

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. LAWRENCE VA C.E. LOWER SCHOOL

Wymington, Rushden

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109628

Headteacher: Mrs. Lisa O'Hare

Reporting inspector: Hugh Protherough
8339

Dates of inspection: 17th – 20th March 2003

Inspection number: 248931

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First school
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Manor Lane Wymington Rushden
Postcode:	NN10 9LL
Telephone number:	01933 353530
Fax number:	01933 316950
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs May Hadley
Date of previous inspection:	15 th January 2001

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8339	Hugh Protherough	Registered inspector	Information and communications technology Art and design Design and technology	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9510	Christine Murray-Watson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20596	Martin Lester	Team inspector	Mathematics Science, Geography History Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19387	Mari Powell	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage English Music	How well does the school care for its pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a small lower school with 121 pupils on roll. They comprise 50 boys and 53 girls who attend the school full time, and 11 boys and 24 girls who go to the nursery on a part-time basis. There is also a private kindergarten on the school site. The school serves the village of Wymington and its surrounding area that includes the south eastern fringes of the town of Rushden. In recent time, there have been significant numbers of pupils entering and leaving the school at times other than the start or end of the school year. Last year, fifteen arrived and three left, amounting to 25% of the school's roll at that time. This was much higher than the usual turnover. The overwhelming majority of pupils are of white ethnic origin, and the few pupils who speak English as an additional language, are all reasonably fluent. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average at around 18%, and only one has a statement of special educational needs. Very few pupils (5%) are entitled to free school meals. The pupils' attainment on entry covers the full range and is generally above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is doing a better job than at the time of the previous inspection and has improved its effectiveness to a satisfactory level. The quality of education provided is good, standards are rising and above average in the key skills of literacy and numeracy. Pupils of all abilities achieve well. However, important aspects of the school's management continue to lack the coherence and rigour that would accelerate progress to an even faster rate. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in speaking and listening, reading, mathematics and science are above average.
- The children are enthusiastic learners who respond positively to the predominantly good teaching found throughout the school.
- Small class sizes and a good number of well-trained and effectively deployed teaching assistants have a positive influence on the quality of education provided.
- The curriculum has a much better breadth and balance that ensures a fuller coverage of the requirements for both the Foundation Stage and Years 1-4.
- The staff team knows the children well and demonstrates good pastoral care.
- The children are polite and very well behaved.

What could be improved

- The strategic planning for school improvement.
- The performance management of the staff team.
- The provision for physical education.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 2001 when it was judged to be, "underachieving in a number of important aspects of its work." **This is no longer the case.** Standards are higher and pupils of all abilities, including both the more able children and those with special educational needs, are achieving well, especially in reading, mathematics and science. There has been good improvement in the

provision for information and communications technology. The curriculum is far better balanced and the annual reports to parents are more informative than before. There has been steady improvement in the arrangements for tracking the pupils' academic performance and personal development and a sound start made to developing some aspects of the leadership and management skills of the subject co-ordinators. Taken overall, the school is satisfactorily placed to continue to improve.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
reading	B	A	A	B
writing	B	A	D	E
Mathematics	B	A	D	E

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

The children enter the nursery class at the age of three and start school in the reception class in the year they become five. The teachers' assessments show that both in the nursery and at the point they start full time school, the children's attainment is generally above average. The inspection findings confirm that throughout the Foundation Stage the children make good progress. The vast majority are on course to meet the national targets for five-year-olds and a good number will exceed them.

An analysis of the results of the Year 2 tests for the past three years shows that on the basis of the average points scored, the pupils achieve standards that are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Last year's results show a sudden drop in the pupils' performance in writing and mathematics. However, of the 25 pupils taking the national tests for seven-year-olds in 2002, only 13 had been educated at the school from the age of five. A significant number of those pupils arriving at the school within this year group had special educational needs, especially in relation to writing and spelling. The inspection findings indicate that standards in the current Year 2 are once again above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

The pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4. The pupils in the current Year 4 are on course to meet the school's ambitious, but realistic targets in reading, writing and mathematics. Several of the higher attaining pupils, both boys and girls, are already working at the levels expected of eleven-year-olds. This is a good indicator of the considerable gains made since the last inspection when this group of children were judged to be underachieving. Throughout the school, the standard of the pupils' work in information and communications technology has improved and is now securely in line with the levels expected.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children concentrate, show good recall of previous learning and apply themselves energetically to the work in hand.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. From an early age, the children are very polite and considerate in their dealings with each other, adults and visitors to the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are harmonious. The adults take great care to ensure the pupils' all round development.
Attendance	Good. Above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

Since the last inspection, the teaching has improved throughout the school and is now of a predominantly good quality. The teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes gives the children a good start. The adults successfully provide the full breadth of the Foundation Stage curriculum, and a major strength is the careful organisation of the classrooms that encourages the children to make independent choices from a very early age. The adults provide a good range of creative and imaginative activities, such as role-play, as well as regular opportunities for vigorous physical activity in the well-equipped outside play area. There is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and the Reception children are currently getting a taste of the sorts of lessons they will experience in Year 1.

The re-structuring of the school's timetable means that lessons that previously went on for too long now have a sharper focus and a greater sense of urgency. The teachers' careful planning now identifies the length of each section of a lesson, and this contributes to the brisk pace of learning observed in many classes during the inspection. A key feature of the successful learning lies in the widespread use of practical activities that enthuse the pupils to work hard and improve their skills. For instance, many pupils in Year 4 express a preference for science because they have the opportunity to create and carry out experiments and simple tests that help to make their learning real. Classroom displays and photograph albums indicate a wealth of similar teaching in art and design and design and technology.

The teachers have established clear routines and working practices that are underpinned by very good relationships and have a positive effect on the children's attitudes and commitment to learning. The teachers set work that matches the range of abilities in each class, and the effective deployment of the well-qualified teaching assistants ensures that pupils of all backgrounds and abilities make good progress in their studies. The teaching of numeracy is generally good, and has a particular strength in

the way that the teachers encourage the skills of mental mathematics. The development of the children's speaking and listening and the teaching of reading are also strong features of the school's provision. Recent developments within the teaching of writing are starting to have a positive effect on standards. However, the range of strategies employed for the teaching of spelling is too narrow and more needs to be done to enable the pupils to write at greater length and for a wider range of purposes. The teachers mark the pupils' work regularly and write encouraging remarks. However, their commentary seldom makes clear how the pupils should improve their work, or checks that the specific targets set in the front of some exercise books are being properly addressed. The teaching of physical education is satisfactory overall, but is constrained by limited accommodation and teacher expertise.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good and much improved. The pupils now benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that is organised in ways better suited to their needs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. These pupils are swiftly identified and provided with good levels of additional support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The teaching is particularly effective in helping the pupils to gain a deeper appreciation of social and moral issues.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school makes good provision for health, safety and welfare of its pupils.

The educational partnership between home and school is satisfactory. There are close and effective links between the parents and the staff in the Foundation Stage, but these are not yet consistently built on as the pupils proceed through the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher continues to provide sound pastoral leadership. Furthermore, the school management has improved because the teachers are more fully involved in exercising their responsibilities as subject co-ordinators.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors provide good support for the headteacher and the staff, and have a sound overview of the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The analysis of test and assessment data is now used as a basis for target setting and curriculum planning, but the systematic monitoring of the effects of the teaching is not yet firmly established.
The strategic use of	The headteacher and governing body make prudent use of the budget.

resources	A sound start has been made to the introduction of the principles of "best value".
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The leadership and management of the school is improving, but for too long it has been reactive to the demands of external monitoring rather than the findings of its own self-evaluation. The next step is for the entire school community to agree a plan for future school improvement that reflects a shared vision and includes a regular performance review of the staff involved.

The good staffing levels allow small class sizes, and include a very good number of well-trained teaching assistants who make a significant contribution to the quality of the teaching. The school is well equipped with books and educational resources and the recent purchase of a set of lap top computers has been central to the improvements in information and communications technology. The lack of a school hall continues to hamper the provision for physical education, particularly in Years 1 - 4. However, careful budget management and enthusiastic fund raising means that the governors are close to realising their plans for building a hall.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy coming to school. • The teaching is good and motivates the children to work hard and do their best. • The teachers take good care of the children and know them very well as individuals. • The Christian ethos supports the children's all round development and encourages them to accept responsibility from an early age. • The children are polite and behave well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent and range of activities outside lessons. • The leadership and management of the school. • The educational partnership between home and school.

The inspectors agree with the many positive views expressed by the majority of the parents, but note the significant minority who disagree about some important areas of the school's life. The inspectors judge that the range of extra-curricular activities provided is satisfactory and that the leadership and management are sound. However, the good links between parents, carers and school staff established to promote learning in the Foundation Stage are not yet being built on sufficiently in Years 1 - 4.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The children enter the nursery class at the age of three and transfer to the Reception class in the year they become five. The teachers' assessments show that both in the nursery and at the point they start full time school, the children's attainment is generally above average. The inspection findings confirm that throughout the Foundation Stage the children make good progress in all the areas of learning. The vast majority are on course to meet the national targets for five-year-olds and a good number will exceed them.
2. Until 2002, the results achieved by the Year 2 pupils in the national tests had been either above or well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, last year there was a dip in the children's performance in writing and mathematics. This was due to the considerable mobility of pupils within this cohort. Of the 25 pupils taking the national tests for seven-year-olds in 2002, only 13 had been educated at the school since the age of five and a significant number of those arriving at the school within this age group have special educational needs. The children who took the tests last year are currently in Year 3 and although their attainment is improving it continues to be lower than that of the pupils in other classes.
3. The inspection findings show that the levels of pupils' attainment are higher in the current Year 2. As a result of the effective support for the children with special educational needs and the challenging teaching of the higher attainers, pupils of all abilities are achieving well and standards are above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. An analysis of the performance data shows little if any difference in the attainment of boys and girls. This was borne out by a close scrutiny of the pupils' work during the inspection.
4. An analysis of the results of the Year 2 tests for the past three years shows that on the basis of the average points scored, the pupils achieved standards that were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Last year's results show a sudden drop in the pupils' performance in writing and mathematics. However, a significant number of those pupils arriving at the school within this year group have special educational needs, especially in relation to writing and spelling. The inspection findings indicate that standards in the current Year 2 are once again above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
5. In Years 3 and 4, the school makes effective use of the national voluntary tests to track pupil progress. An analysis of the results of the past two years shows that since taking the Year 2 tests the pupils have generally made good progress in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing has previously been slower, but the inspection findings confirm that recent initiatives are paying dividends. Many more pupils are showing good improvement in their work, particularly in Year 4. Even so, more still needs to be done to improve the pupils' spelling and their ability to write at greater length. However, by the time they leave the school standards are generally above average in English, mathematics and science and the pupils are on course to meet the school's ambitious, but realistic targets. Several of the higher attaining pupils, both boys and girls, are already working at the levels expected of eleven-year-olds. This is a good indicator of the considerable gains made since the last inspection when this group of children were judged to be underachieving.

6. Conversations with the children and scrutiny of their books and folders provided good evidence about their work in information and communications technology, art and design and design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education. This evidence clearly shows that in all subjects the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are generally in line with the levels expected of nine-year-olds.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. The pupils enjoy their time in school and participate actively in their lessons. They consistently display a high level of concentration, very good standards of behaviour and a caring attitude towards each other and to adults. As a result, they are able to take full advantage of the good teaching they receive and make good progress in their studies. Their enthusiasm is reflected in the level of attendance shown over the school year, which is above that normally found in primary schools nationally.
8. The youngest pupils make a good start in the Nursery, where they are developing a sturdy independence and the confidence to make full use of the activities offered to them. They are comfortable with the daily routines and evidently feel safe with the adults who care for and teach them. Their confidence is maintained as they proceed through the school, and they take pride in what they are able to achieve. By the time they reach the top class, for example, they are able to use the library for independent research. They also enjoy the more practical activities. During an art lesson seen, the mixing of primary colour paints generated great interest. The satisfied murmur of "Oooh, I've got purple!" from one pupil reflected the general satisfaction and sense of achievement being experienced by the whole class as they discovered the different colours that could be created.
9. Due attention is paid to the social skills needed to maintain a harmonious working community. As a result, the pupils are very polite, take care to open doors for each other and adults and generally move in a considerate way around a building whose many steps, doors and awkward turns might otherwise present potential difficulties. They are developing an increasing awareness of what it means to be a good friend. This shows in the sociable play seen at breaktimes. An easy acceptance of each other's wishes and sensitivity to those who might otherwise find it difficult to fit in was evident in some of the self organised games that were taking place. The cheerful acceptance of a range of responsibilities and routine tasks, particularly by the oldest pupils, also plays a part in the smooth running of the school day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

10. Since the previous inspection, the quality of the teaching has improved across the school, especially in the successful way that pupils of all abilities are now being well supported and challenged in their work in almost every subject. At the last inspection the teaching was predominantly satisfactory with a little that was good. On this occasion, three quarters of the lessons were good and a few were very good. With two exceptions all of the other lessons were satisfactory.
11. The teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes gives the children a good start to school life. The adults successfully provide the full breadth of the Foundation Stage curriculum and a major strength lies in the careful organisation of the classrooms. This encourages the children to develop confidence and independence from a very early age. A good example of this is seen at the start of each school day when the children enter the classrooms with their parents and carers. Each child has to pick up a card bearing their name and place it next to their name on

the class register. Next they look at the simplified, colour coded timetable for the week, and with the help of an adult check to see which activity their group has been allocated. As a result of this purposeful routine, the children settle happily to work, the parents can spend some time with their children and share information with the nursery staff.

12. The children work hard and clearly enjoy being in school because the adults provide a good range of creative and imaginative activities that engage their interest and stimulate learning. The setting of the role-play area often reflects favourite stories such as “Goldilocks and the three bears.” The children willingly adopt roles and develop their good speaking and listening skills as they negotiate over who will cook the porridge or do the washing up. The provision for the children's physical development is very good with regular opportunities for vigorous physical activity in the well-equipped outside play area or on the small scale climbing apparatus in one corner of the classroom. There is a strong and appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy in both classes. The opening and closing sessions in the nursery provide a good range of stories, poems and songs that help the children to recognise that text conveys meaning. Rhymes and plentiful practical activities ensure that all the children are counting small groups of objects with confidence and starting to recognise numerals. The teaching in the reception class builds successfully on this good start with good opportunities offered across the Foundation Stage curriculum. In addition, the children are given a taste of the kind of lessons they will experience in Year 1.
13. Two major contributory factors to the improvement of the teaching are the small class sizes and the good number of well trained and effectively deployed teaching assistants. In the Foundation Stage, these additional adults make a significant contribution towards tracking the progress of individual children by making notes as they work and play alongside the children. For instance, when they are supporting the children during outside play they will check who can pedal, scoot and tell left from right. As a result, the quality of day-to-day assessment is improving considerably and helps the teachers make well-judged decisions about what the children need to learn next. In Year 1, the teaching of English is greatly enhanced by the way that an experienced and well-qualified assistant provides Extra Literacy Support to small groups of pupils. She has a thorough grasp of the materials in use and presents them in a lively and entertaining manner that engages the pupils and helps them make good progress in their work.
14. In Years 1–4, the successful re-structuring of the school's timetable means that lessons that previously went on for too long now have a sharper focus and a greater sense of urgency. The teachers' careful planning identifies the length of each section of a lesson and this contributes to the brisk pace of learning observed in many classes during the inspection. The teachers are generally successful in making clear to the pupils what they are expected to learn during the course of each lesson, but the objectives recorded in their plans are sometimes far too broad.
15. In all classes, the clear routines, good working practices and positive relationships have beneficial effects on the children's attitudes and commitment to learning. A key feature of much of the successful teaching is the widespread use of practical activities that encourage the pupils to work hard and improve their skills. For instance, many pupils in Year 4 express a preference for science because they have the opportunity to devise and carry out experiments and simple tests that help to make their learning real. Similar levels of enthusiasm and commitment were also observed in the pupils' work in art and design, design and technology and information and communications technology.
16. The teaching of numeracy is good with particular strength in the way that the teachers establish the skills of mental mathematics. The development of the children's speaking and listening and

the teaching of reading are also strong features of the school's provision. In each of these aspects, the pupils' progress is frequently enhanced by the probing questioning of the teachers that ensures that the children have to think carefully about their answers and frequently deepens their levels of understanding. This was particularly the case in the teaching observed in Year 4.

17. Recent developments in the teaching of writing are starting to have a positive effect on standards. The children's handwriting is improving, and a scrutiny of their exercise books reveals that as the year unfolds pupils of all abilities are increasing both the volume and the quality of their written work. However, the teaching of spelling is too narrow because it focuses almost exclusively on the sounds of individual letters and not enough on the shape and appearance of words and the groups of letters within them. In addition, more work needs to be done to help the pupils to write more extendedly, developing their work over longer periods of time.
18. The teachers mark the pupils' work regularly and write encouraging remarks. However, their commentary seldom makes clear how the pupils should improve their work. The teaching of physical education is satisfactory overall, but it is constrained by limited accommodation and teacher expertise. **This is a key issue for action.**

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

19. The pupils now benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that is organised in ways better suited to their needs. The school has made a positive response to the key issues linked to this aspect in the last report. The curriculum now ensures a fuller coverage of the requirements for both the Foundation stage and years 1-4. A significant enhancement of the learning resources has considerably improved the curriculum in information and communications technology (ICT). In addition, the use of ICT to support the pupils' learning in other subjects is far more evident. Consequently, in considering the curriculum and the quality of the teaching, it is evident that the school offers an effective education that enables the pupils to achieve well and to attain good standards overall.
20. The adults in the Nursery and Reception class give the children a good start in school by providing an interesting and challenging Foundation Stage curriculum. They carefully organise the day so that the children are encouraged to make independent choices from a broad range of meaningful activities both indoors and outside. There is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy so that the Reception children are currently getting a taste of the sorts of lessons they will experience in Year 1 next year. The curriculum for Year 1-4 now includes a good range of practical and purposeful activities that motivate the pupils to work hard and achieve well. Furthermore, good links are made between subjects to encourage the children to draw upon their previous learning to support their current studies. In addition, good use is made of the local environment and visits to places of educational interest such as local museums and historically significant buildings, for example the adjoining church. The school also draws upon the expertise of local people who work with the children in their classrooms.
21. The staff effectively ensures that the curriculum provides equality of opportunity and access. For example, the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Their needs are clearly recorded in their Individual Education Plans and suitable activities to support good progress are identified. In addition, accurate records of their progress towards these targets are well documented. This provision is enhanced through the effective deployment of well-trained learning support assistants who encourage the pupils to achieve well.

22. The provision for the pupils' personal development is good overall. The teaching is particularly effective in helping them to gain a deeper appreciation of social and moral issues. All members of the staff are committed to raising the pupils' self esteem so that they willingly attempt increasingly challenging tasks. The adults also consistently promote high moral principles, by dealing fairly when difficulties arise and applying the agreed rules consistently. This creates a climate where pupils thoughtfully consider the consequences of their actions and willingly take on responsibility. The provision for personal, social, and health education and citizenship is good. Well-planned lessons in each year group provide regular opportunities for the pupils to discuss a wide range of topics related to their values, beliefs, feelings, attitudes and life styles. For example, the pupils in Year 4 held a most mature and sensible discussion about railway safety in response to a very thoughtful contribution by the teacher. This clearly showed the pupils' keen understanding of the issue of untoward peer pressure and how to resist it.
23. There are a few extra-curricular activities, but the understandable priority for the staff has been to address the numerous issues from the previous inspection report. Several concerning the quality of education have been addressed effectively. The lack of a school hall continues to hamper the provision for physical education and other activities that require a large uncluttered indoor area. However, the governors are close to realising their plans for building a hall. It is intended that this will further strengthen the curriculum provision including extra-curricular activities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

24. The school makes good provision for the health, safety and welfare of its pupils. A high level of pastoral care is a priority and underpins the pupils' academic development. The members of the learning support staff are caring, committed and give very good support to both teachers and pupils. As a result, the children entering the nursery settle quickly into the daily routines and rapidly learn to engage in their activities with confidence and enjoyment. The consistent understanding of the welfare and pastoral procedures throughout the school is of considerable importance given the nature of the building. The pupils are carefully supervised at breaks and lunchtimes. The foundation stage staff are very conscientious about the supervision of the midday meals and breaks for the youngest children. This makes a very good contribution to their social development and their overall welfare. The procedures for child protection are now much better than at the last inspection.
25. The school supports the pupils with special educational needs well. Individual education plans, informed by external support agencies where appropriate, provide additional guidance for the provision in the classrooms. The learning support assistants and the teachers use this information well to plan work that ensures that these pupils make good progress. The adults know their pupils very well. The procedures for health and safety are satisfactory, but a few minor concerns were brought to the attention of the headteacher and governors during the inspection.
26. The school has very effective procedures for promoting and monitoring discipline and good behaviour; for example, the pupils have been involved in agreeing, and are very aware of, the Golden Rules that govern their conduct. All the adults who come into contact with the pupils have high expectations of their behaviour. Courtesy and consideration towards others permeate the whole ethos of the school community and extend to visitors. Good attendance is actively encouraged and monitored. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

27. The monitoring of the pupils' academic performance is improving. The teachers and learning support assistants regularly make focused observations of the pupils and maintain detailed records. For example, the reading progress of pupils is regularly tracked and assessed against their chronological age. This ensures that the books the pupils read extend their skills and result in above average standards in reading. In the foundation stage, each child's progress is closely followed and recorded in line with various stages of achievement set for this age group. However, the picture is not entirely consistent. For example, in the case of the pupils' English writing, the informal assessments are not always sufficiently evaluated to be of use in planning the next steps in learning. Moreover, there is currently insufficient attention to checking the extent to which marking is followed up.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

28. The great majority of parents feel that their children like coming to school, that the teaching is good and their children are motivated to do well. The teachers take good care of all the children and know them well. The parents are also aware of the Christian ethos of the school that supports the children's all-round development and encourages them to accept responsibility from an early age. The parents are pleased at the way the children are becoming polite and well-behaved individuals.
29. The inspectors agree with the many positive views expressed by the majority of the parents, but note the significant minority who disagree about some important areas of the school's life. For instance, there are some concerns about what is perceived as a limited range of activities offered outside of lessons. There are also some misgivings about the leadership and management of the school and the educational partnership between home and school. The inspectors judge that the range of extra-curricular activities provided is satisfactory and that the school's leadership and management are sound. However, the good links between parents, carers and school staff to promote learning at the Foundation Stage are not yet being built on sufficiently in Years 1 – 4.
30. The school provides a good level of written information for the parents and carers, in a variety of ways such as attractive newsletters, clear annual reports and appropriate letters about school activities. A regular pattern of formal meetings and easy, informal contact at the start and end of the day also facilitates a useful exchange of information between families and staff. At the Foundation Stage, the Nursery staff actively involves the parents and carers in the activities at the start of the school day, so that they can understand and appreciate the sort of skills being fostered in their child's learning. This active involvement is not present to the same extent as the children progress through the school and some parents expressed concerns about this. For example, some felt they were given insufficient information about the deployment of class teachers at the start of the school year and for a time the use of homework was seen to be spasmodic and insufficient. Whilst most of these concerns have been resolved, it is still evident that the active creation of links with parents and carers to support a partnership with the school in the children's learning is not a high priority.
31. The school is currently attempting to raise a considerable sum of money towards the building of a new hall that will enhance both the curriculum and the scope for a greater range of extra curricular activities. The PTA are working hard with the governors on fund raising and social events to support the school in this aim.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

32. The headteacher's tenacious leadership has steered the school through turbulent times to the point where a developing staff team is providing a good and improving quality of education for the children. The Christian ethos of the school is well established and reflected in the positive relationships at all levels. It is also evident in the very good behaviour of the children, their positive attitudes to their work and the rising trend in the standards being achieved. There have been some important improvements in relation to the management of the school, *but much remains to be done if the school is to grow still further in effectiveness.*
33. The previous inspection report set out a daunting list of important issues for the school to address. As a result, an understandable decision was taken to make the OfSTED Action Plan the key document outlining the programme for school improvement. This useful, well-structured and informative plan has now run its course and has clearly been useful in helping the school to approach important issues in a systematic fashion. However, there is as yet nothing to replace it to guide the future development of the school. The next step is for the headteacher to consult with teachers, governors, parents, children and the wider community in order to determine the key priorities for the school for the next two to three years. These views, the findings of this report and the teachers' own evaluation of standards, teaching and learning should then form the basis for a new school improvement plan. **This is a key issue for action.**
34. The teaching team has made satisfactory progress towards adopting the roles and responsibility that are necessary for the successful management of the school's curriculum. The teachers are starting to talk with greater authority about how the curriculum is planned and the range of resources available for teaching. As a result of the analysis of a good range of test and assessment data, they are also more conversant with the standards being achieved in the core subjects. The sensible decision to introduce a common format for the co-ordinators' files has also contributed to the development of cohesive practice. However, all subject co-ordinators now need to acquire a more detailed knowledge of standards across the school, for instance by collecting sets of the pupils' work from different classes, by checking progress and the quality of the teachers' marking. All the co-ordinators need training in the art of lesson observation and how to provide colleagues with feedback that will help them to improve. Responsibility for a budget and an opportunity to learn a little about the use of "best value" principles in purchasing equipment and resources would also help their professional growth. The decisions taken by the headteacher are central to this process, but despite a strong bond with her staff and a ready willingness to send them on training courses, the current arrangements for Performance Management are poor. The headteacher is appraised annually by a panel of governors supported by an External Adviser, but an appraisal programme for the teachers is not yet in place. All adults working at the school have individual job specifications, but these are limited to generic descriptions of duties and responsibilities and do not contain targets specific to initiatives on the school improvement plan. Such targets would support both individual and institutional development. All members of staff are entitled to a regular professional review of their performance and a discussion of the possibilities for their future career development. **This is a key issue for action.**
35. With the exception of the arrangements for performance management of teachers the governing body carries out its duties satisfactorily. The governors have provided good levels of support for the headteacher and the staff team in recent years. The regular involvement in the day-to-day life of school of one or two long serving governors ensures a satisfactory overview of the quality of education being provided. The governors' annual report to parents covers the vast majority of the necessary ground in an interesting and informative fashion. However, the inclusion of a more detailed commentary and evaluation of the action taken in relation to the most recent inspection report would improve it still further.

36. The headteacher and governors make prudent use of the budget and are now in a good position to contribute towards the construction of a long awaited school hall. The levels of educational resources are generally good with significant recent improvement in those for information and communications technology. The principles of best value are clearly shown by the high levels of care shown by staff and pupils in the treatment of books, equipment and other resources. The purchase of wireless networked laptop computers that can be moved from class to class rather than fixed in one place also demonstrate a sound start to this process.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

37. The school now needs to improve still further its effectiveness, the quality of education provided and the standards achieved by the children. In order to do so, the headteacher, staff and governors should

- (1) Devise a school improvement plan based on
 - the findings of this inspection report
 - the ongoing evaluation of the current test and assessment data
 - the priorities agreed amongst the staff, governors, parents and pupils

- (2) Establish a rigorous system of performance management so that
 - all staff have regular, formal opportunities to review their career development and level of performance
 - staff responsibilities can be matched to the priorities of the school improvement plan
 - staff training needs can be accurately assessed and catered forParagraphs 32, 33, 34

- (3) Improve the provision for physical education in Years 1-4 by
 - developing the teachers' knowledge and skills in the subject
 - completing the school hall projectParagraphs 18, 82

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	38
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	6	22	8	2	0	0
Percentage	0	16	58	21	5	0	0

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

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)	18	103
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	18

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.62
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.2

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
	2002	9	14	23

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	6	9
	Girls	14	12	14
	Total	23	18	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	78 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	9	8
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	23	23	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	96 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	96	1	0
White – Irish		0	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean		0	0
Mixed – White and Black African		0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background		0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian		0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani		0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi		0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background		0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean		0	0
Black or Black British – African		0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background		0	0
Chinese		0	0
Any other ethnic group		0	0

No ethnic group recorded			
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The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16
Average class size	21

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	75

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	48
Number of pupils per FTE adult	11

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
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	£
Total income	274 213
Total expenditure	260 711
Expenditure per pupil	2 155
Balance brought forward from previous year	38,910
Balance carried forward to next year	52 412

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	121
Number of questionnaires returned	43

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	44	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	35	9	5	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	58	2	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	60	12	2	14
The teaching is good.	51	44	5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	53	9	7	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	42	9	5	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	56	0	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	19	51	19	9	2
The school is well led and managed.	37	30	23	7	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	37	7	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	2	33	28	21	16

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

38. Children enter the nursery at the age of three and join the reception class in the term in which they are four. The induction arrangements in the nursery are flexible and enable the teachers and the parents to meet the varying needs of the children. The teaching in the nursery and reception classes gives the children a good start to their early learning. Their pastoral and welfare needs are also sensitively met so that they are confident and eager in approaching the good range of activities planned for them. For instance, on arrival each day they and their parents are individually and warmly welcomed and move off confidently together to self-register and then on to one of the activities set out around the classroom.
39. The success of the teaching lies in the way the adults make careful observations of the children and get to know them very well. This enables the staff to match carefully the range of activities to the stage each child is at. For instance, when they first arrive at school the children have varying skills for holding mark-making equipment. Therefore, they are encouraged to participate in a variety of tasks designed to enable them to hold pencils, felt pens, brushes and other equipment comfortably. As a result, many of the children quickly learn to reproduce basic shapes that develop into clear, rounded letters to form the basis of a clear, legible handwriting style. The adults operate as a very coherent team and understand well the requirements of the foundation stage curriculum. They are rapidly developing a good understanding of the targets set for the children by the time they begin Year 1. The adults recognise that many of the children enter school with above average ability in all of the areas of learning and are very committed to ensuring that they make good subsequent progress.

Personal and social development

40. The adults organise and manage the daily routines very well so that the children are calm and settled. Many of the reception class children show a good degree of maturity as they help the nursery children to negotiate steps or invite them to participate in some of their choice activities. The youngest children engage enthusiastically and without fuss in the activities set out for them as they arrive at school. A few are already sufficiently adept socially to negotiate a companion to share their activities. The reception children are able to work harmoniously in small groups when role-playing the story of Goldilocks, following up a literacy activity or using the outdoor environment to make constructions with large wooden blocks. They quickly become independent over matters of personal hygiene and rapidly learn to remove and replace their shoes and socks when using the sand tray. Unaided they put on coats when they are going out of doors and aprons when they wish to paint. By the time they enter Year 1, many meet the targets set for this stage of learning and a good proportion exceed them.

Communication language and literacy

41. Many children speak well by the time they begin school, but a few are less confident and need careful attention in order to develop clear speech. This is why opportunities to speak and listen are regular features of each day. The reception children are well able to put together a number of interesting sentences as they talk about objects they have brought from home. The teachers have also arranged a number of valuable opportunities for the children to speak with visitors such as a doctor, an ambulance driver, a friend of the school who has a special bird collection, and a female police officer. The teachers are skilful at responding to what the children say.

For instance, one of the youngest children spoke of “a short rabbit” to which the teacher promptly added, “Oh you mean he is not very tall!” This challenging but constructive approach enables the children to refine and develop their choice of words.

42. The children are making good progress in developing early reading and writing skills. A good number of the nursery children write their own name and recognise it on a printed card as they self-register. The older children are copywriting sentences legibly, and a good proportion can construct their own sentences, for example, to caption an illustration. They enjoy listening to stories and can often identify the initial sounds in key words. An example was seen as the reception children set about ordering the names of the day of the week, using their knowledge of initial sounds to help them. By the end of the reception year, many exceed the learning goals set for them.

Mathematical development

43. Regular opportunities are provided for the children to develop their mathematical awareness within the daily life of the classrooms. For instance, they are encouraged to use mathematics as they count pieces of equipment in and out of their containers and the written numerals to twenty are clearly displayed in classrooms. The children regularly chant number rhymes, often linked to stories that are read to them. In the reception class, the children have learned the names of a range of shapes and use the terms triangle, square, circle quite naturally as they collaborate in activities to make various designs from these shapes. They use puppets and “small world” materials to arrange objects in relation to each other, providing opportunities to use the language of position. The role-play corner often has a mathematical element; the children engage in shopping activities and learn one-to-one correspondence as they match bowls of porridge to the relevant number of bears or lay out a table for a tea party. Their mathematical learning gets off to a good start in the foundation stage and many exceed the average levels that are expected by the end of the stage.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

44. The adults bring some interesting resources to stimulate the children’s interest in the world around them. The current topic has enriched their knowledge of the variety of animals around the world and the fact that many of them live outside England. A considerable degree of awe and wonder was expressed as the reception class children were shown first an ostrich’s egg and then one laid by a goose. The children cut out paper and card and use different methods of joining materials to make models. The youngest children in the nursery enjoy using a range of small and large construction equipment and are able to talk excitedly about what they have made. The teaching area is well organised to promote enquiry skills. Some children, for example, enjoyed looking at various objects through hand lenses. When they engage in sand and water play, the children learn to appreciate some of their properties and the fact that they can be changed. For instance, one child in the nursery expressed considerable surprise one day as she noticed that the water in the water tray was coloured orange. The computers represent a considerable focus of interest. By the time the children complete the reception class, they fully understand that images on the screen can be changed by a mouse click. A few are very adept at using paint programs to reproduce illustrations such as a tepee, which they had previously constructed with card and straws. The children are well placed to meet the early learning goals in this area of their work by the end of the reception class.

Physical development

45. Many of the children have above average levels of coordination. In part, this is the result of the good organisation that ensures a regular flow of activities from indoors to out. For example, the skills of manipulation learned by using smaller materials indoors can be expanded outside in construction activities using larger materials. The children's control and energy levels are abundantly challenged as they pedal around on single or paired wheeled vehicles. Another positive feature of this activity is the fact that boys and girls share the paired vehicles and take turns to be the driver. The adults are careful to ensure that the children's learning is pushed forward by setting challenges such as asking them to steer following the outline of a road on the playground or getting them to turn left or right. The outcomes of the children's responses are noted carefully and recorded as part of the day-to-day assessments made by all adults. This information is then used to determine the next steps in the children's learning. The children's fine control skills are also developed well in regular activities that require them to manipulate playdough, to draw and to paint. Once again, the sensitive interventions and demonstrations by the adults contribute strongly to the good progress made by the children in this area.

Creative development

46. The good range of activities includes many opportunities for creative expression. The children enjoy painting, both individually and as part of a larger group where they can produce large collages or paint large pieces of fabric for use as drapes in the teaching area. For example, the youngest and oldest children have participated successfully in the creation of large collage panels to illustrate the sequence of a story. The nursery children gain a great deal as they see the older children confidently selecting colours to paint large bold pictures. The role play area is very popular because it fires the children's imagination as they create their own version of traditional stories, or are engaged in providing "medical care" for dolls. No musical activities were seen, but the planning shows that singing and the use of untuned percussion instruments happen regularly. The children's creative development is well fostered; they are confident and imaginative when they engage in creative activities, especially when the adults are able to interact with them. They generally exceed the targets set for this area of learning.

ENGLISH

47. The strength of the pupils' performance lies in their very good speaking and listening skills and their confident reading. They have been maintained at this high level since the last inspection. Over the past few years, however, the results in writing have been less strong. There was a good explanation for the fall in the Year 2 results last year, but the school's own analysis of the writing in Years 3 and 4 shows that the pupils' progress did not match the brisk pace found in their reading. Following a careful analysis of the assessment data, the teachers have used a variety of approaches to improve the pupils' writing. There is a better awareness of the sorts of writing the pupils need to encounter as they move through the school and the activities planned are generally much better matched to their abilities. Consequently, standards in writing are now better than at the time of the last inspection and are above average by the end of Years 2 and 4. The progress that has been made is encouraging, but more now needs to be done to enable the pupils to write at greater length over a period of time.
48. Handwriting is well taught and most pupils are swift to acquire a well-formed script. However, the range of methods employed for teaching spelling is too narrow because it focuses almost exclusively on the sounds of individual letters and not enough on the shape and appearance of words and the groups of letters within them.

49. Good opportunities for speaking and listening are provided in the Foundation Stage so that many of the children begin Year 1 as confident speakers. The pupils in Year 2 were heard to make well articulated, imaginative suggestions about what might lie behind a closed door discovered inside a cave. During a lesson in personal, social and health education in year 4, the pupils listened very attentively and responded appropriately to each other's views. Several lessons provided evidence of the fact that as they spoke, many of the pupils were searching for the most effective way of expressing their ideas.
50. The pupils read fluently and expressively. Standards throughout the school are high. This is because the school staff regularly listen to the pupils reading. The good quality support of the teaching assistants is a significant factor in the good progress made by many lower attaining pupils. There is also a close correlation between reading attainment and the additional support the children receive from being heard to read at home. Some of the older pupils have very secure skills to access information and enjoy opportunities to carry out independent research. Despite the difficulties caused by the library having to be used as a classroom, the arrangements adequately ensure that the most is made of the good supply of books.
51. The school is making a conscientious effort to address the pupils' attainment in writing. In Year 3 the profile of attainment is below average, but the children are making reasonable gains. However, they do not extend their writing sufficiently and still need further guidance about how to express their ideas clearly and sequentially. Elsewhere in the school progress is faster and the analysis of the exercise books and folders now shows evidence of the children's increasing awareness of ways that will help them to improve the quality of their writing. For instance, the older pupils in Year 4 regularly re-read their draft writing to improve its accuracy and to increase the interest level for the reader. The use of text to introduce writing tasks is also a more consistent feature of lessons. A good example was seen in Year 1 when the pupils used John Foster's poem "Sand" to produce similar poems of their own, recognising and reproducing the author's rhyming and rhythmic patterns. The pupils' awareness of punctuation is improving and by the end of year 4 they use question, exclamation and speech marks appropriately.
52. The school has introduced a more systematic approach to spelling; for instance the pupils are provided with word banks to which they can refer when writing. The very effective teaching of the sounds of letters assists the children when they tackle unfamiliar words and also contributes to some of the sensible guesses that the children make when writing. However, these skills need also to be augmented by a sharper focus on the shape and appearance of words and the letter combinations within them. The teachers mark the pupils' work regularly and write encouraging comments. However, their observations seldom make it clear how the pupils should improve their work.
53. The pupils' interest in reading and writing is high. They behave well in the lessons and respond very positively to some of the interesting texts that are used to develop their language skills.
54. The management of English is satisfactory. A sound start has been made to developing a clear view of standards by analysing the test and assessment data. The next step is for the co-ordinator to spend more time assessing the quality of the pupils' day-to-day work across the school and checking that school policy is consistently applied in regard to curriculum coverage and the marking of the pupils' work.

MATHEMATICS

55. Standards in mathematics are above average at the end of Years 2 and 4 because the teaching is consistently good throughout the school and the curriculum well organised.
56. The re-organisation of the school day and the timetable has facilitated a review of the mathematics curriculum and how it is taught. The pupils now benefit from a curriculum that is organised in ways better suited to their needs. It draws upon the guidance provided in the National Numeracy Strategy to ensure a fuller coverage of the requirements for both the Foundation Stage and Years 1-4. In addition, the teachers have improved their subject knowledge and provide interesting lessons that involve both practical activities and opportunities to apply mental arithmetic skills. Consequently, the school has successfully enhanced the quality of education provided and improved upon the average standards reported at the last inspection.
57. The inspection findings confirm that the children in the nursery and the reception class make good progress in their mathematical development. The vast majority are on course to meet the national targets for five-year-olds and a good number will exceed them. Good progress is maintained in Years 1-4. For example, pupils in Year 1 confidently work with analogue clocks to tell the hour and half-hour and several show a good understanding of quarter to and quarter past the hour with both analogue and digital clocks. A majority of the Year 2 pupils solve real money problems by the accurate use of simple multiplication tables to speed up their calculations. Several of the higher attaining Year 4 pupils, both boys and girls, are already working at the levels expected of eleven-year-olds. For example, when investigating consecutive numbers several pupils accurately identify and describe the patterns emerging from the addition of different number combinations. Moreover, the lower attaining pupils are securely reaching the expected level for pupils of this age. For instance, they can describe a general pattern and know that the addition of an odd and even number always produces an odd answer. This is a good indicator of the considerable gains made since the last inspection when this group of children was judged to be underachieving.
58. The teaching of numeracy is good with particular strength in the way that the teachers encourage the skills of mental mathematics. There are several other strong features that characterise the quality of the teaching, such as the teachers' good subject knowledge and their use of probing questions. This was evident in a Year 3 lesson concerning multiplication of one digit numbers by 10 and 100. Rather than just reading out the next one digit number the teacher asked for the next odd number or double the last even number and the children responded by listening and thinking really carefully. The teachers' careful planning identifies the specific learning focus and the length of each section of a lesson. This contributes to the brisk pace of learning observed in many classes during the inspection. Moreover, the widespread use of interesting practical and investigative activities successfully enthuses the pupils to work hard and improve their skills. This is a significant improvement since the time of the previous inspection when there was too much reliance on unchallenging worksheets. The setting of work that matches the range of abilities in each class and the effective deployment of the well-qualified teaching assistants ensure that pupils of all abilities are helped to make good progress in their studies. The teachers have established clear routines and working practices that have a positive effect on the children's attitudes and commitment to learning. The pupils concentrate well, show good recall of their previous learning and apply themselves energetically and diligently to work in hand. The teachers mark the work regularly and write encouraging remarks, but their commentary seldom makes it clear how the pupils should improve their work.
59. The management of the subject has improved because the co-ordinator is clearer about her role and responsibilities. The analysis of test and assessment data is now satisfactorily informing

target setting and curriculum planning, but the systematic monitoring of the effects of teaching is not yet firmly established.

SCIENCE

60. Standards in science are above average at the end of Years 2 and 4 because the teaching is predominantly good throughout the school and the curriculum well organised.
61. At the end of Years 2 and 4, standards in science are above average for reasons similar to those underpinning the pupils' attainment in mathematics. The improvements in the two subjects have gone hand in hand.
62. The inspection findings confirm that children in the nursery and the reception class make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of scientific aspects of the world around them. Almost all are on course to meet the national targets for five-year-olds and a good number will exceed them. The findings also indicate that the pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1-4. For example, pupils in Year 2 are able to not only accurately identify which materials have been used within the school environment, but also to explain the reasons. In Year 4, several of the higher attaining pupils, both boys and girls, are already working at the levels expected of eleven-year-olds within the area of scientific enquiry. For example, they understand the principles of a fair test and can explain how to alter one variable at a time in order to ensure valid results. They were able to explain clearly how they had applied this principle in experiments about sound. In addition, the lower attaining pupils are securely reaching the expected levels for pupils of this age. For example, almost all of them can accurately explain the concept of an electrical circuit and know that a switch works to break then rejoin the circuit. This is a good indicator of the gains made since the last inspection when progress was judged to be only satisfactory.
63. The teaching of science is good and is characterised by several strengths. Lessons that were previously overlong have been shortened and now have a sharper focus and a positive influence on the pupils' behaviour and learning. The objectives and each section of a lesson are clearly specified thereby helping to generate a brisk pace of learning. The good use of appropriate scientific questioning and vocabulary by the adults also contributes positively to the pupils' ability to express themselves effectively as scientists. Many pupils in Year 4 indicate a preference for science because they have the opportunity to create and carry out experiments and simple tests that help to make their learning real. Similarly, the Year 2 pupils show an obvious enjoyment of their science work and are keen to record their findings of the exercise. The teachers set work that matches the range of abilities in each class and the effective deployment of the well-qualified teaching assistants ensures that pupils of all abilities are helped to make good progress in their studies. The teachers have established clear routines and working practices that have a positive effect on the children's attitudes and commitment to learning. Children concentrate well, show good recall of previous learning and apply themselves energetically, safely and diligently to work in hand. However, although the teachers mark the pupils' work regularly and write encouraging remarks their commentary seldom makes it clear how the pupils should improve their work.
64. The management of the subject has improved because the co-ordinator is clearer about her role and responsibilities. The analysis of assessment data is now satisfactorily informing target setting and curriculum planning, but the systematic monitoring of the effects of teaching is not yet firmly established.

ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

65. It is evident from the folders and displays of the children's work and from watching and speaking with them as they work that they enjoy these subjects and achieve standards that are securely in line with those expected at the end of Years 2 and 4.
66. The teaching of art is sound in Years 1 and 2. The skills of colour mixing are taught effectively alongside a sensible range of brush techniques so that the pupils achieve a good variety of attractive effects by combining primary colours to create patterns. The levels of resources are good and carefully prepared before each lesson. The teachers' technical knowledge is secure so that, for instance, the pupils are instructed always to add darker colours to lighter rather than vice versa. However, more teacher demonstration and a sharper evaluation of the finished products would further accelerate the rate of the pupils' progress. There are also signs that the school's improved computer provision is beginning to benefit the children's work in art. For instance, their study of the work of the artist Mondrian is reflected in some clever imitations using the program "Dazzle."
67. In Years 3 and 4, the teaching of art is good and builds successfully upon what has gone before. The pupils are currently studying the work of Picasso and have built up a good knowledge of some aspects of his work, especially in relation to portraiture. In discussion with their teachers, they declare that they find his art interesting, "because he puts things at odd angles," and speak enthusiastically about famous paintings, such as "The Weeping Woman." In order that the pupils might encounter success in their own attempts to recreate the style of Picasso, the teachers have skilfully guided them through a variety of activities to illuminate the artist's work. For instance, the children have cut out pictures of people from magazines and newspapers in order to tear out and reassemble facial features in the form of "paste up" portraits. Subsequently, when the pupils in Year 3 were observed creating their own portraits in pastels, they already had a good idea of what they wanted to achieve. Their skills in colouring, blending and smudging colour are good. The Year 4 pupils used powder paint for their work and showed no fear when confronted with the large sheets of blank paper provided by the teacher. They all demonstrated good levels of confidence in drawing a faint outline and gridlines to determine the location of facial features. They speak knowledgeably when deciding to work in either "profile" or "frontal" view and the subsequent quality of their work reveals a good range of bold, imaginative and individual attempts that incorporate competent colour mixing skills and a variety of clever brush techniques.
68. Only one lesson of design and technology was observed during the inspection. This was in Year 4. The analysis of the pupils' work in Year 2 shows that helpful links are being made between this subject and history. A study of toys from long ago has led to the children constructing template models of toy rocking horses and attempting to create a working version of the game "cup and ball." The latter project in particular offered the children the opportunity to develop their skills of cutting and fixing a variety of materials, to produce an attractive finish and to test for "fitness for purpose." The good volume of work in Year 3 and 4 shows how well the pupils' skills are developing. For instance, prior to constructing their own coin containers, the pupils produced a variety of carefully labelled drawings that set out the materials to be used, the sequence of work and the fixings to be employed. The finished products are carefully displayed and will evidently do the job they were designed for. Many have been attractively finished using beads, ribbons and sequins sewn onto the fabric of the purse.

69. The lesson observed in Year 4 involved the pupils in designing a sandwich for a specific individual, situation or occasion. It was successful because there was a precise objective that the teacher kept in the forefront of the pupils' minds as they set about their initial drawings and designs. The teacher's careful questioning enabled the children to demonstrate that they had learned a great deal about food from their work in Personal and Social Education and by their involvement in the Healthy Eating project. Her own personal knowledge of individual pupils was also useful as she enabled them to volunteer information about their own particular dietary needs. The pupils worked hard and carefully and most were eager to attempt the "exploding" diagram technique demonstrated by the teacher as a means of illustrating how their sandwich might ultimately be constructed.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

70. Discussion with pupils and an analysis of their work indicate that standards in history and geography are broadly average. This is supported by the observations of three history lessons made during the inspection. No geography lessons were taught at this time.
71. As they move through the school, the pupils cover an interesting range of topics in history. In doing so, they acquire the ability to interpret information sources in order to answer questions about the past, to identify differences between the past and the present and develop a sense of chronology. The teaching of history is generally sound and has some good features. Its strong features are the good use of resources, including both artefacts and visits to places of historical interest, and the use of questioning to support the pupils' skills of historical enquiry. In addition, there are clear links with learning in other subjects, such as geography, mathematics and science. This was seen to good effect in Key Stage 1 lessons involving a study of toys, then and now. The pupils were enthused by the range of toys provided and were effectively encouraged to identify decades within the 20th Century in which the toys could be grouped. The children accurately noted the different characteristics of the toys and used these to arrange them in order of age. Once the task had been completed successfully, it was then recorded accurately. By the end of Year 4, the pupils are able to extract evidence from a range of sources to develop their knowledge and understanding of different periods and key events from the past. This is well illustrated in their recall of their study of the Ancient Egyptians, Victorians and Romans. Much of these studies also allow the pupils to develop their geographical skills, such as using maps and the identification and understanding of localities beyond their own.
72. In geography, the pupils cover an appropriate range of topics to develop their ability to recognise and describe features of their own locality and then to compare this with a contrasting setting. They also are encouraged to appreciate the difference between man-made and natural features, and to reflect upon the effect of humans on the environment. The teachers make good use of visits to places of geographical interest and identify meaningful links with learning in other subjects such as history, mathematics and science. The pupils in Year 2 demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of human and physical features of the local environment, which they then compare with a different locality, such as a Scottish island. The pupils in Year 4 are aware of the elements comprising our weather patterns and can compare them with Australia's. In addition, they show a sound knowledge of the different physical features of the two differing locations. They draw upon their good mathematical knowledge to identify and locate features on maps.
73. The co-ordination of these subjects is more effective than at the time of the last inspection, and the learning resources have been improved to a good level. Furthermore, there is more helpful guidance available for the teachers, both in the national subject documents and a published

scheme of work that was recently purchased. This is helping the teachers to ensure that there is greater progression in the pupils' learning as they move through the school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

74. As a result of significant and well-judged investment in new equipment and a substantial programme of staff training, there has been good improvement in this subject since the last inspection. Consequently, standards are rising swiftly and the pupils' attainment is now clearly in line with the expected levels at the end of both Year 2 and Year 4.
75. One of the key reasons for the recent improvements is the decision to opt for the purchase of a set of lap top computers that can be moved from class to class and recharged at lunchtimes and over night. This obviates the need for a dedicated computer suite, which would tie up some of the school's already limited space. As a result, every child in the school has access to a computer when this subject is being taught and this contributes strongly to the good progress being made in the acquisition of a wide range of skills.
76. The pupils' folders of work show a systematic and widening coverage of the National Curriculum requirements. By the age of seven, the pupils are acquiring a good understanding of how new technologies can help make life easier in a variety of ways. They enjoy producing pictures with programs such as "Splosh" and "Dazzle", and understand that computers make it easy not only to design birthday cards, but also to print out several invitations in one go. By the age of nine, these basic skills are successfully extended and refined. For instance, in Year 4 the pupils are currently exploring branch databases. They are becoming increasingly adept at discovering the answers to their questions and at adding information to the original database. In the past, they have used programs such as "Compose World Junior" to appraise music and to compose their own pieces. They have collected data from their investigations in mathematics and used the computer to analyse and present it in a variety of ways.
77. The teaching is good. In the three lessons observed, the teachers' subject knowledge was secure, and in one instance the teacher made very successful use of a projector to demonstrate on screen exactly what the pupils needed to do. This helped the children because they could match the screens and menus on their own computers with those being shown by the teacher. The pupils are clearly delighted by the quality of their new computers. They treat them very carefully and explain intelligently to visitors the range of work for which they have used them. A good indication of the brisk pace of improvement was seen in the way that in Year 1 the pupils switched on their own machines, clicked on the icon for the correct program and started work confidently. At the end of the lesson, there were similar levels of competence as the children closed the program and switched off the computers.
78. The subject co-ordinator has made a sound start to her work. Her file provides good levels of information about how the curriculum is organised and the way that assessments are made of the children's work. The next steps have been correctly identified, including the need for better quality programmable electronic toys in Years 1 and 2 and further guidance on the uses of information technology across the curriculum.

MUSIC

79. During the inspection one music lesson was observed in Year 4 and one brief session in Year 1. The pupils were heard singing during school worship. No recorded work in music was available, but in discussion with the pupils it became clear that their attitudes to learning music are

satisfactory overall. Some pupils spoke with enthusiasm about being members of the school choir and of opportunities to participate in school productions such as “Babouschka”. A high quality violin lesson led by an instrumental teacher enriched the experience of two of the older pupils.

80. Classroom music is taught by two “specialist” teachers whose subject knowledge is good. The planning of the curriculum meets national requirements, but in the case of the older class, the activity chosen to practise maintaining a beat or pulse was somewhat formal and too repetitive for the pupils to respond with any real engagement. Nevertheless, an earlier opportunity to imitate Egyptian music was based on work in their history topic and had clearly fired their creative imagination. The younger pupils are learning to recognise features such as ostinato. Their listening skills and their ability to perform together are carefully fostered. The singing heard during school worship was tuneful and expressive, providing evidence that the standards in singing are better than average.
81. The teachers plan their work conscientiously and provide good resources for listening and performance activities. Nevertheless, at times, too little use is made of national guidance to ensure that the pupils experience a well-balanced variety of interesting activities that build progressively on their skills and provide sharp criteria for the assessment of progress.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

82. The standards achieved are satisfactory overall. The pupils in the nursery and Reception classes make a good start in their physical development, but they make merely satisfactory progress throughout the rest of the school. This is the result of the inadequacy of the accommodation and the variable levels of the teachers’ subject expertise. The lack of a school hall means that it is not possible to offer gymnastics activities safely and the teachers' subject knowledge is not always as secure as in other subjects, such as mathematics and science. **This is a key issue for action.**
83. The teaching of physical education is satisfactory overall, but contains both good and poor features. Two lessons were seen during the inspection. One took place on the playground for pupils in Year 1, and the other lesson was held on the adjoining school field for pupils in Years 2-4. The standards exceeded expectations in the first lesson, and were broadly in line with expectations in the second. Both lessons were mainly concerned with ball skills, but the lesson for Year 2-4 pupils also involved skipping activities. In both lessons, the adults and the pupils changed into appropriate clothing. The children warmed up and cooled down effectively, behaved well and used equipment provided sensibly. The Year 1 lesson resulted in good progress in the pupils' ability to throw, catch and strike a variety of balls. This was due to the good subject knowledge of the adults who enthusiastically provided well-thought-out activities for the pupils. In addition, they provided frequent, helpful coaching and made good use of pupil demonstrations to achieve general improvement. Consequently, the children practised their skills, reflected upon their own and others' performance and refined their actions effectively. The Year 2-4 lesson failed to provide the same levels of consistency and purpose. For example, the pupils' physical activity varied from minimal to overlong. Although the quality of the pupils' performance was satisfactory, the adults provided limited opportunities for them to think about and improve their actions. For example, little use was of either teaching points or pupil demonstration. The planning for both lessons set out a range of appropriate activities, but provided limited guidance about the development of skills.

84. When they are available, the school makes sound use of coaches and coaching schemes, for example through links with Rushden and Diamonds Football Club. At other times, the teachers run after-school activities that supplement the physical education curriculum.

85. The leadership is aware of the shortcomings in provision for this subject and has already begun to take appropriate action to bring about improvements. For example, the governors are close to realising their plans for building a hall. It is intended that this will strengthen the provision both for physical education lessons and extra-curricular activities. However, it will also be necessary to ensure that the teachers are provided with appropriate training and guidance about the teaching of the full physical education curriculum.