. In the current Year 6, in the work seen, which was predominantly two-dimensional, standards were good. Standards in design and technology were satisfactory during the last inspection. In the current work seen standards were good but the sample of work was small. These judgements are based mainly on a scrutiny of pupils' work because very few lessons were observed. Pupils are achieving well, in the main, including those with SEN.
- 69 Sketchbooks are being used better than in the past. For example, in the upper juniors, in exploring the use of perspective, creating effective tone and mixing and applying colours using chalk. A feature of the most effective use of sketchbooks is the teachers' written evaluative observations on the pupils' work. In Year 3 pupils have designed and made colourful pottery leaves and displayed them in frames they designed and made themselves. The work includes pupils' evaluations and comments on how they could have improved the finished product. Pupils in Year 4 are carefully designing and making money containers and talk well about their ideas.

In Year 5 pencil has been used carefully in pupils' portraits of their friends and observational drawings of flowers are good. Year 5 pupils have also made shadow puppets with moving parts.

- 70 Pupils in Year 6 have studied the work of Andy Warhol and have used his techniques well to produce some interesting pop art. For example, they studied his portraits of Marilyn Monroe and then used photographs of themselves in emulating his technique of painting in contrasting colours four different versions of the same picture. They also used the computer clip art program to design wallpaper patterns in Warhol's style. Work in design and technology is also good in Year 6. Pupils have designed, planned and made slippers. Their work shows good ideas and in a very good lesson they explained their ideas well. Throughout the school, teachers provide pupils with a suitable booklet in which they plan design and evaluate their products.
- 71 In the few lessons seen, the teaching was good overall. In the very good lessons, explanations were very clear and demonstration of key skills was used effectively, for example, in stencilling technique in Year 3. A key feature of the good or better teaching was the emphasis given to improving pupils' performance by encouraging them to evaluate their own work. Pupils in all lessons showed interest in their work.
- 72 The headteacher has taken on responsibility for art and design and the co-ordinator for design and technology has had the responsibility for a very short time. Both are aware of how provision can be improved, especially in relation to monitoring pupils' progress. An important area for improvement in art and design is the provision for three-dimensional work.

GEOGRAPHY

- 73 Few lessons were observed during the inspection but in the work standards were in line with expectations and similar to those seen during the last inspection. There was not enough evidence to evaluate overall attainment by the age of eleven.
- 74 All pupils, including those with SEN make satisfactory progress. They acquire sound knowledge and understanding of a range of places and are able to compare their own location with those from other localities further afield. For example, in Year 3, pupils identified holiday destinations on one map and then found the relevant country on a climatic map. This helped them to find out why Morocco, Croatia or Tenerife were suitable locations for a holiday. In Year 4, pupils sorted what they perceived to be the good and bad aspects of living in Chembakolli, India, and give reasons for their choice. Pupils in Year 5 demonstrated an understanding of the water cycle and a river system following their studies during the autumn term.
- 75 Pupils' response to the subject is good. They collaborate and support one another well when researching information. This was particularly evident in an excellent lesson in Year 3. They are enthusiastic and keen to learn and share their knowledge and understanding.
- 76 In the four lessons observed, teaching was good overall with one lesson being excellent. Lessons are well planned and teachers consolidate previous learning and use subject language effectively. The teacher's precise instruction and clear explanation, together with well focused questioning, were particular features of the excellent lesson.

- 77 The newly appointed subject manager has carried out a careful audit of the geography provision to determine an action plan for the future development of the subject. This has, for the first time, included the monitoring of planning and teaching and discussions with colleagues. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 extend their geographical learning experiences through residential visits to Burwell House, Scarborough and the Isle of Wight. During the inspection, there was little evidence of the use of ICT.

HISTORY

- 78 Due to the school's timetabling arrangements, and the timing of the inspection, only a very small number of history lessons were seen. Judgements are also based on a scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers planning and discussions with teachers and pupils. Standards are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. The majority of pupils make good progress and by the age of eleven achieve standards that are expected for their age. Pupils with SEN also make good progress.
- 79 By the age of eleven, pupils have a wide historical knowledge and show satisfactory skills of enquiry and research to develop and deepen their understanding of the past. Through their study of Vikings, Romans, Egyptians, Tudors, Victorians and twentieth century Britain, pupils have gained a good range of factual knowledge. They are learning to examine the motives behind the way people behaved and their contribution to the present. As pupils progress through the school they develop a sound understanding of how events in the past can have affect the future and the way people live. Year 6 pupils show a very good understanding of the impact of Henry the VIII's desire for a son and the implications for religion and politics.
- 80 Pupils develop a secure understanding of chronology and name significant events and people from the past. Pupils in Year 6 confidently place the Egyptians, Romans, Tudors and Victorians in chronological order and name the different kings and queens and characters from different periods of history. However, they are unsure about specific dates such as the attempt of Guy Fawkes to blow up the Houses of Parliament and are apt to mix up centuries.
- 81 Pupils recall with considerable enthusiasm a visit to a local archaeological dig. This brought the subject alive for them as they observed research at first hand. It linked the past to the present and enhanced their understanding of life in Roman Britain. Although pupils are developing satisfactory skills of enquiry and research there is scope for more opportunity for them to use a wider range of historical resources and visits. Some pupils are enthusiastic about the work they do at home and this includes the use of artefacts, photographs and the Internet. However, the majority of pupils are unable to access such support and ICT is under-used.
- 82 In the very small number of lessons seen, the teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good. Teachers use effective strategies for managing lessons and organising pupils. Where teaching is good or better teachers are enthusiastic and have a very good understanding of the subject. Pupils are encouraged to think of themselves as historians as they study a wide range of aspects, for example, of life in Tudor times links with literacy are satisfactory. Pupils record their findings in a variety of different ways including posters, accounts, stories and letters. Links are haphazard however, and there is no overall plan to link literacy learning with history topics, which would enhance the teaching and learning in both subjects.
- 83 The new subject co-ordinator is aware of the need to raise the profile of the subject and address the weaknesses in curricular planning and resources.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 84 Pupils throughout the school are regularly and systematically taught ICT in the central computer suite. There are no computers in classrooms. The direct teaching of key skills is ensuring that pupils are making good progress and are achieving standards above those expected at the age of eleven. Standards remain similar to those at the time of the last inspection. All required elements are covered in the curriculum, but opportunities are missed to expand fully the use of ICT in other subjects.
- 85 All pupils make good progress over time including those with SEN. Pupils in Year 3 used the programme Information Workshop to enter the data they had collected into their database "Ourselves". They demonstrated a familiarity with basic operations using both keyboard and mouse and worked well in pairs. In Year 4, pupils imported images from Clipart into Publisher to create repeating patterns for their carrier bags before adding text. Pupils in Year 5 developed the skills they had acquired in previous years to locate information from a database using the commands "< = and =>" and the AND and OR commands. They demonstrated the outcomes of each command when searching the Monarch database and gave reasoned responses about their findings. They posed appropriate commands for their teacher to access a database about York on the Internet.
- 86 Pupils in Year 6, having entered information on a spreadsheet about the "Stationary Shop", entered formulae to calculate totals by addition and multiplication and copied and pasted those formulae for all rows. Also on display was the year group's other accomplishments in ICT. Pupils have used a digital camera to take self-portraits and then the computer to produce a multi-image self-portrait in the style of Andy Warhol's portrait of Marylyn Monroe. There were also examples of wallpaper designs in the style of the same artist. Pupils from Year 6 also produce the Irthlingborough Express, a newspaper for the school, during the subject leader's computer club activities.
- 87 Pupils have very positive attitudes towards the subject and thoroughly enjoy their lessons. They work very well together and their behaviour is consistently good. They are mindful of their peers and perceive and provide the time to help and advise.
- 88 Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good or excellent. Teachers plan their lessons very well and teach the key skills thoroughly. All lessons begin with teachers introducing and rehearsing the key vocabulary for the lesson. In the excellent lesson in Year 5, the tasks were challenging, instructions were very clear, the levels of questioning were searching and developmental and the assistance provided during the activity was very purposeful. Despite the quality of teaching and learning being achieved some teachers feel insecure in their knowledge and understanding and are looking forward to the training they are going to receive as part of the New Opportunities Fund initiative.
- 89 The subject manager provides very good leadership. She has a clear vision of the future development of the subject that is supported by a focused subject action plan.
- 90 The school is rightly giving very careful consideration to the future deployment of resources, taking into account the need to provide ICT opportunities to support all areas of the curriculum. Records of what is taught are well maintained and annotated and plans for assessing pupils' progress are suitable.

MUSIC

- 91 Pupils throughout the school attain the standards expected for their ages and all enjoy making music. Standards have been sustained since the last inspection overall, but the standard of singing, although still good, is not as high as last time. This is because the school does not currently have a specialist music teacher to co-ordinate the subject. Pupils' knowledge of famous composers and different types of music has improved and is now satisfactory. Composers and their music are regularly discussed during singing sessions and pupils in Year 6 are studying scale and modal systems from around the world. The acting co-ordinator works hard to ensure that the quality of the music provision has been maintained. Pupils from Year 4 and upwards have the opportunity to play brass, string and woodwind instruments taught by the Northamptonshire Music and Performing Arts Service. The thriving choirs, ocarina clubs and guitar clubs reflect the quality of the provision and contribute to maintaining the overall standards.
- 92 The teaching is good throughout the school and was very good in a lesson in Year 6. In this lesson the teacher prepared the resources very well, providing her pupils with sets of tuned percussion with Japanese, Indonesian, Chinese, Raga, whole tone, major and minor scale structures. Pupils evaluated and compared the music, discussing the way the music made them feel. From recorded music, pupils identified music by Beethoven and they recognised Jewish and Chinese music. Relationships between pupils and teachers and within the groups of musicians as they composed their eight-beat melodies were very good and everyone enjoyed the lesson. Pupils' exposure to different modal systems and the opportunity to compare them meant that they all made very good gains in their musical knowledge. The lesson made a very good contribution to the pupils' social, spiritual and cultural development. Pupils with SEN worked with other pupils in their group with the good support of a learning support assistant. Their achievements were in line with the rest of the class. All the teachers observed had an appropriate knowledge of the subject and in almost all lessons it was apparent that pupils' understanding of musical vocabulary is appropriate for their age.
- 93 There has been a significant improvement in pupils' behaviour in the music lessons and during the combined singing sessions in the hall. Behaviour was unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. It is now good in all lessons and excellent in the hall. In a Year 3 lesson, when pupils listened to recorded music in order to compare styles, every pupil closed his or her eyes in order to concentrate fully. This is a tribute to the recent emphasis on pupils' moral and social development and the reflection of the ethos of the school within the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 94 All the required strands of physical education are taught. Lessons were observed in swimming, dance and gymnastics but no lessons were observed in gymnastics in Year 6. In the work seen in other age groups, standards in gymnastics meet expectations for pupils' ages and are similar to those described in the previous inspection report. In dance and swimming, standards are above those expected for pupils aged eleven. There are no significant differences in the performance of girls and boys.
- 95 Pupils throughout the school achieve well and make good progress in lessons, including pupils with SEN. They have a good awareness of the need for safety in exercise and when moving apparatus. They have a good understanding of why warming up and cooling down their bodies are important before and after exercise.

Pupils in Year 3 created interesting positions and movements based on symmetrical and asymmetrical shapes. They compared their performances with those of other pupils and made changes to their own interpretations, which led to improvement. Pupils in Year 4 used the space in the hall well to perform a satisfactory balancing activity following a command to stop running. Individuals showed good imagination to contrive interesting finishing positions. This work was extended with pupils working in pairs to create a sequence of movements ending with a balance. In an excellent lesson in Year 5 pupils showed their skills in jumping in a variety of modes and directions, maintaining balance and steady footing. The pupils were very enthusiastic and keen to perform and extend their skills. They listened very carefully to the teacher who provided a very good role model as he demonstrated a range of jumps. Some impressive performances were developed with pupils using their arms to provide further impetus when jumping forwards and sideways. Later in the lesson pupils worked in pairs and in groups of four to produce sequences incorporating many of the skills they learned. A particularly good feature of the lesson was the pupils' evaluations of each other's performances. They were generous in their praise but were prepared to suggest ways to improve skills. Members of the class thoroughly enjoyed performing their activities in front of their friends. Year 6 pupils demonstrated their skills in creating a dance using mirroring and matching techniques in preparation for the production of a 'Machine Dance'. Pupils showed imagination and application in their movements. A strength of the work was the diversity of expressive movement.

- 96 Pupils benefit from a swimming pool on the school's site. This valuable facility enables pupils to develop confidence and safety procedures in water. In a swimming lesson with Year 4 it was clear that many pupils were confident and prepared to 'experiment' whilst putting into practice the techniques they have been taught. Some pupils needed the support of a range of apparatus that was available to encourage success. Year 6 extend their skills in a larger pool at a nearby town. A swimming instructor, who has the knowledge and skills to make significant improvements in their techniques, teaches the high achieving swimmers. Emphasis is placed on body position and stroke technique. This arrangement enables teachers to devote more time teaching basic skills to groups requiring additional support and to help any pupils needing to develop their confidence in water. The school has a good reputation for swimming and the level of instruction and pace of learning reflected the high quality planning.
- 97 Pupils are involved in a range of team sports, many of which have a competitive element. For example, the girls' football team will take part in the final of the district championships when they play at the Rushden and Diamonds Football Club stadium in front of a large crowd before a football league match. The girls indicated to inspectors that they are thrilled to have this opportunity to show off their skills. Competitive matches are arranged in other sports, for example, cricket and netball. Good opportunities are also provided for pupils in a range of extra-curricular activities sporting activities.
- 98 The quality of teaching is good overall. Lessons are very well prepared with tasks that provide challenge to pupils and capture their interest. Pupils look forward to physical education and this is reflected by the speed with which they get changed. They are anxious to get started and are keen to develop their skills in after school activities. Teachers have high expectations and this helps to encourage effective learning. For example, in Year 5, the teacher's encouragement of pupils to devise a range of interesting activities challenged them all and consequently improved their learning. In Year 4 the teacher used good performers to demonstrate their skills to the class and this helped pupils to see how their own performance could be improved.

- 99 The scheme of work for physical education is due for review this year. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic teacher who shares his skills and knowledge with staff to improve opportunities for the pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 100 Standards at the time of the last inspection met expectations in the locally agreed syllabus. Current standards at the age of eleven are broadly similar. Progress in pupils' work is satisfactory. Lessons were seen in each year group and pupils' achievement was satisfactory overall but good in Year 5. Pupils' work in the Autumn term was about Christianity and in the current and subsequent term they will be studying other faiths.
- 101 Pupils in Year 3 have written clearly about important events in the Christian year and also about famous people such as Mother Teresa. In Year 4, pupils' study of the stories of Jesus stimulated them to write about the importance of friendship. In Year 5, pupils' writing about their own ideas for the school's pupils' charter enhanced their spiritual development, for example, one pupil wrote; "Comfort others who are hurt or unhappy". Their accounts of Christian practice, for instance, baptism, are satisfactory. Pupils' work in Year 6 shows satisfactory understanding of the Bible and some expressive re-telling of Bible stories such as the story of Noah.
- 102 Six lessons were seen. The teaching was good or better in half the lessons and satisfactory in the remainder. In the successful lessons pupils' interest was captured, for example, in lively discussion of Hindu practice. Strengths in the teaching included the probing of pupils' understanding and clear imparting of knowledge, for instance, in the teaching of the Gospels in Year 6. Inspectors' discussion with pupils indicated that for many religious education is one of their least favourite subjects. A feature of the satisfactory teaching was that it did not always stimulate pupils' enthusiasm. A discussion with a small representative group of Year 6 pupils indicated that their knowledge and understanding of Christian practice were better than that of other faiths. The quality of marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and is often minimal.
- 103 The co-ordinator has had responsibility for the subject for less than a year and this is the first time she has co-ordinated a subject. She has devised an action plan for the subject's development and has started to collect photographic evidence of pupils' involvement in major festivals. Pupils have the opportunity to visit different places of worship.