

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Melton Mowbray

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 119940

Headteacher: Adrienne Holland

Reporting inspector: Brian Aldridge  
17454

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> April 2002

Inspection number: 243026

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Asfordby Road  
Melton Mowbray  
Leicestershire  
Postcode: LE13 0HN

Telephone number: 01664 562554

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Stephen Brown

Date of previous inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> September 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17454	Brian Aldridge	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities Information and communication technology (ICT) Physical education	What should the school do to improve further The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught How well is the school led and managed
14178	Patricia Willman	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents
22248	Glesni Thomas	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Art and design Mathematics	
20911	Judy Dawson	Team inspector	Special educational needs (SEN) English Design and technology Music	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
2766	Rashida Spencer	Team inspector	English as an additional language (EAL) Science Geography History Religious education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Grove Primary is an above average sized school that educates 278 four to eleven-year-old pupils (143 boys and 135 girls). A high proportion of the parents and carers of the pupils are in low paid, part-time occupations or are unemployed. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Some parents who have transport have moved their children to other schools and, since the last inspection, the school roll has fallen by 43 pupils. Children enter the reception classes in September of the year in which they are five. At the time of the inspection there were 39 children in the reception classes of the Foundation Stage. Very few pupils are of minority ethnic heritage; six pupils speak English as their second language, two of whom are at the early stages of learning English. Of the 94 pupils who have special educational needs, five have statements. The range of special educational needs catered for by the school include moderate learning difficulties, emotional, behavioural and social difficulties and hearing impairment. Both of the special educational needs proportions are above average. On entry to the school children's attainment is below the levels expected, particularly in communication and literacy skills. A large proportion have no access to pre-school education. Over the past year the school has suffered from severe staff recruitment difficulties; during the inspection five teachers were employed on temporary or supply contracts.

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

The school is providing a satisfactory standard of education. In English, mathematics and science pupils make satisfactory progress and attain standards that are average in mathematics and science and below average in English by the time they leave the school. Teaching is good in the reception classes and sound in the rest of the school. The headteacher provides good leadership and the school is very well supported by the governing body. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Provision in the Foundation Stage is good
- Pupils achieve well in speaking and listening and investigations in mathematics and science
- The leadership and management of the headteacher are good and governors support the school very well
- Learning in the community is very good
- Staff commitment to the care and welfare of pupils is high
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their school

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

- Standards of work in some of the skills of literacy and numeracy
- Expectations of the quality of handwriting and standard of presentation
- Achievement in many of the subjects of the broader curriculum.

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

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

Despite severe staffing difficulties and a deterioration in the level of attainment on entry, standards in the core subjects are about the same as they were at the time of the last inspection. Teaching has improved and assessment procedures are better than they were; there is also a clearer emphasis on using English and mathematics across the curriculum. The issues identified in the last inspection have been dealt with well. Teachers' subject knowledge is now at least satisfactory and is being addressed well by training. They plan challenging work for higher attaining pupils as a normal part of their work. Resources

are now adequate in most subjects and good in information and communication technology (ICT). The school has maintained a satisfactory rate of improvement and the headteacher and governors have the capacity to continue to move the school forward.

## 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	E	E	E*	E*
Mathematics	E	D	E*	E
Science	C	C	E	E

**Key**

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

Standards have been affected by staff recruitment difficulties and higher than average numbers of pupils with special educational needs. For example, over 60 per cent of last year's Year 6 group experienced special educational needs, of whom a much higher than average proportion had statements. The performance of the 2001 Year 6 group in English was in the lowest five per cent of similar schools. Performance in reading of 2001 Year 2 pupils was also in the lowest five per cent of similar schools. The school did not achieve last year's very challenging targets but the results have broadly kept pace with the national trend.

Standards in the current Years 2 and 6 have improved and are now below average in English and average in mathematics and science. This rise in standards is due to a number of factors. Teachers now plan work that is challenging to high attainers, and encourage pupils to investigate and think about problems. For example, pupils show good understanding of important ideas in science and investigate well in mathematics. Throughout the school in subjects that are taught in a practical manner, such as science, design and technology and ICT, pupils achieve well. This is also the case in some elements of English, for example, in speaking and listening skills and in the content of their writing. However, the presentation of pupils' work is not consistently good and pupils do not recall times tables and other number facts sufficiently quickly. In some subjects, for example, history, geography and religious education, standards dip below the expected levels as pupils often do not remember their learning. This is mainly because they do not have enough opportunities to write about what they have learned. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well and the new team of teachers is working well to support learning. By the end of the Foundation Stage children in the current reception classes will achieve the expected levels before beginning to learn from the National Curriculum. Generally pupils achieve soundly in Years 1 to 6. There are promising signs that, along with the improvements in teaching, learning in most lessons is now good and this will help to build the rates of achievement. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language is satisfactory. High attainers learn well; the type of work set by teachers suits the way these pupils learn.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Overall, pupils' attitudes to school and learning are good. Most pupils have a clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others and show tolerance for others' poor behaviour. They are keen and are conscientious when doing jobs and are proud of their school. A few

	pupils have little respect for the feelings and rights of others but this attitude has a limited impact on the whole community as the school's systems are working well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of most pupils is good although a small group of pupils does not behave well. Behaviour is satisfactory overall.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory; most pupils get on well with their peers and adult helpers.
Attendance	Even though the school's procedures for promoting good attendance are good and the school works very closely with education welfare officers, attendance is unsatisfactory and the school has not kept pace with national improvement.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is satisfactory overall but is generally good in lessons. The school has found it difficult to appoint teachers. However, the recent appointments of temporary staff are having a positive effect on the quality of teaching. The teaching in English and science lessons is often good and the basic skills of speaking and listening are taught well. Pupils do not develop a model of good quality work in handwriting, spelling and the quick recall of basic number facts; teaching of these skills is unsatisfactory. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to investigate and apply what they have learned in different situations. Teachers are skilled at combining subjects and helping pupils see the practical applications of their learning. Pupils learn well together because they have lots of opportunities to work in pairs and groups. Generally, teachers do not share the same high expectations of pupils and do not consistently present them with challenging targets. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good because the team in those classes shares the same ideals and understanding about what children ought to be achieving.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in the reception classes and satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. Too little emphasis is placed on learning subject specific knowledge and skills in history and geography. Very good use is made of community links when planning learning opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory; the arrangements for withdrawing and supporting pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties are good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory for the very few pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall; the provision for moral and social development is good. Too many opportunities are missed to promote pupils' spiritual development.



How well the school cares for its pupils	Good; pupils' care and welfare is very important to all those who work in the school.
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The school's work with parents is satisfactory; most parents think well of the school but because many parents do not actively support their children's learning or the work of the school, the impact of parents' involvement is only satisfactory. The school has good procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development, but these are not fully effective in improving attendance or behaviour.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is a good leader and manager; her work in supporting the care and welfare of pupils is excellent. She is well supported by curriculum coordinators and the newly formed senior management team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The work of the governors is very good; they have a very good understanding of what the school should do to improve.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Some aspects of this work are good; for instance, the analysis of assessment results and support given to teachers to identify what should be done to improve. More could be done to work faster towards meeting academic targets.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Finances are carefully monitored and the headteacher and governors work well to make the best use of resources.

Staffing in the school is good with lots of learning support assistants and sufficient teachers. Learning resources are satisfactory overall although there has been a very good improvement in ICT resources since the last inspection. The headteacher, coordinators and governors keep a careful eye on the school's work; action towards meeting targets for basic skills has been slow. The school applies 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"> <li>• Children like coming to school.</li> <li>• Children receive the right amount of work, are expected to work hard and are helped to become mature.</li> <li>• Teaching is good and children make good progress.</li> <li>• They are kept well informed about their children's progress.</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents and the great majority feel comfortable about approaching the school.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A significant proportion of parents expressed concern about the behaviour of some pupils.</li> </ul>

Although many parents express positive views of the school, there is a significant element of disagreement and concern, particularly about the standards of behaviour and bullying. A small group of parents feel concerned that the school does not appreciate their views. The inspection team agree with parents' positive views. Parents should feel reassured that inspectors found the school willing to listen to the concerns of parents and that the school works hard to ensure that parents' concerns are addressed. The school is addressing the points raised by parents and staff and governors are very keen to show the school's open door policy in action. Individual families attested to the very high quality care and attention given to their children. The school takes behaviour and bullying seriously; the recent

appointment of a learning support assistant to improve behaviour is timely and is having a positive impact on the learning environment. Exclusion is used effectively and properly.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS**

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

1. In the National Curriculum tests for Year 2 held last year the school's performance in reading was in the lowest five per cent of all and similar schools. In writing, the school's performance was well below the average of all and similar schools and in mathematics was well below all schools but below the average of similar schools. Teacher assessments in science showed a below average performance. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in mathematics and science was average and above average respectively. Performance in reading and writing were well below average and below average. Since the last inspection there has been a fall in the standards of reading, writing has improved very slightly and mathematics has fallen slightly. However, over the past few years there have been some serious staffing issues and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs has been high in these year groups. In addition 70 per cent of the pupils in last years' Year 2 were boys. The school is well on the way to solving the staffing difficulties with the new members of the Year 1 and 2 team beginning to work well and an experienced teacher is due to return to the school after maternity leave. Inspectors judge standards in the present Year 2 to be below average in English and average in mathematics and science. Although there is still work to do across the school this improvement is due to some very good and occasionally excellent teaching in Years 1 and 2, a good start for children in the Foundation Stage reception classes and the positive impact of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy.
2. Last year the results in the national tests for Year 6 pupils were in the lowest five per cent in English, and well below average in mathematics and science. Compared to the results of similar schools, based on the uptake of free school meals, results in English were in the lowest five per cent, and well below average in mathematics and science. The National Curriculum test results indicate a decline in standards since the last inspection although the school's trend is broadly in line with that of all the schools in the country. In last year's Year 6, 58 per cent of the pupils, three times the national average, had special educational needs including 11 per cent who had statements, more than five times the national average. An analysis of the results of pupils who stayed in the school for four years after their Year 2 tests shows that they make at least satisfactory progress. A high proportion of pupils who join the school after Year 2 have special educational needs. Inspectors now judge standards to be below average in English and average in mathematics and science.
3. Standards have risen for a number of reasons:
  - teaching although satisfactory overall has improved in lessons
  - the management of behaviour is improving
  - pupils are set interesting and real-life learning opportunities, and
  - pupils' progress is carefully assessed.
4. Over the past few years there have been a number of serious staffing difficulties. The headteacher and governors have tried hard to find good quality temporary and supply staff but that has meant frequent changes to the teaching force. During this inspection there were five temporary or supply teachers in post. In turn this has brought about an unsettling time for some pupils. Although there is still work to do in managing the staffing issues facing the school, the headteacher and governors have taken appropriate steps and the teaching observed in this inspection was better than that

observed at the last inspection, with a higher proportion of good and very good teaching. In most of the lessons observed the quality of pupils' learning was good. This is because teachers plan interesting and relevant work for pupils. Higher attaining pupils are set challenging work and often pupils are given tasks which require them to solve and investigate problems. Where pupils view these tasks as real and important, learning is more effective.

5. Another factor which should be taken into account is the improvement in behaviour since the appointment of a learning support assistant who deals specifically with those pupils who find it difficult to work in a quiet classroom atmosphere. Pupils talk of this system working; classrooms are now more conducive environments for hard working pupils. An issue for improvement at the last inspection was the assessment of pupils' progress. The school has addressed this issue well. Assessment results are analysed and issues such as standards in the basic skills, in art, geography, history, music and religious education have been identified as needing improvement. Further, a watchful eye is kept on how well boys and girls are doing, and the school is trying to support boys' learning in particular. 'Premiership words – no second division here' was understood by the boys in one particular class – 'we have to try hard all of the time'. Teachers understand what needs to be improved and have started the work but the pace of movement towards meeting these goals is too slow. Assessment has also brought about individual targets for each pupil. This system is in the early stages of development; targets need to be sharper and set more frequently.
6. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are average in Year 2 and Year 6. Teachers lay a heavy emphasis on pupils using these skills at every opportunity. 'Response partners' are used to encourage pupils to discuss a problem. For example, in science, when investigating how to construct electrical circuits, or how snails moved and ate, pupils asked searching questions and puzzled until they found solutions. In English groups of pupils designed brochures and in geography groups battled the builders bent on driving a new road through the village. So, although pupils put their speaking and listening skills to good use, they do not have enough opportunities to perfect other skills such as handwriting, spelling and the quick recall of number facts. In these areas of learning standards are below average.
7. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well. Each group entering the school has varying levels of development in the areas of learning. In the past some year groups have been well below the expected levels. The current children in the reception classes joined the school attaining below the expected levels. By the time they enter the first year of the National Curriculum they will have achieved the Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning. Children are confident and enthusiastic and keen to learn. Their social skills are usually above their other areas of development and they work well together. The rate of achievement in these classes has picked up since the last inspection because of the improved quality of teaching and the very close teamwork which has developed.
8. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. They have good adult support and most teachers plan appropriate work to meet their needs. The targets set in their individual education plans are satisfactory but some are not precise or limited enough to enable pupils to make good progress towards them. In contrast, the individual education plans for above average pupils are good, setting out clearly the learning goals identified by teachers and pupils. In some cases, in an effort to boost pupils' self-esteem, praise is used inappropriately, giving pupils the impression that they do not have to make much effort with their written work. Pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties make good, or very good progress because of the

effective systems that support them. For example, a pupil finding it difficult to conform in the classroom was asked to work with a learning support assistant in a quiet area of the school. The pupil was able to return later and contribute to the class discussion. The class teachers are consistent in their expectations of these pupils so that they learn what is acceptable. The learning support assistant employed by the school to support these pupils in their personal management of behaviour is proving to be very effective. Parents and teachers have noticed a reduction in inappropriate behaviour in school. Pupils with physical difficulties, including those with hearing impairments, also make good progress as all adults make sure that they are fully included in all aspects of the curriculum and that work is always set at an appropriate level.

9. Pupils use ICT skills across a wide range of lessons. The rate of progress is picking up since the school installed a well-equipped computer suite. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are at the expected levels. All pupils have a reasonable working knowledge of computers and how they can be used to help them in their learning. The rate of learning is more rapid for younger pupils than it is for those pupils in the older age groups in the school. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, for instance, hold their fingers correctly over the keyboard and attempt to use the correct fingers for each key. These standards are also due to the specialist teaching which now takes place and the close relationship which has been forged between the school and a secondary school in the town. Standards in ICT have been maintained at the same level since the last inspection while the curriculum has become more demanding.
10. Standards in religious education are below the levels set out in the locally agreed syllabus and they are below average in art and design, geography, and history in Years 2 and 6 and in music in Year 6. This is due to a number of factors. Quite rightly the school has concentrated on raising standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT and the curriculum for these subjects is clearly set out. Religious education, geography and history are taught with a heavy emphasis on English skills and this means that pupils do not always learn and remember the important facts and skills connected with these subjects. This is also the case in art and design and music where standards are below average for Year 6 pupils. Even in those subjects where standards are average, for example, design and technology, although teachers produce good quality plans for each block of work, there is no overall plan to guide teachers when planning for each year group in the mixed age classes.

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

11. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and the children in the Foundation Stage, have good attitudes to school. The majority enjoy coming to school and get on well with their teachers and other staff who work with and care for them. Although most pupils respond well to the positive values promoted by the staff, a significant minority has little respect for other members of the school community. This is in contrast with the good behaviour of most pupils and the standards of behaviour overall are satisfactory. Pupils' personal development and the relationships they have with each other are satisfactory overall. The level of attendance has not kept pace with the rising trend in most other schools and it is well below average. The quality of many of the aspects of pupils' development has been maintained well since the last inspection. However, behaviour and attendance are not as good as they were.
12. The children in the Foundation Stage are beginning to develop positive attitudes to school. They have settled happily into what, for many, is their first experience of formal education and respond with enthusiasm and growing confidence to the well-structured lessons. Because of teachers' very good knowledge of how these young children

learn, lessons are fun and the children enjoy their time in school. A good example was seen in the shrieks of delight that accompanied the activity with the parachute in the hall each time the beanbag hit the ceiling. They become excited when presented with new experiences, for example, examining samples of interesting foodstuffs. As a result they are becoming inquisitive and well-motivated learners. Although they listen carefully to each other and to their teachers, a few of the children have short attention spans and are easily distracted. They understand how they are expected to behave and try hard to please their teachers. They have good relationships with each other. For example, one small boy put his arm quietly around his friend when he was upset. The relationships they have with their teachers and other staff are excellent. Although attendance is not statutory, many children attend regularly and on time, learning good habits for the future.

13. Many pupils, including those with special educational needs, have positive attitudes to school. Analysis of the parental questionnaires returned prior to the inspection indicates that almost all parents consider that their children like school. Whilst this evidence represents a relatively small proportion of parents, many pupils comment on how much they like school and several Year 6 pupils said how sad they will be when they have to leave. However, almost a third of pupils do not attend as regularly as they should and this has a significant impact on their ability to do as well as they could in the national tests. Pupils' response to their literacy and numeracy lessons is often good. They enjoy the challenge of the mental arithmetic sessions and in a Year 1/2 English lesson on reading and spelling, pupils thoroughly enjoyed the 'silly questions' time. Pupils enjoy the practical aspects of their lessons. Years 3 and 4 worked hard making up electrical circuits in their science lessons, cheering in one lesson when the teacher explained the experiment they were going to conduct. All pupils look forward to their lessons in the ICT suite and enjoy physical education and music lessons. There is enthusiastic support for the football team and many pupils take part in the training after school organised by teachers and supported by parents. Pupils look forward eagerly to the residential visits. The wide range of other visits increases pupils' interest and enjoyment in their learning.
14. Although the behaviour of many pupils is good, there is a significant minority whose regular and disruptive behaviour in class and around the school has an adverse impact on the whole school community and behaviour overall, while not unsatisfactory, is not as good as it could be. Prior to and during the inspection, a few parents raised serious concerns about the standards of behaviour and the level of bullying in the school. Talking to the pupils and examining of the school's records show that there are a few pupils who cause significant problems in lessons and disrupt playtimes. Most pupils disapprove of the poor behaviour of some of their classmates. They feel strongly that they would learn more in their lessons if teachers did not have to spend so much time dealing with a disruptive minority. However, pupils commented that the steps the school is taking have already improved the behaviour in classrooms and in the playground and their lessons are more enjoyable as a result. When behaviour in lessons is unsatisfactory, time is wasted and pupils' learning is inhibited. The rate of exclusion has risen dramatically since the last inspection. This is an indication of the commitment of the governors, headteacher and staff to modify the behaviour of the troublesome minority in the school for the benefit of the majority of the school community. During the last full year, there were 19 fixed-term exclusions involving ten boys and four girls. So far this year two boys have been excluded permanently, and there have been 16 fixed-term exclusions for a total of 63 days involving eight boys and one girl. These have been as a result of violent, aggressive and abusive behaviour towards staff and fellow pupils.

15. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Relationships between most of the pupils and with their teachers are generally good. They work and play together happily and constructively. They listen to each other and respect different viewpoints. Pupils have a clear understanding of the impact of what they do or say on their friends. A significant minority of pupils, however, do not respect the rights of others and have limited strategies for dealing with conflict, instinctively resorting to verbal and physical abuse to resolve disputes. Although no overt bullying was seen during the inspection, the pupils know of instances when they or their friends have been unhappy because of the actions of others. They know that it is important to tell someone and, although their teachers help them, the problem is not always resolved. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility, coming in early to sort out the milk and registers, staffing the tuck shops, tidying up their classrooms and contributing to the school council. They take part in charitable fund raising activities, learning about the lives of those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are courteous and very friendly to adults; they care about their school and are keen to create a good impression for visitors. Through class discussions, for example, in personal, social and health education lessons, pupils learn to talk about their feelings and clearly understand the difference between right and wrong, even though some make the wrong choices. Not all pupils develop the appropriate level of motivation and self-discipline required to complete homework on time, particularly when they have limited support at home. The school helps by providing study support after school. Most pupils treat the fabric of the building and the resources with respect and there is no evidence to suggest that they are not trustworthy.
16. Attendance at the school is unsatisfactory. It was well below the national average for the last year, and is at a similar level so far this year. Unauthorised absence is about the same as that found in most schools and this is an improvement since the last inspection. This is because of the school's good systems for following-up absence. Most parents advise the school of reasons for absence. Almost a third of pupils, however, miss in excess of ten per cent of their lessons, primarily through illness and they are missing significant elements of their learning. There are a small number of pupils who are persistently late, sometimes without good reason, and these pupils miss the important start to lessons. Registration is quick and efficient and lessons start on time.
17. Pupils with learning difficulties behave well in their support groups and in the classrooms. They treat the adults with respect and work well together. Most are eager to please and respond to praise very well. Those with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties can, on occasions, disrupt the work of the class. Learning support assistants minimise this by withdrawing them, giving "time out". This often results in the pupil returning to the class and behaving appropriately. These pupils are beginning to learn how to face their aggression and anger in their sessions with the learning support assistant. Most pupils with special educational needs work well in pairs and groups and are independent in the classrooms. The support teachers and learning support assistants encourage them to think for themselves and most adults make sure that the pupils do as much as they can themselves.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT**

18. At the time of the last inspection the quality of teaching was judged to be at least satisfactory in all lessons and in the Foundation Stage good or very good in two-thirds of the lessons. In 1997 good or very good teaching was observed in half the lessons in Years 1 to 6. In Years 3 to 6 almost one in ten lessons was considered to be unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection teaching has improved even though many of

the staff now in the school have been teaching less than three years. Now the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in all lessons and good or better in more than six out of ten. In a sixth of all lessons the quality of teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. In the reception classes teaching is consistently good or better. This improvement has come about despite the difficulties the school has experienced in appointing teachers. At the time of the inspection five of the teachers were on temporary or supply contracts.

19. At the last inspection a half of all the lessons observed in Years 1 to 6 lacked challenge and in Years 3 to 6 pupils were not organised or managed well. Inspectors now find that the management of pupils is very good in the Foundation Stage and good elsewhere. Teachers take great care to ensure that pupils are given interesting work; this helps pupils concentrate and where pupils are not behaving as they should, teachers diffuse the situation with humour or a quiet word. At times pupils are asked to leave the class with a learning support assistant until they can control their own behaviour; this works well and pupils and teachers have noticed an improvement since a learning support assistant who helps these pupils took up post at the beginning of the last term.
20. Personal and social education lessons also help pupils develop positive attitudes to their work and the people around them. In a lesson in Years 3 and 4 pupils were asked to consider what makes a good friend. During discussions pupils were asked how they would feel if a friend was unkind and offered 'disappointed, confused and tearful'. In this lesson the teacher and learning support assistant worked together very well. As the assistant helped one pupil frame an answer to the teacher's question, the teacher immediately asked the child and valued the response that was given. This quality of work was seen in some classes and learning support assistants in the Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 help the teacher record pupils' progress by carefully observing what each child accomplishes. At other times assistants give very good support to pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties although in some lessons assistants are not as engaged with pupils as they could be. Resources are used well to stimulate interest and help pupils achieve their tasks. Teachers use ICT well to support pupils' learning.
21. Teachers in Years 1 to 6 plan work in which pupils develop their speaking and listening skills; for example, in many lessons pupils are asked to discuss their ideas, or to investigate what they think is happening in an experiment. Pupils are also given tasks that equate to those adults have to face in real life. For example, they are given the task of writing to councillors about their environment or have to make decisions about a new road that is planned for their village. These are real tasks and give weight and depth to pupils' work. However, teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' presentation, handwriting, spelling, and speed of mental calculation in mathematics are not high enough. Too often work is accepted which is untidy or misspelled. Pupils are not given a consistent model of high quality work. That is not to say that expectations are not high enough in all classes. Where teaching is consistently very good, in one class in Years 1 and 2 and one in Years 3 and 4, high expectations are the watchword. Pupils are expected to perform to 'Premiership standards' and work that is 'second division' is not accepted. In other classes where teaching is good, teachers link pupils' spoken English to their written work so that spelling rules are reinforced. Teachers insist that words are pronounced correctly. Expectations are not high enough in art and design in the classes in Years 3 to 6; teachers expect too little of pupils in both the quantity and quality of their work.



22. Teachers assess children's and pupils' work well in lessons. A key feature of this work is the high quality of the questions teacher pose. Pupils are frequently asked why they think an event took place, or how they would deal with an imaginary occurrence. In the best lessons, where learning is very focussed, pupils are asked to explain the methods they use to arrive at their answer. In mathematics this happens occasionally but not enough to help pupils understand whether their calculations are accurate or not. In science lessons this happens regularly and results in pupils asking further complex and searching questions. Marking across the school is inconsistent. There are some very good examples of marking when teachers set up discussions with pupils in the comments they write. In other classes marking is superficial and does not help pupils understand what they have to do to move forward. Some teachers do not present pupils with a high quality model for the presentation of their work and do not reinforce this with useful marking to help pupils know that they have to do to improve.
23. The teachers who support pupils with special educational needs are effective. They are patient and give clear and accurate explanations. They give pupils with special educational needs reassurance that they can succeed and promote self-esteem well. Learning support assistants work closely with the teachers and provide effective support, often asking the teacher when they are unsure of their facts or what should be done. They keep records of pupils' progress and join with the teachers and the special educational needs coordinator to discuss pupils' progress and help to plan work. They manage behaviour well, using their initiative as to when to withdraw pupils or when to give help. Adults working with hearing impaired pupils use support equipment effectively. When a pupil returned to the class after the support from the local education authority's specialist teacher, the class teacher gave a quick, clear summary of the task so the pupil could join in at once. The learning support assistant employed to support pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties is very effective, providing a role model and an adult that the pupils, mostly boys, can relate to and trust. This work is improving behaviour. ICT is used to support special educational needs and the small group of eight and nine-year-olds often use computers in their literacy group. However, much of the work in the classroom and in the withdrawal groups, although set at appropriate levels, rarely relates to the pupils' individual targets. Although the targets are generally accurate they are not broken down into small steps. Where the quality of plans for above average pupils is good, these pupils are challenged in lessons.
24. Teachers' subject knowledge has developed well since the last inspection when the school was asked to look at the training needs of teachers. Homework is set regularly although some parents find it difficult to assist their children. Where pupils are supported, good quality work is produced, for example, in the history projects in which pupils use the Internet to carry out research. A key issue for the school to address is to improve the pupils' learning in the important skills of presenting their work carefully and the quick and accurate mental recall of number facts.

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

25. The school provides a broad and relevant curriculum for its pupils. There are schemes of work for all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, the latter based on the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The planning for most subjects is based on guidance from the national Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Teachers have drawn up good quality plans to show how English skills are used in other subjects. For example, in their literacy lessons, pupils write accounts of scientific experiments, describe geographical features and empathise with historical characters. ICT is

particularly well planned and pupils use computers in several subjects. Pupils are encouraged to investigate, predict outcomes and hypothesise in their science and mathematics. Practical planning, making and testing are promoted well throughout the school. As a result, standards in mathematics, science and design and technology are in line with the expected levels in these subjects.

26. Children in the Reception classes are provided with a good curriculum and are given a firm beginning to learning in school. Teachers plan good opportunities to develop children's emotional, social, physical and intellectual needs. Teachers, nursery nurses and learning support assistants work well together to plan work which is exciting and demanding; their expectations of children are consistent and they thoroughly review the learning opportunities offered to ensure that children learn effectively.
27. There is some imbalance in the time pupils in Years 1 to 6 spend on each subject. The school has increased the time spent on English throughout the school in response to the low achievements in reading and writing. Some aspects of history, geography and religious education are taught in literacy lessons. While this is effective in integrating learning it makes the development of skills in these subjects haphazard. These, and most other subjects, are taught on a two-year cycle to accommodate the mixed-aged classes. There is no single plan to identify what each year group should be able to do and pupils' progress is very difficult to track from year to year. Teachers find it difficult to set work that challenges both years in their classes and to ensure that pupils build on previous learning. As a result, standards in most foundation subjects are not as good as they should be.
28. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. All pupils have access to the complete curriculum and when pupils are withdrawn from the lessons to work in small groups the teachers try to ensure that they do not miss the same lesson regularly. The school places a high priority on providing support for these pupils. Pupils with emotional and social or physical difficulties, including hearing impairment, are supported very well, working both in the classroom and, when appropriate, in a quiet place with the non-teaching assistant. In the core subjects of literacy and numeracy the teachers plan appropriate work for pupils with learning difficulties to ensure that they are working at an appropriate level. This happens to some extent in other subjects, and learning support assistants as well as special needs support teachers ensure that pupils make appropriate progress. Adults keep records of pupils' achievements. All pupils with special needs have individual education plans related to their specific learning needs. While the adults are aware of these it is rare that the work set is directly related to these targets. Pupils are not as involved in the setting and review of these targets as they should be and none could remember their targets when asked. Pupils with special educational needs need more opportunities to help plan their learning.
29. The provision for literacy is appropriate throughout the school. Teachers follow the National Literacy Strategy and place appropriate emphasis on speaking and listening, reading and writing. The school provides a range of support groups for pupils who need support to achieve appropriate standards. Some six-year-olds and ten-year-olds work in small groups, as do eleven-year-olds in their "booster" groups. In addition, teachers provide study clubs where pupils can work in their own time. The provision for a range of writing styles is good throughout the school. While the content of the pupils' work is interesting, there is not enough emphasis on the teaching and consolidation of basic skills such as grammar, handwriting and punctuation within pupils written work. More focus on these aspects of literacy rather than extending the

time for English to produce more writing of indifferent quality, would release more time for the foundation subjects.

30. Numeracy is promoted appropriately throughout the school and the use and application of mathematics is well planned. Pupils are encouraged to find strategies for solving problems. However, there is not enough emphasis on learning multiplication tables and quick recall of other number facts. This makes their problem solving slower and more difficult than it should be.
31. The provision for personal, social and health education is good. All classes have time set aside for this aspect of the curriculum. The school places much emphasis on healthy eating and has been awarded "healthy school" status. Pupils throughout the school are taught the importance of keeping healthy. Sex education is part of the curriculum but, although there is a policy, drugs education is more informal. Teachers within each two-year unit plan aspects of personal and social education to be discussed in the lessons while responding to any unplanned issues such as incidences of inappropriate behaviour or personal problems. Planned work is often linked to the work pupils are covering in other subjects. The school is developing a scheme of work for personal, social and health education that matches the current practice.
32. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities to support the curriculum. Each class has an educational visit each term and junior pupils have a residential visit each year. Clubs include football, netball, badminton and athletics, music clubs, computer, study support and homework. In addition, there are very good links with the community. Eleven-year-old pupils visit the local technical college to cook and to learn about food technology. A local firm supports pupils as part of the "Right to Read" project. Professional performers give regular concerts that include drama, music and dance. The school nurse supports sex education for the older pupils. Drama groups have provided workshops about drug abuse. A toy library is based on the premises, instigated by the school. The local library and swimming pool are used frequently. There are good links with other primary schools, senior schools and local playgroups. Teachers visit the playgroups and they are invited to school performances. There are sporting links with other primary schools and teachers work together to discuss the curriculum and standards. The secondary school provides support for ICT and lends equipment to support the curriculum. These opportunities make a significant contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.
33. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is a strength of the school. Cultural development is satisfactory with many strengths but spiritual understanding needs to be more effectively promoted.
34. The school works hard to promote pupils' social development and their understanding of moral responsibility. Much of this is delivered through its well-considered policy for personal, social and health education. Pupils are encouraged to be open and tolerant of one another. They are taught the importance of working constructively together and sharing. Examples of this type of working are seen in most lessons where pupils have to operate in pairs and groups. Their behaviour during these sessions is nearly always good; they have lively discussions, listen to each other's points of view and, more importantly, respect each other's points of view. They are taught to recognise and share each other's strengths and there were many examples of pupils encouraging others who were sometimes not sure and were reluctant to answer. This valuing of other people is fostered, for example in the personal, social and health sessions when

the whole class focuses on the particular strengths of an individual pupil or, for example, how pupils value friendship.

35. The school provides a very good range of activities out of school to support social and cultural development and gain a sense of civic responsibility. Pupils learn about, and develop, a sense of responsibility when they go on residential trips. These numerous outings and activities further enhance and promote pupils' understanding of what it is to live in a community in a responsible way. In each of these instances teachers emphasise right and wrong behaviour in different circumstances, thereby making pupils more aware of moral issues. Teachers themselves offer good role models in the way they interact and treat children. Sometimes, in very demanding times, they diffuse a situation with good humour and common sense.
36. The school ensures that pupils are engaged in numerous activities, which promote and build their cultural understanding. The school participates actively in town festivals and celebrations, competed and won the Millennium Project, and every year the school puts on a major production in which every pupil participates. The school is planning to develop an awareness of other cultures, for example by inviting an Indian dance group and visiting other places of worship. The school needs to consider more actively how to expand pupils' appreciation of other cultures by introducing them to materials, music and artefacts of high quality and ensure any instructions they receive are accurate. Some of the displayed work on costumes is incorrectly labelled.
37. The school's aims include important elements for promoting spiritual awareness. Pupils are encouraged to explore values and beliefs held by other people. In the assemblies observed not enough opportunities were provided for pupils to reflect quietly on the themes introduced. There were missed opportunities to set the appropriate atmosphere for thought and collective worship and for selecting music that would set the right tone. During lessons, some opportunities were missed to encourage pupils' awareness of different colours and shapes of snails or the birth of a lamb. However, some very touching and sensitive Haiku poems written by Years 3 and 4 lifted the spirits of all concerned.
38. The provision for ICT throughout the school and science for the infants, weaknesses at the time of the last inspection, has been improved and ICT provision is now good. The impact of the two-year cycle of curriculum planning on standards in the foundation subjects is an area of concern for the school to address.

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

39. The welfare of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is a fundamental priority for the school. The procedures the school has established to safeguard pupils' day-to-day well-being are good and the commitment and hard work of all the staff and governors ensure a high quality of pastoral care. The school has good procedures to track pupils' progress and the educational support provided for them is satisfactory. The information collected has been used well to group pupils according to their ability but has not yet been refined to plan work for individuals, or set sufficiently sharp targets for each pupil. The good quality of care has been maintained well since the last inspection.
40. The children in the Foundation Stage are cared for by kind and caring adults who clearly understand the particular needs of each child and plan tasks accordingly. There are good induction procedures for both children and parents and these young children settle quickly and happily into the routines of the classroom. Good work and sociable

behaviour are praised by staff and children quickly learn what is expected of them and respond well. The children have to use the infant toilets which requires them to leave their classrooms and make their way to and from the toilets sometimes without direct supervision. Although they do this sensibly, it is not always possible to ensure that a good level of cleanliness and hygiene is maintained.

41. The school has good procedures to regulate health and safety. Regular inspections of the premises are carried out and the results reported to the governing body. The requirement to carry out annual formal risk assessment is not yet being met, although the school is a clean and safe environment for the pupils. First aid provision is good. However, accidents are not always recorded in a timely manner. Fire drill is carried out regularly, and evacuation is achieved quickly. Pupils do not have easy access to drinking water throughout the day. Jugs of water are provided in classrooms, but in some instances the hygiene arrangements are unsatisfactory. The school has a policy for child protection which is supplemented by a copy of the local guidelines. The headteacher has the primary responsibility and has recently attended training. All staff have a high awareness of this issue and understand their responsibilities for this aspect of care. Unfortunately, the school is not well supported by external agencies in its commitment to protect those pupils whom they consider to be at risk of potentially serious harm. Class teachers use opportunities that arise in lessons to stress elements of personal safety and the safe use of resources. Pupils are given basic information about sex and drugs appropriate for their age.
42. The school's systems for monitoring pupils' personal development are good and are beginning to have a positive impact on the support that the school provides for each individual in the development of their personal and social skills. Although the school has very good systems for following-up absence and the level of unauthorised absence is lower than it was at the time of the last inspection, there has been no significant improvement in the overall level of attendance. The school receives very good external support to improve the attendance of those pupils with particularly poor records. Pupils receive certificates for good or improved attendance, and parents are regularly reminded of the importance of sending their children to school regularly and on time. Many parents take their responsibilities seriously and advise the school promptly of reasons for absence. Many, however, do not and, even though the office staff make extensive efforts to speak to parents or carers on the first day of absence, this is not always possible. Pupils who arrive late in the mornings are required to report to the office, a record is kept and parents are contacted if their child is persistently late without a suitable explanation. Morning and afternoon registration procedures comply with legal requirements.
43. The school's procedures for recording and dealing with instances of unacceptable behaviour, bullying or racism are good. Parents are involved at an early stage and most appreciate and fully support the efforts of the school to modify the behaviour of their children. The school has recently appointed a member of staff with a specific responsibility for those pupils who are unable to control their behaviour and disrupt their classes. The pupils themselves comment that this is beginning to have a positive impact in the classroom and they are able to learn more. The school and playground rules are clearly displayed and pupils value the praise and rewards they receive for good behaviour. Assemblies and personal, social and health education lessons teach pupils essential social skills and demonstrate the benefits that sensible and friendly behaviour can bring to each individual as well as to the whole school community. A number of new lunchtime supervisors have recently joined the school and they are shortly to attend training in playground games to turn the mid-day break into a purposeful and enjoyable interlude. Despite the school's good work, however, there

remains a significant minority of pupils who have little regard for the school rules and the rights of others and regularly disrupt school life. The increased number of permanent and fixed term exclusions reflects the determination of the headteacher and governors to control and eradicate this anti-social behaviour. Because of the good relationships that the pupils have with their teachers, they know that their teacher will try to help them if they are unhappy. This help, however, does not always result in a long-term resolution of the problem.

44. The school has good procedures for identifying how well the pupils achieve in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' results in the national and other recognised tests are recorded each year. In addition, teachers keep records of pupils' progress in reading, spelling and mathematics throughout each year. Teachers keep ongoing records of children's progress in the reception classes as they work towards the Early Learning Goals. All aspects of their curriculum are assessed including their personal and social development. These records ensure teachers can see how much progress pupils have made as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs have their progress monitored by the adults who work with them. They are set targets as part of their individual education plans and to identify any concerns. These plans are of satisfactory quality; the plans for higher attaining pupils are good, providing far more specific details about targets and support. Teachers are provided with clear guidance for identifying and assessing those pupils who may need additional help. Pupils with specific difficulties have appropriate tests to identify the best ways to help them. The school is diligent in recommending pupils for assessment by outside agencies such as the educational psychologist, often providing support based on assessments out of the school budget while waiting for external assessment and support to be provided.
45. Teachers use the assessments for English and mathematics to set targets for achievement at the age of eleven. Some pupils are sorted into ability groups for English and mathematics lessons based on their performance in these standardised tests. In this way the teachers can plan work at an appropriate level. An electronic tracking system, recently introduced, is proving effective in tracking the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. The school analyses the achievements of different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls and those with summer birthdays. The teachers are beginning to track individual pupils' over time and have developed a policy to support more able pupils as well as those whose progress is slow. Teachers set targets for individual pupils based on these assessments but they have not been in place long enough to make a significant impact on progress. Additionally, the targets are reviewed once each term rather than when targets may have been achieved, this too limits progress. Inexperienced teachers find it difficult to set targets based on short, achievable steps. Teachers use assessments to identify the pupils who need extra help before the national tests and those having additional literacy support and the teachers responsible for the coordination of assessment analyse pupils' answers to the questions in the tests and to look for trends. For example, as results in writing have been low, the school has focused on writing to help raise standards. The assessment managers have produced a list of strategies for improving writing in different parts of the school. Teachers look at pupils' work to discuss the levels achieved identifying what else needs to be taught. The assessments have shown that girls' achievements are higher than those of the boys in the juniors and the school is researching approaches to this issue. This is a good use of assessment information. As there are no ways of measuring pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in the foundation subjects, teachers are unable to adjust the curriculum in response to pupils' needs. The use of assessment to plan the curriculum is satisfactory overall.

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

46. The governors, headteacher and staff are fully committed to involving and supporting parents in the care and education of their children. Many opportunities are provided for parents to learn about the work of the school and to contribute to their children's learning and parents are welcome in the school. However, because there is a significant minority of parents who do not fulfil their responsibilities under the home/school agreement, the effectiveness of the partnership with parents and the impact that they have on the life and work of the school, whilst satisfactory, is not as good as it was at the time of the last inspection.
47. The majority of those parents who expressed a view prior to and during the inspection have positive views about most aspects of the school's work. They value the care that the school takes of their children and the educational opportunities provided. They feel welcome in the school and find the headteacher and staff are easy to talk to. The inspection team supports these positive views. There are also several parents who expressed serious concerns about the behaviour of some of the children and the negative impact this has on their own children's experience of school. Inspection evidence shows that there have been serious instances of bullying and unacceptable behaviour that has disrupted the school community and parents are right to be concerned. However, the steps that the school has taken to improve this situation are beginning to have an effect. A number of parents are unhappy with the homework that their children are asked to do. For some there is not enough, for others too much. However, inspection evidence shows that setting homework is satisfactory.
48. The information provided for parents about the school is satisfactory overall. The prospectus contains useful and practical information about the school and the governors' annual report is enlivened by interesting accounts of visits written by the children. Both of these are good quality helpful publications. Parents of children joining the reception classes have the benefit of a home visit as well as time spent in school to familiarise themselves and their children with the classroom and their teachers. There are opportunities for formal and informal consultation with staff about their children's progress each year, although not all take advantage of these opportunities and this limits the knowledge they have about their children's progress. The format of the children's annual reports does not cover all subjects of the National Curriculum separately and this is unsatisfactory. The quality of the text is variable from class to class and, although there is some reference to specific weaknesses, few explicit targets for improvement are identified. Individual test results are included with each report, together with an explanation of what they mean; this gives parents a clear idea of how well their children are doing. Regular newsletters and letters are sent out, and from time to time parents are invited to presentations about what their children are learning. Brief details of the work being done in each year group are sent to parents each term and they are welcome to speak to the headteacher or other members of staff if they need more information. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are invited to be involved in the decision making process and are kept informed about the needs of their children, although not all choose to take an active part.
49. The level of parental involvement in the day-to-day life of the school is satisfactory. The 'Friends' organisation, run by a few enthusiastic and hard working parents and teachers, makes a good contribution to the social life of the school as well as raising funds. Some of the money raised has been used to improve the playground and also to help towards the costs of school trips. A few parents contribute to school life by accompanying the children to swimming, helping on trips and coaching the football team. Many parents are willing to help their children at home with reading and spelling,

but the inconsistency and lack of guidance about homework limits the amount of help they can give. A significant number of parents, however, lack either the time, commitment or ability to help and this has an impact on their children's acquisition of basic skills. The school involves parents at a very early stage in any problems associated with attendance or behaviour. Whilst many parents actively support the school's measures to help their children, there are a few who do not. The contribution of the parent governors to the decision making process of the school is very good. Parents are informed about the work of the governors and invited to comment at the annual meeting. The headteacher is always available to listen to parental concerns and many parents comment on how supportive she is of any worries they may have, even when there is no easy solution. Parents have, in the past, been consulted formally about aspects of school life but the very low response rate indicates that the informal approach is more productive.

50. Parents are kept informed about the progress of their children at parents' evenings and feel confident approaching the school to discuss any problems. Many are very impressed with the support the school gives, often offering advice as well as giving information about their child's progress. The school works very hard to develop these informal links with parents. Parents are invited to attend the annual reviews of the pupils with statements of special educational needs and the school meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. However, parents are not involved in the drawing up or reviewing of the individual education plans for their children. Although the individual education plans are shared with those who choose to attend parents' evenings, many are not aware of their child's targets.

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

51. The headteacher inspires and motivates staff and governors. She combines a high level of intellectual analysis with a very strong commitment to teamwork. She shows a great deal of empathy with staff members, pupils, parents and governors. She understands how to encourage staff members to work hard on the school's behalf but is careful to ensure they are well supported and valued. She sets an excellent example for the welfare of pupils. Determined that all pupils should receive the best of care and attention, the headteacher and governors have sought to find resources to ensure that pupils receive very high levels of pastoral care, whatever their needs. This has been successful although the support of external agencies has, at times, not kept pace with the school's needs. The school's work in meeting the social needs of pupils is excellent and, while staff and governors have focussed sharply on improving standards, there has not been a sense of urgency in meeting academic targets. The headteacher is not afraid to take unpopular decisions but at the same time is very keen to ensure that all members of staff and governors receive high quality information in order to support decisions.
52. When the school needed to provide assistance to the headteacher, she researched the options and the school has been trialling the use of three assistant headteachers rather than one deputy. This is being monitored carefully and is, on initial examination, proving to be a cost effective measure. Whilst the team has not been working long enough to make a significant impact on the school's academic work, they are an active and cohesive unit who combine complementary skills. All four of the senior managers are committed to the school's pupils and work hard to provide a settled working atmosphere in the school. The assistant headteachers act as team leaders and provide a good basis for the professional development of staff.



53. The temporary special educational needs co-ordinator manages this aspect of the school's work well. She has made a point of attending a range of in-service training to support her role and ensures that other adults in the team have appropriate training. She works extremely hard to ensure that pupils have the support they need and is diligent in pursuing external assessments and support for the pupils. This process is slow and the school provides extra funding to provide support for pupils with special educational needs, which has an impact on the money available for other resources.
54. The school's development plan is a very good management tool. It sets targets for the improvement of resources, the quality of provision and how the school must work to improve standards. Pupils' performance has improved since last year but as the plan sets out, certain skills in English and mathematics must be a sharp area of focus. The work of the governors is very good. They have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They visit lessons, report on their findings and keep a careful eye on the school's work. They pick up well on issues and plan carefully for the future. Governors' work in this area is exemplary. The school has identified all of the issues marked by the inspection team for improvement and the plan details how these issues will be met.
55. Recently the school has experienced some difficulties in recruiting teaching staff. Temporary and supply members of staff have been appointed due to illness and maternity leave. However, the headteacher has developed a good understanding of the qualities of her staff and new members of staff are well supported. The proportion of good teaching has improved since the last inspection even though many of the present members of staff are fairly inexperienced and relatively new to the school. However, the staff share a very strong commitment to the school's success. They understand their professional areas of strength and receive good quality support and feedback on their work.
56. Financial planning is very good. Funds are used very carefully and the headteacher and governors are aware that very detailed financial planning needs to be undertaken to manage the complicated budget situation now facing the school. The school has used special educational needs funding extensively and appropriately over the past few years. At times pupils have been maintained in school by using extensive support. The headteacher and governors are aware that a different balance will have to be struck given the school's falling roll and subsequent fall in income. Well-laid plans are already made to manage this situation. The school's first priority is to provide pupils with as many adults as possible to help them learn. This means that in some curriculum areas, geography and history for example, resources are barely adequate. However, the school has been successful in recent projects. The employment of a learning support assistant for pupils' who experience behavioural difficulties has been of benefit and pupils recognise the help and support they receive. The school's use of ICT is very good and very good use has been made of funds to support pupils' learning in this area. The new ICT suite is of good quality and very good relationships with a local secondary school enhance the provision in this subject.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

57. In order to raise standards and the quality of education the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- 1) \*Improve the consistency of learning some key skills in English and mathematics by:
  - ensuring all teachers set consistently high standards for the quality of work
  - ensuring that pupils' work is marked to the same consistently high standard
  - encouraging pupils to produce their best work at all times
  - increasing the pace of learning basic number facts so that pupils have more to learn more regularly
  - reviewing pupils' targets frequently to build on areas for improvement  
(Paragraphs 6, 21, 22, 29, 30, 45, 75, 79, 82, 88, 93-95 )
  
- 2) \*Improve the standards in art and design, geography, history, music and religious education by:
  - evaluating the impact of the two-year cycle of curriculum planning
  - developing a whole school plan to show progression in knowledge, skills and understanding for each year group
  - ensuring that specific targets are planned for each year group of pupils.  
(Paragraphs 10, 27, 104, 113-120, 126-130, 136-143)

**\* Issues already identified by governors and staff and in the process of development.**

Minor issues which the governors may wish to include in their action plan:

- Accelerate the school's efforts to improve the rate of attendance (11, 16)
- Continue the school's work to prepare pupils for life in an ethnically diverse society (36)
- Improve the quality of pupils' annual reports (48)
- Enhance the involvement of pupils with SEN in planning their targets and ensure that teachers' planning works more consistently towards them (8, 28)
- Improve the provision for pupils' spiritual development (33, 37)
- Carry out an annual risk assessment (41)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	62
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	2	8	30	22	0	0	0
Percentage	3%	13%	48%	35%	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. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR-Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		278
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		80

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR-Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		94

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

%
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#### Unauthorised absence

%
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School data	6.9
National comparative data	5.6

School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	26	16	42

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	16	22
	Girls	8	11	12
	Total	19	27	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	45 (74)	64 (79)	81 (81)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	20	22
	Girls	9	12	15
	Total	23	32	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	55 (76)	76 (76)	88 (83)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	24	35	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	7	16
	Girls	21	18	26
	Total	28	25	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	47 (55)	42 (68)	71 (90)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	N/A (47)	N/A (63)	N/A (81)
	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	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	274
Any other minority ethnic group	3

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.7
Average class size	25.3

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

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	286

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	19	
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	617,620
Total expenditure	609,051
Expenditure per pupil	1,965
Balance brought forward from previous year	12,498
Balance carried forward to next year	21,067

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years (FTE)	5.1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years (FTE)	5.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	278
Number of questionnaires returned	64

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	30	8	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	47	3	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	47	17	13	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	44	22	5	0
The teaching is good.	63	25	8	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	31	13	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	22	3	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	31	8	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	47	34	8	9	2
The school is well led and managed.	53	33	3	11	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	42	8	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	44	6	6	9

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

58. The reception classes give children a good start and most are likely to reach the early learning goals in all areas of learning by the end of the school year. Almost a third of children will have exceeded the goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematics and personal and social development. Children entering the school have a range of prior attainment though generally it is below that found in most other schools and a large proportion have had no access to pre-school education. A significant proportion of the children have language skills that are not as advanced as would usually be found in four-year-olds. The good progress children make in the reception classes is the result of the effective planning and organisation of the curriculum, high expectations and the good quality teaching from teachers, nursery nurses and learning support assistants in all areas of learning. Overall, the quality of provision is better than it was at the time of the last inspection and consequently children's achievements have improved.
59. The curriculum, which is securely based on the national guidance for the Foundation Stage, provides well for children's emotional, social, physical and intellectual needs. Good use is made of the spacious accommodation for the reception classes but the two classrooms allocated for reception use are some distance apart. Only very good organisation ensures that the resources are used efficiently and that activities proceed smoothly.
60. Children spend a year in the reception classes and within the first half term are assessed. Information from this base line assessment is well used to plan a future programme for the children. It also serves to identify any children who might have special educational needs. Good day-to-day assessment procedures are used well to evaluate and keep track of the progress children are making. They also provide the starting point to enable staff to plan what children are going to learn next. Planning is good and the range and quality of activities are well designed to engage and inspire young learners. Staff are often well deployed; the good staffing ratio in the reception classes adds to the effectiveness of the provision. The reception team demonstrates a high degree of collaboration and a strong sense of purpose and these qualities are significant factors in the quality of education provided and the good achievements of the pupils.

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

61. The good relationships staff establish with the children underpin the good progress children make in this area of learning. By the end of the reception year, the majority of children are likely to have reached the expected targets and some children will exceed those targets. Staff treat children with consideration and respect and, in consequence, children learn to value themselves and others. They are prepared to take turns and to share. They understand that during a shared news time, one talks whilst others listen. Good manners are well encouraged and children respond very positively. Good behaviour is the norm and during inspection week no poor behaviour was observed. Staff know how to get the best out of the children; humour is often shared and pupils respond in the most positive manner.



62. A sense of independence is well developed in most children. They approach tasks with confidence and persist at them, even when not directly supervised by an adult. One boy busily sorting a collection of different types of pasta explained what he was doing and industriously continued. Most help themselves to equipment, aprons and materials. They put on and take off coats with little help and show a good degree of independence in their personal hygiene. Children are encouraged to take on responsibility. For example, at the morning snack time they take it in turns to serve the drinks and fruit and do so carefully. Many like to help tidy up after snack time by making sure, for example, that all straws are placed in the bin. They clear away after lessons and make sure equipment is returned to its rightful place.
63. They are learning to co-operate well. This was particularly evident during games with a parachute when the collaboration of everyone was needed to lift or lower the parachute. As well as providing excellent opportunities for developing social skills, the parachute game provided a rich source of fun and enjoyment for children and adults. However, the hilarity the games often provoked never tipped into silliness or poor behaviour. A very positive attitude to learning is being well nurtured by the rich and stimulating learning environment and inspiration and support given by staff. Children are well motivated and eager and this has a very positive effect on their learning in all other areas.

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

64. By the end of the reception year, the majority of children will have reached the set learning goals and many are likely to be working within Level 1 of the National Curriculum. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good. Children's speaking and listening skills are being very well nurtured, both in informal interactions and also in very well structured news sessions. Sensitively led news sessions in both reception classes were seen during inspection week and these gave all children very good opportunities to talk to a small group, supported by an adult. The vast majority of children listened well to one another and most expressed themselves in a few sentences. Some, using a good range of vocabulary, talked at some length and one or two, brimming with eagerness, added a commentary to everyone else's news. A minority expressed their ideas in a few phrases, though, after some encouragement, expand a little. The good opportunities for speaking and listening in both reception rooms include the use of tape recorders and headsets. Good use is made of children's senses to stimulate and enrich their language - when handling a plate of cold spaghetti, they thought up words such as wet, slimy and squashy. When observing samples of decaying foods, they are encouraged to talk to their neighbours about changes they notice.
65. Early reading skills are being well encouraged, for example by visits to the nearby local library. Poetry is very effectively used to promote enjoyment of literature, knowledge of language and awareness of features such as rhyme. Many children identify poems they know that rhyme and can think of words that rhyme with 'jelly'. They listen attentively to an unfamiliar poem and their good listening skills help them to identify rhyming words in alternate lines. In a lesson based on the poem 'Spaghetti' many show good skills of anticipation, joining in when their teacher read this poem to them for only the second time. All delight in joining in a favourite familiar poem 'Sand', thoroughly relishing some of their favourite lines. They make good progress in reading and enjoy books, often sitting in the reading corner on their own or with an adult. The vast majority understand that text carries meaning and handle books appropriately. Most are beginning to recognise some words by sight and some are confident early readers. A few are ready for more challenging books. The classroom is rich with signs and notices and teachers make good use of these to heighten children's awareness of text and to give them

confidence as readers. One good example of this, typical of the high expectations staff have of the children, is that at the start of a class discussion, teachers ask children if they recognise any of the words in the lesson aims, written on a white board. This generally elicits a positive response as one, two or more words are recognised.

66. Writing activities are well planned to arise out of other language work. For instance, during inspection week children wrote news and made up a poem about food using 'Spaghetti' as an inspiration. During literacy lessons, teachers effectively model writing. Staff have devised helpful strategies to encourage children to become confident and effective writers. These are reinforced by staff before writing sessions and have become part of established practice. Children are encouraged to use their knowledge of letters and, particularly, of initial and final consonants when writing. Their teacher reminds them; "Remember, if you can't hear the sound in the middle, put a line." As a result, children are gaining an appropriate degree of accuracy and independence in their writing and make good progress. Most write short sentences independently and these have accurate or phonetically plausible spellings. Other pupils are beginning to write sentences with recognisable words. Since the spring term more emphasis has been placed on independent writing. A scrutiny of past work reveals imaginative and engaging opportunities for writing in little booklets. There are sound opportunities for reading and writing birthday greetings in the role-play corner.

### **Mathematical development**

67. Most children are likely to reach the early learning goals by the end of the reception year and some children will exceed these goals. This is because of the teachers' high expectations and the very good range of mathematical activities and experiences that are planned to build up children's mathematical skills and confidence. Children enjoy the social aspects of mathematics, singing number rhymes and songs together and counting, and join in enthusiastically.
68. Many children are able to say number names in order to fifty and are gaining a good understanding of simple calculations. For instance, during one activity a girl knew that four added to three equalled seven. In another activity, a child placed twelve items on a grid of twenty squares and said she would need "eight more to make twenty". Many are beginning to recognise pattern in number, threading patterns of three yellow or green beads to make a necklace. Most use the language of comparison, for instance by talking about heavier and lighter objects, and a few have begun to tell the time. They sample different types of bread and create a pictogram to record their favourites. Children's progress is well noted and new challenges are appropriately set to extend their skills, knowledge and understanding.
69. Teachers have good insight into what makes learning effective. They plan activities which, because they are securely based in everyday experiences, make learning relevant, purposeful and highly effective. One good example of this was a well-planned shopping activity. Small groups of children supported by a para-teacher counted the items contained in their shopping baskets then wrote down the corresponding numeral. Children's counting skills and their ability to match numerals to sets of objects were well reinforced. Another example is the opportunity provided in the role play area for consolidating and extending skills in matching one item with another. Here children laid the table for a birthday party, setting out a plate, cup and party hat for each child.

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

70. Because of good teaching and learning in this area, children achieve well and the majority are likely to reach the expected goals. Their scientific skills are being well developed. They make good predictions about what might happen to foodstuffs as they deteriorate and grow old. "The tomato might get squishy," says one and another adds; "The bread might get green spots". Reminding them not to touch the samples, their teacher encouraged them to look carefully and to observe changes. In a later lesson, they learn to use magnifiers to observe the different textures of various types of bread. During inspection week, food was a key theme in many activities and children observed how food changed when cooked. They noted that pasta was "hard and brittle" prior to cooking but soft afterwards. Their scientific skills are further enhanced as they care for and observe the growth of runner beans plants.
71. Children have a sound sense of place, they know they come from Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire, and this is well extended when they taste bread from different parts of the world. Their teacher helped them recall that pasta often came from Italy and then encouraged them to say their Italian word 'tagliatelli' which rolled off their tongues with obvious relish. Good provision is made to give children a sense of time through a display of wedding photographs taken recently and over the past hundred years. ICT is appropriately used and good use is made of a remote controlled programmable toy. Children use a range of construction toys which helps foster their designing skills.

### **Physical development**

72. There are sound and sometimes good opportunities for pupils to develop physical skills and consequently they achieve well and are likely to reach most of the expected goals by the time they leave the reception classes. In the safe and secure outdoor learning area children have room to move freely and with confidence. There are few collisions. When working in the school hall, they move with care, marching around the room in a curved line "like spaghetti". They co-operate in a well-controlled manner manoeuvring a large parachute very effectively to keep a beanbag moving from segment to segment. They create waves with the parachute, then hold it still. All this takes a good level of control, co-operation and concentration. When working out of doors, children steer and pedal their tricycles with skill but their control over small equipment such as balls and bats is less well developed. Children's coordination of hands and eyes is appropriately developed. They learn to cut with increasing skill and accuracy and make threaded necklaces with dexterity. Their pencil skills are appropriately developed and they make good attempts at using chopsticks to eat spaghetti. At snack time, they are learning the importance of fruit as part of a healthy diet.

### **Creative development**

73. Children reach the expected targets in all areas of their creative development and in music they are likely to exceed these targets. Children enjoy joining in singing activities. In their music session, led by their nursery nurse, they clap out the rhythms of the names of their favourite foods and then use percussion instruments to play the rhythms of their names. Almost all the children are able to do this. Helped by the teacher and the nursery nurse, they perform a simple two-part accompaniment to a song. All the children use their instruments correctly and in a well-controlled manner. Good habits have been well inculcated here and as a result children achieve well. When exploring media, children learn to use shape colour appropriately and to use texture well. They make interesting textured grids some of which include finely textured segments made from seeds and grains.

74. There are good opportunities for role-play in the home area. "Party Time" is signposted outside the playhouse and some children collaborate well, discussing arrangements for the birthday preparations and join in singing 'Happy Birthday'. Others enjoy less interaction in their imaginative play; nevertheless work happily beside one another engaged in their own world. In the outdoor classroom two small permanently fixed play houses provide potentially good sites for creative role play which were not used as well as they might have been during inspection week. Indoors, there are sound opportunities for small world play which children often respond to with sustained involvement and concentration.

## ENGLISH

75. Standards in English have improved since the summer of 2001 when Year 6's results in the national tests were well below the national average. Standards in Year 2 were low. Last year a well above average proportion of pupils in Years 2 and 6 had special educational needs, which had a major impact on the standards achieved. This year, standards are below average for both Year 2 and 6. Standards in speaking and listening are similar to other pupils nationally because teachers are diligent in promoting discussion in the lessons. The content of pupils' written work has improved but the presentation, including handwriting, spelling and punctuation, is not as good as it should be. In the past boys' achievements have been lower than those of the girls. This difference was significantly more than in other schools over the last two years. Three-quarters of the current top set in Year 6 are girls, but there are more girls than boys this year. Inspectors could find no differences between the standards achieved by boys and girls. The standards achieved by the Year 6 pupils in the national tests for the end of 1998 were well below the national average although pupils' achievements were found to be at an appropriate level in October 1997, the time of the last inspection.
76. Children are encouraged to participate in discussion and role-play and to listen attentively in the reception classes. By the time they join the infant classes most are confident and communicate appropriately with other pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to discuss their work in pairs or groups as well as responding to questions. Most teachers ensure that their questions require more than a one-word answer, so pupils use phrases and complete sentences to reply. This process continues throughout the school so that the oldest pupils are beginning to develop the techniques required to ask pertinent questions to extract information. During the inspection, for example, ten and eleven-year-olds produced appropriate questions to ask a child who is new to Melton Mowbray. The 'child' [played by the teachers] replied with "yes", "no" or "don't know" until the class were forced to make their questioning more searching. Pupils are taught technical vocabulary to support both English and other subjects but few teachers insist on its use. As a result, few pupils can define words related to language such as 'metaphor' and 'homonym'. Pupils' general vocabulary is often interesting and many express their thoughts and feelings well. The emphasis the school has placed on writing styles and account and story writing has helped pupils to use descriptive words in their everyday speech. By eleven, pupils achieve appropriate standards in speaking and listening. Pupils with hearing impairments make good progress because their teachers and the learning support assistants are careful to show them how to shape their sounds. Teachers work hard to include pupils who find listening difficult in class discussions and value their contributions.
77. Standards in reading are below what they should be throughout the school. Teachers ensure that the spelling patterns, linked to reading, are taught at appropriate times and follow the National Literacy Strategy. Younger pupils are encouraged to use their knowledge of letter sounds to attempt new words. Pupils who need extra help work in

small groups with support teachers and learning support assistants. They follow a programme for reading and the lessons are taught well. Reading is a regular feature of each day and younger pupils are keen to attempt new words but as pupils get older some become reluctant. Some pupils do not have the skills to read unfamiliar words by breaking them down into individual sounds. Some also have difficulty in guessing the word from the meaning of the text. Older pupils of all abilities select their own reading books that are not always at an appropriate level. As a result, the less able oldest pupils do not enjoy reading as they struggle with their books. Pupils' knowledge of different authors is appropriate and they have sound library skills. There is plenty of reading going on in school.

78. The school has identified the need to improve pupils' writing throughout the school and teachers provide plenty of opportunities for their pupils to write. Pupils write in different styles such as poetry and factual text, letters, stories and descriptions. Often the content is based on the work in other subjects. There are accounts of experiments, for example, and the life of people in Ancient Egypt. Seven-year-olds have made lists and written accounts about the physical landscape of Melton Mowbray and the genealogy of Elizabeth I. Eight and nine-year-olds study poetry. Some pupils showed real empathy with a tiger, using lines such as "Conniving and quick". Older pupils in the "booster" group, working towards achieving the expected level in the imminent national tests, used good vocabulary with an accurate feel for atmosphere as they completed an exciting beginning to a story. ICT is used very effectively to support literacy. Pupils use computers to work with spelling and reading programmes as well as typing and printing their stories, accounts, lists and poems. This gives them a pride in their work as well as improving their ICT skills. All these measures are having a positive impact on the standards of writing throughout the school.
79. While pupils generally make sound progress throughout the school, in some classes there is not enough attention paid to the basics of English such as the presentation of the work, handwriting, spelling and punctuation. There is more focus on teaching these skills for the youngest pupils, who generally make good progress. In the classes for older pupils, teachers concentrate on encouraging pupils to use their English skills in practical situations. For example, by writing letters or brochures. At times marking does not draw enough attention to the skills of handwriting and spelling although there are always appropriate comments about the content. Although it is important to promote pupils' self-esteem with praise, some pupils' books contain too much praise for work that does not merit high regard. As a result, these pupils do not have a clear idea of the standards they should be achieving and do not strive to produce their best work. Recently pupils have been given targets for writing. These targets are too new for them to be making a significant impact on attainment but some teachers do not refer to them in the comments they write in pupils' books. In classes where targets are written on bookmarks, pupils know what they have to achieve at a glance. These targets are reviewed regularly but at a given date rather than moving pupils on earlier if they are achieved before the review date. As a result, the standards of presentation are not improving quickly enough.
80. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory overall although in about half the lessons seen during the inspection the teaching was good with one very good and one excellent lesson. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. However, there is not enough consistency in the quality of the marking and the teachers' expectations of the quality of how work is presented is generally not high enough.
81. Teachers across the school have appropriate skills in the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. A strength of the teaching overall is the way the teachers

encourage their pupils to discuss their work with each other. Pupils respond well and the level of discussion is mature and almost always related to the task. In a very good lesson for the eight and nine-year-olds, for example, pupils used their “response friend” to evaluate their planning for an advertisement, concentrating on the effectiveness of the alliteration. As a result, phrases such as “tasty tangy tingle” enlivened the posters. The best teachers encourage their pupils to draw on their bank of knowledge of the structure of the English language and apply it to the work they are doing. They use technical terms, emphasise the need for accuracy and the use of dictionaries and applaud the use of descriptive words and phrases. In an excellent lesson, the mutual respect the pupils and teacher had for each other, the teacher’s high expectations of her pupils’ achievements and accurate match of work to pupils’ abilities enabled the class to achieve what she had planned to the full. By the end of the lesson pupils found information from non-fiction texts, knew how to extend a sentence and understand the difference between a picture, an illustration and a diagram, as well as reinforcing spelling rules. In some lessons, however, teachers do not plan the work accurately enough to challenge all the pupils in their class because of the wide range of age and ability in some lessons. Two age groups and the full range of abilities work together for most lessons in the older classes. The eight and nine-year-olds also have mixed ages, although the pupils with special educational needs work together with their support teacher. The five to seven-year-olds, however, work mostly in single aged groups and the mixed age class contains pupils of similar ability. The teaching for these pupils is never less than good and it is here that the excellent teaching takes place.

82. Where teaching is less effective, teachers miss opportunities to reinforce literacy skills that have already been taught. Some teachers do not plan effectively for the different ages and abilities in their classes. Some parts of the lesson are slow and there is no urgency for pupils to complete work. The lack of rigour in some lessons and in the comments in books restricts the rate of pupils’ progress over time.
83. Pupils with special educational needs receive plenty of good quality support. The support teachers are very effective in promoting their pupils’ self-esteem and giving them confidence. They have very good strategies for encouraging the pupils to discuss their work and expect them to think for themselves. In some cases, however, there is an over use of praise which, while boosting self-esteem devalues effort so that the pupils lack the incentive to produce their best work. This applies especially to written work and does little to improve pupils’ secretarial skills. Pupils with physical difficulties, for example, hearing impaired pupils, have good support from the school staff and the support teacher from the Local Education Authority. There is good liaison between all staff supporting pupils with special educational needs. Pupils’ targets in the individual education plans are generally appropriate but some are not small enough to enable pupils to achieve them swiftly. The support the pupils receive in their literacy lessons is planned at suitable levels but rarely relates to their targets.
84. Learning support assistants generally give good, and sometimes very good, support but are not always deployed as effectively as they could be in the classroom, for example, working with groups that need little support. The most effective learning support assistants work closely with the teacher, responding to needs and reinforcing the learning. Those who support pupils with emotional and social difficulties are particularly effective, judging accurately when their charges can work effectively in the classroom and supporting them in their learning when they are withdrawn to a peaceful environment. All adults work hard to ensure that all pupils are included in all aspects of the curriculum and, when pupils are withdrawn to work in support groups for English, they do not always miss the same class lesson.

85. The school measures pupils' attainment as they move through the school and has begun to track the progress made by groups of pupils. They use this knowledge to predict what the pupils should achieve at the end of their time in school and to identify those who need extra support. The subject managers have analysed test results to see where there are specific weaknesses. Writing, for example, has been a whole school focus this year. The managers look at the pupils' books regularly and discuss the work with other teachers to ensure that the teachers' judgements about levels of attainment are accurate. They monitor the planning and have observed teaching throughout the school. The management of English is effective overall but there is not enough help given to new teachers to help them challenge the different ages and abilities in their classes or the high standards to which the school aspires.

## **MATHEMATICS**

86. Standards are satisfactory, as they were reported to be at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils in Year 6 and Year 2 reach the expected standards in all areas of mathematics and in some areas they achieve well. Compared with the results of the 2001 tests and assessments, a measure of improvement can be seen in both Year 2 and Year 6. This is because teaching is better and there are fewer pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 6 and an equal balance of boys and girls in Year 2. No significant difference was found in the achievements of boys and girls.
87. By the age of seven, pupils have a sound grasp of place value to 100. They add and subtract confidently and have begun to use multiplication and division. They tackle problems well. For example, during the week of the inspection pupils worked confidently and independently to investigate the number of different ways in which four cubes could be connected. Their knowledge of two and three-dimensional shapes is being appropriately developed and most in Year 2 have a good understanding of the properties of many of these shapes. Some pupils use this knowledge well when identifying a shape from some properties given. "It can only be one shape," said one boy immediately after the teacher's description of a shape with four equal sides.
88. By the time they leave the school, pupils have good skills in applying their knowledge of mathematics in practical situations and they tackle mathematical problems well. This is because the school provides carefully planned opportunities for pupils to develop investigation skills. Work on data handling and with shape, space and measures meets the standards expected of eleven-year-olds. Most have a secure knowledge of the number system and a good grasp of fractional and decimal values. The majority work confidently with four digit numbers and know how and when to apply the four operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Lower attaining pupils are secure in working with three digit numbers and understand decimal values. Higher attainers often achieve well and reach good standards. They have a secure understanding of the equivalence of fractional values and are able to reduce fractions to their simplest forms. In general, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and a few achieve well. This is particularly the case in Years 1 and 2, where these pupils benefit from good quality assistance given by support staff. A weakness amongst pupils of all abilities is that most do not have a quick recall of times tables and the answer to simple mental calculations. Consequently, their speed and accuracy in calculation is hampered and they do not achieve the standards of which they are capable. The school is aware of this weak area and targets for improvement have been set but have yet to be addressed with the urgency they deserve.

89. Throughout the school mathematics is appropriately used across the curriculum, for example, in geographical mapping exercises in Years 3 to 6 and in woven pattern making in Years 1 and 2 design and technology. Good use is made of ICT to develop mathematical thinking, for instance in exploring symmetry in Years 1 and 2 and in understanding numerical values in data handling in Years 5 and 6.
90. Most pupils respond well, are attentive and are keen to do their best. Many show a high degree of independence and confidence in their approach to learning. Many are helpful and show a good degree of tolerance. They often work very constructively together, particularly in partnered learning. Staff members deal sensitively with occasional disruption by pupils.
91. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and a significant element of good teaching was seen. In Years 3 to 6 one excellent lesson was seen. Mathematics is most often taught in mixed age class groups. However, in Years 5 and 6, teaching is in ability groups across the two age groups. Planning is satisfactory but would be improved by including more specific objectives for each of the age groups. Throughout the school teachers do their best to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met and the scrutiny of work indicates that, in general, pupils are successfully covering the key objectives for each year as set out in the National Numeracy Strategy. Nevertheless, there are a small proportion of lessons that proceed either too quickly for members of the younger age group to fully keep up or too slowly to fully challenge the most able members of the older age group.
92. Teachers have sound subject knowledge. In most lessons, teachers review what pupils have previously learned about the topic and this provides a very solid starting point for fresh learning to take place. Most teachers give clear explanations and develop lessons well so that pupils confidently move from one step to the next. In an excellent lesson seen in Years 3 and 4, the teacher encouraged pupils to think mathematically and to behave as mathematicians. No opportunity was missed to test and extend pupils' understanding or to extend their mathematical vocabulary. Consequently, learning was of the highest quality and pupils progressed well in developing written methods for adding in columns.
93. In some classes, not enough time and rigour is given to developing pupils' mental mathematics skills. On occasion, teachers' mental mathematics questions move too quickly from one topic to another leaving pupils uncertain about what they have to do. When a series of similar questions, for example finding fractional values, follow one another, pupils understand what is required, are keen to answer and make good progress in using and extending their ability to use mental methods of calculation.
94. Lessons are usually well organised and are well planned to provide a good balance of activities within the framework of the three part lesson structure advocated by the National Numeracy Strategy. Opportunities for listening to teachers' explanations are well interspersed with opportunities for individual, paired or group work. As a result, interest remains high and pupils remain well motivated. In a few classes, teachers' searching questioning leads to good opportunities for pupils to explain their calculations or to describe their reasoning and this helps to deepen understanding and to broaden the range of different approaches available. At present, some pupils are not asked frequently enough to explain their methods or justify their answers and therefore opportunities to extend mathematical understanding are lost.
95. Over the past few years, the school has been working hard to raise standards in mathematics. Analysis of test results revealed two key areas of weakness which the



school has set about addressing. One significant strategy being used is to set all pupils mathematics targets and these are often clearly linked to these identified weaknesses. For example, in one class, all pupils were set targets involving learning multiplication tables. Target setting in this way is at an early stage of development and at present not enough is done, in or out of the classroom, to ensure enough support is given to encourage pupils to meet their targets as quickly as they could. Nevertheless, the curriculum leader has provided good leadership in ensuring that the approach to teaching mathematics is consistent. That this has been accomplished at a time of high staff turnover is no mean feat. There are sound assessment procedures and, generally, pupils' progress is appropriately tracked.

## SCIENCE

96. In last year's National Curriculum statutory teacher assessments for pupils in Year 2, overall attainment was well below the national average and below average compared to similar schools. The percentage of pupils who attained the higher level 3 was well above the national and similar schools' average. Attainment in Year 6 was well below the national average and the average of similar schools in last year's tests. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are now in line with national expectations in both Year 2 and Year 6, which is broadly similar to the standards at the time of the last inspection. Higher attainers are being challenged, especially in Year 6. In mixed-age classes, work is pitched at a level suitable for the older pupils, consequently below average and younger pupils do not always make appropriate progress. The weaknesses identified in the last report - no challenge for higher attainers and a weakness in experimental and investigative science - have been rectified.
97. In Year 2 pupils are given opportunities to use simple equipments and carry out observations and investigations. For example, they explore the similarity and differences between materials that are transparent and those that are not, and sort materials using simple categories; they explore different properties of materials and can conclude which stretch the most. They are developing their skills in making predictions; for example, they can predict that the floor of the dinner hall is the best surface for testing speed or racing cars because it is smooth and hard. When studying living things, such as snails, pupils show they are developing their skills of observation and ask questions such as, 'Why does the snail's tail change as it moves?' They comment accurately on colour, shape and size. Their comments on size indicate that they differentiate between the sizes of different species, but also that some are small because they are young. They use correct vocabulary when explaining whether snails hibernate, where their habitats are, and the more able, when they looked at a detailed picture of a snail's tongue, could quickly comment that 'you can see sharp ends because it is magnified many times'.
98. By Year 6 pupils have a good knowledge of how to plan a scientific investigation. They show considerable knowledge about prediction, fair testing, recording results and coming to conclusions. When studying a topic on electricity, pupils can predict how brightly bulbs will light if they have more than one battery. Their predictions are based on prior knowledge and understanding and their conclusion shows they are beginning to consider whether their prediction is related to the final conclusion. Good teaching makes pupils question why one group's experiment of dissolving sugar cubes is different from the other groups. Pupils could see variations in results but one group's results showed that sugar cubes took a very long time to dissolve. The teacher asked if all things were equal and why was this reaction slow. The group checked to make sure they had measured carefully, the temperature of water was the same and finally concluded that they were sitting near a window which was wide open, hence this

lowered the temperature of the water and slowed down the rate at which the sugar cubes dissolved. In another case, pupils investigated the implications of one group using less water. Again, the response from a higher attainer demonstrated that pupils had acquired a good understanding of the impact of different factors, such as the surface size of the cube, the width of the containers and the temperature of the liquid, all variables that could alter the final results.

99. The quality of learning and the progress pupils make is inconsistent, but overall is satisfactory. Because work is often pitched at the older level more able Year 5 pupils are working at the same level as Year 6. This extends them and, in the following year, their understanding is consolidated. These pupils make good progress, particularly in classes when teaching is very effective. Teachers' planning does not take sufficient account of how to support average and below average pupils. This was exemplified well in a Year 3/4 lesson on electricity when pupils had to explore making circuits explaining why light was brighter or dimmer. Above average pupils could do this with reasonable clarity of detail and could explain what they had learnt, the relationship between the level of power and the end output; below average pupils enjoyed making bulbs light up and understood simple circuits but the extended learning was beyond their capability. There were many examples of how average and below average pupils sometimes failed to make sufficient progress and this may in part explain why higher attainers are achieving above average results in tests but overall the school's results remain below the national average. Additionally, whilst progress and the quality of learning was often good for these pupils, scrutiny of pupils' work on topics being repeated in different year groups shows insufficient regard to what pupils already know. This results in uneven progress and slows down some pupils' achievements.
100. The majority of pupils are keen to be involved, particularly in practical work. They enjoy carrying out experiments and show considerable pleasure in their achievements. They co-operate well, even in a lesson when the pupils had to share one snail and observe with poor quality magnifying glasses. In all classes the sharing of lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson helps pupils' to focus on their work. In most cases pupils' behaviour is good, even when they are very excited.
101. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in almost all lessons. There is exceptionally good teaching in at least one class in each of the year groups. In these lessons teachers have high expectations of the correct use of subject terminology. For example, when the oldest pupils were asked how they could accelerate the rate of dissolving a sugar cube they were encouraged to consider the differences between use of the words stir and agitate. The teaching of the basic skills of scientific investigation is also good. This is mainly due to the teachers' good understanding of the subject and the good use they make of available resources. One important and significant strength in teaching is the way it often builds upon pupils' literacy and numeracy skills; for example, consolidating pupils' knowledge and understanding of measurement by checking on whether they know how many millilitres make a litre, or by displaying results of their heartbeat after exercise in graphical forms. Often they read about the topic in their literacy lesson, such as reading about snails. However, there are dangers in this approach. Though with better planning the reinforcement could be helpful to pupils of lower ability, there was some evidence to suggest that for more able pupils repetition was unhelpful and opportunities to use their initiative were sometimes reduced.
102. Other strengths are the teachers' use of questions. Most ask open-ended questions which prompt pupils to think and all pupils are given time to respond. This was well demonstrated in a Year 1/2 class where, instead of telling pupils what they should look

for, the teacher asked them what they wanted to find out about snails. She very successfully got pupils to see how by clustering their questions they can appreciate the differences between what, how and why questions and through her questioning she built up an excellent grid of questions which address key characteristics of a living creature. Effective teaching in Years 5 and 6 results in pupils setting out their diagrams and notes neatly and carefully and, in this subject in these classes, pupils' handwriting and presentation are quite good but these expectations are not reflected in other year groups. Marking and assessment are inconsistent across the year groups. There is not sufficient evidence that assessment leads to modification of planning, particularly as there are mixed-age groups.

103. The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator and well supported by the link governor whose monitoring of the teachers' work is exemplary. Weaknesses identified by monitoring are followed up. The co-ordinator plans to measure the impact of changes on pupils' progress and attainment. The medium-term planning of the science curriculum is good; it ensures appropriate coverage of the National Curriculum but needs to deal more effectively with the problems posed by mixed-age classes. Opportunities for the school to explore nearby natural resources of parks and rivers could be better exploited.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

104. During the course of the inspection it was only possible to see one art lesson in each key stage. The bulk of evidence, from pupils' past work, indicates that standards have deteriorated since the last inspection and are now below those usually expected in Year 6 and Year 2. The majority of pupils do not achieve as well as they could be expected to.
105. Past work completed by pupils from Years 3 to 6 is limited in quantity and there is very little evidence that pupils have opportunities to develop their observational and representational skills by drawing from direct observation. They learn to mix shades of different colours and some subtle use of colour is seen in some of their effective African landscapes. In Years 3 and 4, pupils learn to apply wax resist under a paint wash and work with collage. Standards are appropriate for Year 3, but not of the quality expected in Year 4. Of the more limited range of work produced by Years 5 and 6, only a few pieces reach the expected standard. The range and amount of work produced in Years 1 and 2 is closer to that usually found in these year groups and some pupils produce paintings which are of a sound standard. Overall, the scrutiny indicates that, particularly in Years 3 to 6, expectations of the standards are too low and pupils do not have sufficient learning opportunities in the subject. Throughout the school pupils use computers to illustrate their work and understand how to use graphic programs to draw, paint and insert illustrations.
106. In the lessons seen, standards were satisfactory. In a Year1/2 class pupils selected and placed collage pieces well to create spiralling snail shapes. This was one of a series of lessons on pattern in nature, though not enough was done at the start of the lesson to provide pupils with visual stimuli. Nevertheless, overall, teaching in this lesson was satisfactory and the teacher gave effective help which enabled pupils to overcome technical problems which arose whilst they were working. Pupils worked diligently, sharing equipment and using materials well.
107. In a very good Year 3/4 lesson, pupils reached appropriate standards when designing a chair for a specific character. Most were successful in completing the task and some did so well, incorporating imaginative features such a 'sneezometer' into a chair for the

character, Sneezy. A few included good levels of detail, such as the inbuilt duvet cover decorated with stars and the moon for Sleepy's chair. Some pupils worked carefully and could well have been offered the further challenge, for instance, of adding annotations to their designs. A number of pupils worked without a due level of care, yet completed their task. The lesson closed with a good plenary activity in which pupils shared with neighbours their ideas for improving their designs.

108. The curriculum is based on the nationally advised units of work and arranged in a two-year rolling programme which does not always ensure that it provides sufficient challenge for all pupils in the mixed age classes. Presently art and design is taught in alternate half terms with design and technology; this arrangement makes it difficult for the school to ensure that pupils experience a well-balanced curriculum and build up their skills in all elements of art and design. At present there is no permanent curriculum leader because the post holder is on long-term sick leave.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

109. Pupils' standards are average in Years 2 and 6. From the few lessons observed and the photographic and other evidence seen during the inspection it is apparent that pupils have access to a varied range of experiences and that they make appropriate progress throughout the school. Plenty of time is now allowed for pupils to design and make their work, a weakness at the time of the last inspection. The overall monitoring of pupils' skills development throughout the school is still not done, but emphasis is put on the evaluation of pupils' work, both by the teacher and the pupils. The resources are now sufficient and the school has adapted government guidance for the subject to relate to the work covered in other subjects. For example, when studying World War 2, pupils designed and made boxes to hold gas masks. Every eleven-year-old pupil visits the college of further education to study cooking and food technology with a volunteer teacher. This is a very good resource and is an example of the very good links between the school and the community. A weakness in the provision is the lack of software to enable pupils to control models using computers; however, this is addressed well by the school cooperating closely with a partner secondary school.
110. The teaching was good in the lessons seen during the inspection. A common feature in the lessons is the way the teachers involve pupils in discussion, encouraging them to apply their knowledge of vehicles, appropriate materials and safety features. There were good links with science as these ten and eleven-year-olds discussed the forces used to make vehicles move and the properties of materials that would be suitable for their models. Pupils' draft designs showed that they were used to drawing diagrams and labelling them appropriately. The regular breaks for discussion in one lesson, building on the evaluation of the work so far, were very effective in leading pupils to the next stage. For example, pupils started by listing vehicles, then refined the list to include those with and without wheels and finally to a discussion about the forces that power them. In the food technology lesson pupils baked scones following a recipe and discussed other ingredients in order to bake to their own recipe after adapting the basic recipe. This is a good example of the school working within the community and helping pupils develop and understanding of a healthy diet composed of fresh foods.
111. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and are encouraged to participate in discussion. In one lesson a learning support assistant worked with a group of pupils guiding the discussion and consulting the teacher when she was not sure of her facts.

112. The teachers of each two-year unit plan the lessons together. The subject leader looks at the planning and offers advice. While this ensures that there is consistency and equal opportunities for pupils in the parallel classes it makes tracking progress throughout the school difficult. The links with other areas of the curriculum help to give coherence to pupils' learning, but without a clear, whole school scheme of work there is an imbalance in the tasks and materials the pupils use.

## **GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY**

113. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are just below expectations in both geography and history, which appears to represent a slight fall from the levels reported in the last inspection.
114. In Year 2 in geography, pupils are beginning to show an awareness of places beyond their locality, illustrated by descriptions of their journey to London. Pupils comment on the type of travel and places of interest and have been involved in carrying out a simple traffic survey. They have visited the local fire station in order to find out how different people provide services. Pupils have recently started studying Tenby as a contrasting locality. They develop their skills by examining photographs and maps of Tenby. They are encouraged to find different features and locate them on the map.
115. By Year 6 pupils have learnt about the equatorial rainforest, used Melton Mowbray as a focus of local study and Kenya as a developing, contrasting country. Additionally, half the pupils go on a residential visit to Kingswood Centre in Norfolk. Pupils locate the rainforest on the map of the world and write about key features but there is not much evidence of how changes destroying the rainforest may affect our lives and activities. The project on Kenya has a large section of information copied from other books. Some of the information recorded, such as the cost of an African hut was inaccurate. Discussion with pupils indicates that pupils do not remember basic factual information of Kenya.
116. Currently extending their study of Melton Mowbray, pupils produce a local guide for tourists. This work, supported by a homework research project and Internet study, is pitched at the right level and pupils' standards are improving in line with national expectations.
117. For both geography and history, specific topics have been identified and significant parts of the subjects are delivered through the literacy, numeracy and ICT curriculum. For example, in Year 5/6 in history, work on Britain since 1930 is taught mainly through a cross-curricular approach based on the novel, 'Good Night Mr Tom', by Michelle Magorian. Discussion with pupils indicates that they have thoroughly enjoyed the book and have absorbed much social information but pupils lacked accurate factual information, and recall was not sequential. They remembered specific incidents but were not clear, for example, about which two countries were involved in war. There is not sufficient emphasis on historical research skills and chronology. Consequently, progress in historical enquiry, organisation and communication is limited. In geography, National Curriculum requirements are being met but coverage is not addressed in depth. Visits to historical sites, geographical field trips and links with the local communities enhance experiences of learning in both history and geography. Lack of other evidence in pupils' books and folders makes it difficult to make a secure judgement about pupils' achievement, particularly as so much time is spent on discussions and not much work is recorded. The standard of handwriting and presentation is not satisfactory and a significant amount of previous work is recorded using undemanding worksheets. ICT is used well in both subjects. Pupils use the Internet and CD-ROMs for research and store information on databases.

118. Pupils' attitudes are generally positive. They enjoy the practical nature of these subjects. They develop their skills in speaking and listening and they have learnt important skills in debating and arguing their points. This is well illustrated in the quality and range of letters written by Years 5/6, to the local council, about its decision to put in a new road in Lower Downham. Pupils are generally attentive and focus on the task given but their skills in presenting their work well and accurately are under-developed. Pupils' skills in drawing and using maps and co-ordinates are not well developed.
119. Teachers are enthusiastic about these subjects and this is communicated effectively to the pupils. They plan well but lack good quality resources and artefacts. However, as teachers do not require pupils to write about their learning, pupils find it difficult to remember what they have covered. Where learning is effective, as seen in Years 5/6 and 1/2 geography lessons, teachers have secure subject knowledge and use questioning well to help pupils to form opinions and give reasons for their views. Teachers provide good role models as demonstrated by a Year 5/6 teacher who played the role of a tourist guide taking visitors around Melton Mowbray. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the drama but also learnt quickly how to adapt language, tone and articulation, again consolidating communication skills.
120. Both geography and history co-ordinators have acquired their responsibilities fairly recently. The geography co-ordinator has plans to carry out a complete audit, particularly the levels of achievements within single and mixed-age groups. She has used the policy but has produced her own action plan which will enable her to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the subject systematically. Her audit of resources shows a significant shortage in some areas, such as good quality atlases and Ordnance Survey maps. She is well aware of the need to prepare pupils adequately for the transition to secondary school in Year 7. The history co-ordinator has also started carrying out a proper audit but her part-time work gives her limited access. Both co-ordinators are well placed and committed to improve standards.

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

121. Standards in ICT are at expected levels for Year 2 and 6 in most areas of the curriculum. The teacher who specialises in ICT does most of the teaching with the consequence that pupils learn well and enjoy working with the newly installed and good quality computer suite. Lessons are well planned and pupils make good progress in their weekly sessions. Few opportunities are missed to use the suite or the class based computers. Pupils' confidence grows as they use the computers during a range of activities including the study support sessions and computer club.
122. Pupils in Year 2 show good keyboard skills, positioning their fingers correctly over the keys. They understand the tools and symbols used in programs and load and save their own work. An analysis of work and discussions show that pupils understand how to make their work interesting and ready for publication by including saved illustrations. They change font and the colour of their work and use paint programs to good effect as they try to work in the style of Jackson Pollock. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 look on computers as normal tools to use in the classroom. In Years 3 and 4 pupils wrote a formal letter to persuade their headteacher to allow the sale of sweets in the school shop. In this lesson the classteacher gave a very good demonstration and her careful instructions helped lower attaining pupils to use a template effectively and succeed in their tasks. Working in pairs the remainder of the class knew most of the functions of the word processing program and completed their task. Pupils' work was in line with the expected levels for their age group and their enthusiasm was due to the good

teaching of skills and the direct, clear teaching and support that were available from their classteacher and their learning support assistant. The analysis shows pupils use computers to design posters during their research in their Greece topic, complete covers for their moneybox designs and know how to program a point to move around the screen, to trace routes or draw figures and shapes.

123. In Years 5 and 6 pupils used a spreadsheet to plan a party including the food and drink they intended to buy for their guests. Pupils label cells, enter their data and use the spreadsheet to calculate totals. Poetry work is well presented and illustrated and abstract designs are produced in the style of Matisse's Snail. During lessons, pupils used a web design program to prepare a web site on Melton Mowbray. Pupils linked pages, included sounds in their designs and higher attaining pupils used animated designs to make their work interesting. Pupils are confident when they use computers and, although not many have the use of a computer at home, the school does all it can to encourage pupils to see ICT as a necessary tool of the world of work.
124. Teaching in the lessons seen was of good quality. Subject knowledge is good; the coordinator is passing on skills to other teachers as they work together to monitor each class. Teachers' confidence is rising and lesson plans are of good quality. The coordinator, teachers and learning support assistants watch carefully to see how pupils are managing and, if they are learning effectively, they are moved to the next stage. A highlight of pupils' work is the use of computers across the curriculum. Teachers are skilled at planning work that demonstrates to pupils how computers are used in the real world. Letters are written to Greenpeace, opinions are published about a proposed road scheme in a fictional village and databases are used to record their scientific investigations.
125. The coordinator, headteacher and governors have worked hard to establish the new computer suite and this very good facility is beginning to pay dividends as the rate of pupils' learning increases. Training has taken place and the confidence of teachers and learning support assistants is rising. Standards have remained at about the same levels seen at the last inspection, although the requirements of the curriculum have risen considerably since that time. A strength of the school's work is the relationship with a local secondary school. Materials and equipment are borrowed, expertise shared and pupils often visit their secondary partner school to use facilities. As the expectations of pupils rises, learning in lessons for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is effective. The school has successfully met the issue identified at the last inspection to improve the facilities available for ICT.

## **MUSIC**

126. Standards in music are in line with expectations in Year 2, which maintains the position seen at the last inspection, but below expectations in Year 6, which is a fall in standards. Older pupils sing well and use tuned percussion instruments appropriately. They are beginning to understand basic musical elements like "beat". However, discussion with a group of Year 6 pupils and observations in the music lesson and music club shows a lower than average understanding of musical elements and different types of music and composers. There was no evidence of composition at the upper end of the school. As at the time of the last inspection, there is a wealth of musical opportunities offered to the pupils, with music clubs, professional musicians performing in school and an annual concert when everyone participates.
127. The teaching was good in both lessons observed during the inspection. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 experimented with sound, creating and extending patterns. The teacher had

very good relationships with her pupils, sharing their enthusiasm and appreciative of their efforts. She encouraged pupils to experiment in pairs to develop their own patterns and was sensitive to the needs of both a shy boy who did not want to perform and a hearing impaired pupil who joined the lesson after working with a support teacher. The class teacher's swift donning of the transmitter and her clear summary of what was going on enabled the pupil to join in at once. Pupils performed well and their mastery of complex rhythms was above average as were their listening skills. They identified nursery rhymes from rhythms clapped to each other.

128. Ten and eleven-year olds sing tunefully and maintain a melody when a second part is added, making a good attempt at singing in harmony. Some recognise and name the treble clef. This teacher, the subject manager, also has very good relationships with her pupils and her humour encouraged them to greater effort. She used resources well. Pupils had the musical notation in front of them and she demonstrated the melody with clear and tuneful singing.
129. Pupils in the juniors sing tunefully and the teacher ensures that the phrasing and the length of the notes are accurate. In the infants pupils sing a range of familiar hymns in their music assembly, joining in with the actions. This session was not as effective as it could have been because pupils' behaviour was not as good as it should have been and there was a lot of talking between the hymns. The pace of the session was too slow.
130. There is no external instrumental tuition but the teachers give pupils who are interested opportunities to learn the guitar or tuned percussion. There is an appropriate range of equipment, including instruments from other countries and recorded music from other cultures but no facilities for composing music electronically. The school has very good links with local musicians and performers and pupils see and hear a variety of different music. This is a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development. All junior pupils learn to play the recorder but this needs to be linked with developing an understanding of pitch, rhythm and notation. The curriculum is based on government guidance for the subject and is planned by the teachers of the parallel classes. However, there is a lack of overview of the subject throughout the school so that the development of pupils' skills across the whole curriculum is erratic. There is no formal assessment of pupils' abilities. Aspects of the curriculum, especially pupils' knowledge and understanding, are not taught in sufficient depth to enable pupils to make appropriate progress.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

131. Pupils in Year 2 reach the expected levels in dance and swimming and in Year 6 reach the expected levels in athletics and swimming. These areas of the curriculum were the only aspects that could be inspected. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
132. In a creative lesson in Years 1 and 2 the teacher used music and story to create an impressive effect. As pupils warmed their muscles to an Octopus's Garden, their movements began to take on a sinuous fluency. And when their teacher produced ribbon sticks, their movements began to float and take on the currents of the ocean. The music was well chosen and atmospheric. Insisting that pupils listen carefully and behave themselves, the teacher used examples of good achievement to help other pupils learn effectively. By the end of the lesson pupils danced gracefully, with some higher attainers pirouetting and gliding with skill. Pupils talked about how much they enjoyed dance and liked dancing like crabs and fish. There were gasps of excitement as their teacher told them about next week's creature: the shark. This was an



inspirational lesson that appealed to pupils' imaginations. In Years 1 and 2 pupils are confident in the swimming pool. Higher attainers do well practising their backstrokes in a learner pool. Other pupils used floats to practice their arm and leg strokes. They received good tuition which improved their confidence, stamina and skills.

133. In Years 3 and 4 pupils moved weightlessly in space as they prepared to build a space rocket. Good use was made of discussion in this lesson as pupils decided how to move and work together to build their ship. Learning was adequate because at times behaviour was not controlled as well as it could be. A strength of the lesson was the quality of movement as pupils worked together. Pupils' performance improved from a fairly low base. In Years 5 and 6 pupils worked hard to improve their stamina and relay skills. The lesson had a good structure and behaviour was managed well with a quick word and humour. In Years 5 and 6 pupils swim at the expected levels. They are taught well by qualified coaches and teachers and are very confident in water. Pupils who experience social and behavioural difficulties make good progress and have their needs met very well by sensitive and demanding support. Lower attaining pupils developed their confidence as they stroked their way across the breadth of the pool. The higher attaining group, which also contained pupils with special educational needs, made good progress as they synchronised their arm and leg movements and developed their stamina. They showed good application as they learned how to enter the pool safely. Pupils produced good quality surface dives as they retrieved rubber bricks from the bottom of the swimming pool.
134. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory in Years 3 and 4 to good in Years 1 and 2 and 5 and 6. Good lessons are characteristically brisk and well-paced. Enough time is left to practice the skills developed and teachers are confident about the work they have planned. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their work and in successful sessions pointers are given to help all pupils develop their skills. Pupils attitudes to the subject are generally good; however, too many pupils each week forget their kit. Although the school makes every effort to support their learning, discussion show that some pupils do not enjoy physical education or see value in the work. The school has recognised the talent of one pupil in particular; there are individual education plans to promote higher achievement for talented pupils, which are of good quality.
135. The co-ordinator is managing the subject well. He is well supported by another member of staff and their enthusiasm and commitment is commendable. The school's physical education curriculum contains many opportunities for pupils to be involved in team games and community sporting activities.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

136. Attainment in religious education in Year 2 and 6 is below the level expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Lesson observations, conversation with pupils and the limited evidence of pupils' written work and displays, indicate a low level of understanding and limited progress.
137. A number of factors have a detrimental effect on standards:
- the co-ordinator is new to her job
  - the school places a significant importance on the provision to develop pupils' personal, social and health education, decreasing the time available for religious education
  - the coordinator is reviewing the RE syllabus but is waiting to receive the final version of the LEA Agreed Syllabus

- a two-year long curriculum programme and the absence of written work means that pupils' recall of factual knowledge and understanding of religious events, symbols, rituals and festivals of Christianity and other faiths is patchy and fragmentary
  - many teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are insecure
  - pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other faiths are not extended regularly during assembly.
138. Pupils' attitudes are positive. They become involved in discussions and are ready to offer their views. They show restlessness when the subject matter appears not to be relevant to their lives.
139. By Year 6 pupils have studied the Festival of Lights, Divali, as part of understanding Hindu festivals. They have considered the clothes Hindus wear and have discussed the conflict in Hindu families when a young teenager wants to wear modern European clothes. They can recall and discuss when questioned, but their knowledge and understanding of the festivals, rituals and clothes are vague. Similarly they have studied Sikhism but could not recall much important basic information and its significance.
140. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have a patchy understanding of Christianity. They lack knowledge of the principal festivals, rituals and events. For example, many could not explain what happened during the period of Lent and what important event followed in the Christian calendar. Inappropriate worksheets were given to lower attaining pupils, one of which required them to use words such as 'temporal' and 'existence' when filling in blanks. For younger Year 3 and 4 pupils this was a demanding task that did not help them to understand the ideas and principles being studied.
141. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 have looked at the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, why the symbol of the candle is important and they know where and when Jewish people pray. In other lessons pupils heard a story of 'The Discontented Son'. Pupils knew this story so well that they became bored. One teacher's attempt to explore when we apologise and forgive was partly successful but failed to build on some of the pupils' interesting observations that provided opportunities to build on their understanding of right and wrong.
142. The quality of teaching seen in lessons ranged from satisfactory to good but it lacks consistency and is unsatisfactory overall. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are not always secure and hence, when materials are used from the Internet, they are not able to identify information that is misleading. Religious figures, such as the Prophet Mohammed, are not always referred to with due respect.
143. The new curriculum co-ordinator has a very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the current position. She has made a very accurate analysis of the needs of the school. These include:
- better planning
  - the need for pupil to record more of their work in writing
  - professional training and support for teachers
  - improving the quality and range of resources.