INSPECTION REPORT

GAWCOTT INFANT SCHOOL

Gawcott, Nr Buckingham

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110228

Headteacher: Ms Carole Chandler

Reporting inspector: Mr George Crowther
18814

Dates of inspection: 24th – 26th February 2003

Inspection number: 246969

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms C Hare
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
George Crowther *Registered inspector* *18814*	Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Information and communication technology Music Educational inclusion, including race equality	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils? What should the school do to improve further?
Norma Ball *Lay inspector* *9391*		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Pat Kitley *Team inspector* *23487*	English Science Geography History Physical education Religious education Special educational needs	How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Gawcott is a small, community infant school for boys and girls who are 4-7 years old. It has 55 full-time pupils and 10 who attend part-time in the reception class. At the last inspection, it was a first school with 76 pupils aged 4-8 years. The school is situated in a village about two miles south of Buckingham. Children live in the village, surrounding villages, and some travel from further a field, owing to parental choice. The school serves families whose social circumstances are generally much more favourable than the national picture. No pupils are eligible for free school meals. Overall, pupils' attainment when they join the school is above average. About 12 per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, for a range of learning and behavioural difficulties, which is below average. Two pupils have statements outlining how their special needs should be met. During the past two years, there has been a complete change of teaching staff and many changes on the governing body. Gawcott is a Beacon School, so staff work with colleagues in eight other local schools developing and sharing good practice.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Gawcott provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils, and has a number of strong features. The staff know children and their families well, and create an environment for learning that is caring and positive. Children get a good start in the reception class and achieve well because the teaching is good and a wide range of activities encourages effective learning. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall, and good in English. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are well above average, and this is reflected in the results of national tests. Despite many changes in teaching staff, the leadership and management of the school are sound. Many systems and procedures have been rebuilt during the past twelve months, but are not yet fully effective. The quality of teaching is good overall, but there are relative weaknesses in a few lessons. All the staff work effectively as a close-knit team, which provides a consistent approach to supporting pupils' learning. The school provides satisfactory value for the funding it receives.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Pupils attain standards in national tests that are well above average.
- In the reception class, children get a good start to learning at school.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The school creates an environment in which pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour make a significant contribution to their learning.
- The headteacher has led the school successfully through a period of great change.
- Positive and productive links with parents make an effective contribution to children's learning.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Work for the higher attaining pupils does not always challenge them sufficiently, especially in

mathematics.

- In a few lessons, there are weaknesses in the quality of teaching.
- The school does not identify areas for improvement precisely enough, so plans to raise standards lack focus.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected, in November 1997, it was judged to be a good school, with some very good features. Since then, it has been through a period of great instability, with a number of changes of headteacher and a complete change in teaching staff. Despite these barriers, overall improvement has been satisfactory. The standards of attainment noted at the last inspection have been maintained and the school has dealt with the points for action that were identified. A change of staff has eliminated the dip in progress during Year 1 that was reported at the last inspection. The school has improved resources for information and communication technology (ICT) and staff have had additional training. However, ICT activities are still not a consistent feature of lessons in other subjects. Beacon School status has enabled the headteacher to have additional time without teaching commitments and this, alongside sharing curriculum responsibilities with colleagues, has eased her workload. Since the new headteacher was appointed, the school has done well to consolidate the quality of its work, and has a sound capacity to raise standards further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
reading	**A**	**A**	**A**	**A**
writing	**A**	**B**	**A**	**A**
mathematics	**B**	**B**	**A**	**A**

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

Children start school with a range of existing skills, but their overall attainment is normally above average. In the reception class, children's achievements (the progress they make in relation to their initial attainment) are good in all areas of learning. The curriculum is well matched to their needs, they are well taught, and they make good progress in developing their early skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Almost all are likely to reach the standards expected by the time they join Year 1 (the Early Learning Goals), and many will exceed them.

During Year 1 and Year 2, pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. Results in the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 2 were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics, and compared very favourably with those gained by similar schools (those with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals). The results for 2003 are likely to be a little lower because the current Year 2 has a larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs than last year.

Inspection of pupils' work in the current Year 2 shows that attainment is well above national expectations in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' achievements are good in English, with skills

in speaking, reading and writing all being developed well through a good range of activities. A particular strength is the way in which literacy skills are used and developed in other subjects. In mathematics, whilst the lower attaining pupils achieve well, the higher attaining pupils' achievements are satisfactory because the work is not always challenging enough, especially in Year 1. In science, pupils join Year 1 with well above average skills and their achievements are satisfactory. Pupils achieve well in design and technology and dance and reach standards that are above national expectations. In art, geography, history, information and communication technology, music and religious education, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Although pupils reach standards that are close to national expectations, their attainment does not yet match that seen in other subjects. The variable achievement across subjects is owing to the fact that the school is re-establishing the curriculum following a period of instability, so pupils are not yet receiving a consistent quality of education in all subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils really like coming to school and enjoy their learning. They show great enthusiasm for many activities. They contribute their ideas confidently and concentrate very well when they are given a task to do. This provides a very good basis for learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very sensibly in lessons and around the school. They know what is expected of them and respond well to guidance from adults. Their very good behaviour supports the progress they make. There have been no exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils and staff know each other very well. They form very positive relationships, which support pupils' learning. Pupils work and play well together, and all ages are friendly with each other. When given the opportunity, pupils respond well to additional responsibilities.
Attendance	Very good and well above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2
Quality of teaching	good	satisfactory

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

The quality of teaching is good overall. Throughout the school, it was at least good in 11 of the 20 lessons observed, and occasionally very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The good quality of teaching has been sustained since the last inspection. Teaching and learning for the reception children are consistently good and often very good. A rich variety of well-planned activities and very good support from adults ensure that children are very positive about their learning and make good progress. Throughout the school, lessons are planned well, with clear learning objectives that are shared with the children so they know what they are trying to achieve. Work is generally well matched to pupils' needs but, in a few lessons, higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough. Nonetheless, in most lessons pupils enjoy their work, try their best, and make good gains in learning. A very strong feature of children's learning is the interest and concentration they bring to their work. Teaching is good for English, and satisfactory for mathematics. Basic skills are taught well in both literacy and numeracy lessons. Teachers and classroom assistants have very good relationships with pupils and provide considerable support to enable them to succeed, particularly where pupils have special educational needs. The pace and organisation of most lessons is good. In a few lessons, however, the whole-class session lasts too long, which leaves too little time for the pupils to complete their

independent work. On occasion, the standard pattern of literacy and numeracy lessons is not adapted to meet the learning needs of the pupils most effectively.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum for children in the reception class is very good. For Year 1 and Year 2, the curriculum is broad and includes all the required subjects. Pupils receive a good balance and range of work in literacy, but there are a few weaknesses in numeracy. Other subjects are taught using nationally recommended guidance. Although the *content* of this work develops progressively, the school has yet to ensure that pupils' *skills* are built steadily in all subjects. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities, including visits to places of interest and visitors.
Aspect	**Comment**
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The needs of these pupils are identified clearly and appropriate targets for improvement are set. Pupils with special educational needs are well included in all activities. In lessons, they are given work that is well matched to their needs. Effective support, especially from learning assistants, helps them to make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school provides good support for pupils' personal development because the staff know each child very well. Provision for pupils' social and moral development is good and is fostered through the day-to-day life of the school as well as through activities such as 'circle times'. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is sound.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. On a day-to-day basis, the school cares for its pupils well, but staff have had no recent training in some of the formal procedures.
Assessment	Satisfactory. A good amount of information is gathered about pupils' attainment and achievements in English, mathematics and science. It is not used consistently, however, to ensure that work is well matched to pupils' needs.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. The school has positive links with parents. It encourages them to be involved in school activities, to take an active interest in their children's work and to support learning at home. The school provides very good quality information for parents about life in school and how their children are doing.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher has led the school successfully through a period of considerable change and has a clear vision for the future. Although many new management systems have been put in place, these have yet to be fully implemented or tested. The three full-time teachers share responsibilities well, for example in the co-ordination of subjects. They have a good grasp of strengths and areas for development, but

	have not yet had time to implement plans for improvement fully. The current school improvement plan was an interim measure and does not provide the focus needed to guide developments. A new plan will be put in place in the near future.
How well the governing body fulfils its responsibilities	Good. The governing body has a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have good systems for monitoring the work of the school. Governors are supportive, they fulfil their statutory responsibilities well, and they are beginning to play a fuller part in planning the way forward.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has put in place some systems for monitoring pupils' attainment and the quality of teaching and learning. As yet, the gathering of information is not systematic enough to ensure that weaknesses are identified precisely and that planned action for improvement is well focused.
Aspect	**Comment**
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning and management are good. The school makes good use of its funding, and plans ahead methodically. It has appropriate procedures for checking that it is providing the best value in all aspects of its work.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The school is well staffed, and has a graduate trainee teacher who is making a very good contribution. Teachers, classroom assistants and other staff are a committed, hard working team. The building provides adequate facilities and there are plans to add an ICT room. The grounds provide good opportunities for play and learning. Resources for learning are satisfactory for most subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
§ Their children make good progress at school. § Teaching is good. § The school expects children to work hard, achieve their best, and helps them to become mature and responsible. § Behaviour is good. § There is a good range of activities outside lessons. § The school is well led and managed.	§ No significant concerns were raised by all parents, but a few said that they would like more information about what their children are learning in class.

Just under a half of the parents returned the questionnaire, and 10 attended the meeting. The great majority of these parents are pleased with all aspects of the school's work, and inspectors' judgements largely support parents' positive views. However, inspectors judged that, in most subjects, children's progress is satisfactory rather than good in year 1 and year 2, and that the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The amount of information the school gives parents about what their children are learning in class is better than most schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

*(Pupils' **attainment** is what they know, understand and can do at a particular point in time e.g. at the end of Year 2. Pupils' **achievements** are the progress they make in relation to their initial attainment. Therefore, a child starting school with low attainment may achieve well but still not reach the nationally expected standard of attainment by the end of Year 2. Where reference is made to **similar schools**, these are schools with a similar proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.)*

Overall, pupils' achievements are **good**.

Strengths

- Children achieve well in the reception class
- Pupils do well in national tests at the end of Year 2
- Pupils' achievements in English are good
- Pupils achieve well in design and technology, and dance
- Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress

Areas for development

- Achievement of the higher attainers, especially in mathematics
- Achievement in art, geography, history, music and religious education

1. When children start school in the reception class, the great majority are keen to learn, and they have good personal and social skills, which help them to be successful. The staff make the most of these positive attitudes. They ensure that children are happy, settled and confident in school. They build very good relationships with the children and their parents, and they provide a wide variety of learning activities that catch the children's interest. When children are ready, and after the staff have been able to assess the existing skills of each child, learning becomes more focused. Staff have good systems, both formal and informal, to track each child's progress, so they are constantly looking to encourage the next steps in learning. The quality of teaching is good and staff have high expectations of what the children can achieve. A well planned curriculum supports children's learning by providing

a very good range and balance of activities. Whole-class sessions are lively and interesting, and the teacher makes sure that the children are fully involved. When children work independently, or as part of a small group, activities are well matched to their needs and adults provide skilful support and encouragement, whilst allowing children to find out for themselves. As a result of the good provision in the reception class, children's achievements are good and, by the time they join Year 1, almost all reach the standards expected for their age and many exceed them.

2. In the 2002 national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2, results in reading and writing were well above average. All pupils gained the expected level 2 of attainment, with very few at the lower end of this level. In reading, just over a third of pupils reached the higher level 3 and, whilst this was above average nationally, it was about the same as the results of pupils in similar schools. In writing, the proportion of pupils reaching level 3 was well above average. In mathematics, results were identical to those in reading. Overall, the 2002 results were well above average compared with those gained by pupils in similar schools, largely owing to the absence of any lower attaining pupils. Since 1999, there has been a steady improvement in the school's results, most pronounced in mathematics. Based on teachers' assessments, attainment in science was very high for those pupils reaching the expected level 2, and well above average for those gaining the higher level 3. As there has been a complete turnover of teaching staff during the past two years, it is not possible to attribute the 2002 results to the good quality of teaching of the current staff. However, the new team did well to ensure that high standards in national tests were maintained during a time of considerable change within the school. The pupils are bright and keen to learn, which makes a strong contribution to success in national tests.

3. Pupils achieve well in most aspects of English. They start school with good skills in speaking and listening, and teachers build upon these effectively through plenty of opportunities for discussion, as a class, in groups and individually. Standards in reading are well above national expectations. The school teaches reading methodically so that, by the time they reach Year 2, most pupils are fluent, expressive and confident readers. Pupils enjoy sharing 'big books' in their literacy lessons and finding information using CD-Roms and non-fiction books. Parents share books with their children at home, which plays a significant part in the good progress pupils make. Standards in writing are also well above national expectations. Teachers provide a good range of writing tasks and suitable support to enable younger writers to be confident. By Year 2, most pupils capitalise on their very good oral vocabulary and use an imaginative choice of words in their stories and poems. Pupils' use of grammar and punctuation develops well, but their spelling does not match this standard because there is only a recent system in place for improving this important skill. Overall, however, a well-planned English curriculum and good teaching enables most pupils to reach high standards.

4. Pupils achieve well in design and technology and physical education. The quality of teaching is particularly good in these subjects. In design and technology, all the teachers have a particular interest in the subject and the curriculum is systematically planned to develop pupils' skills of designing, making and evaluating. Recent projects making 'moving pictures' in Year 1 and 'Joseph's coat of many colours' in Year 2 have included the development of valuable skills as well as resulting in all pupils making an attractive and functional product. In physical education, although only dance lessons were observed, pupils concentrated hard, worked enthusiastically and co-operated with each other very well. They achieve well in lessons because they are taught skills and encouraged to practise them, whilst teachers increase challenge by varying the task.

5. The school welcomes all pupils, whatever their special educational needs, and ensures that they are fully involved in all aspects of school life. Whether the needs are physical, behavioural or specific to learning, the school makes good provision to support these children both educationally and emotionally. During the inspection, a number of examples were observed of pupils with special needs making good progress in lessons because of the support from staff, with classroom assistants playing a

particularly effective role. As a result, pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the clear and attainable targets set for them.

6. In 2002, Year 2 pupils gained well above average test results in mathematics. Whilst these were good results, evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that higher attaining pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable. In Year 1, pupils' past work shows that they are given work of a similar difficulty for most of the time. This is usually appropriate for the lower and middle attaining pupils, but does not challenge the higher attainers sufficiently. In Year 2, higher attaining pupils are given independent tasks that challenge them. In a lesson seen, however, they spent too long during the whole-class session doing work that did not challenge them sufficiently. The school is not doing enough to ensure that, in each phase of numeracy lessons, the large proportion of higher attaining pupils are given work that encourages them to take the next step in their learning.

7. Pupils start Year 1 with attainment in most subjects that is at least above national expectations. There are very few low attainers. In art, geography, history, music and religious education, their achievements are satisfactory during Year 1 and Year 2, and they reach standards that are similar to those found nationally. Higher attainment would be expected from these children. It was clear from discussion with the staff that, owing to the high turnover of teachers during the last 18 months, planning for these subjects has not been the first priority. As a result, whilst teachers are covering the content required, there is little focus on developing pupils' skills. For example, in art, whilst pupils complete a range of work, their understanding and use of features such as colour, pattern and texture is not developed systematically. The school is aware of this weakness and will address it in its imminent school improvement plan.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Overall, standards are **very good**.

Strengths
- Pupils have very good attitudes to school.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils and staff have very happy and constructive relationships.

Areas for development
- A few families do not regularly arrive at school on time in the morning.

8. Pupils like coming to school and show real enjoyment in their lessons. They concentrate well, work together sensibly, and apply themselves to a range of tasks with enthusiasm. For example, in a Year 2 personal and social education lesson, pupils discussed how they could be helpful to others and gave sensible examples of when they had helped at home and in school. They then settled quickly to concentrate on writing a short description of their helpful acts and how being kind had made them feel. Pupils are keen to answer questions and love to share ideas in discussions. They work hard and get fully involved with tasks, especially when these tasks have caught their imagination. In a Year 1 history lesson, pupils learnt about Victorian toys and worked with deep concentration on making a small cut-out working model of a rocking horse. Very positive attitudes have continued to be a feature of the school since the last inspection. These very good attitudes provide a firm basis for learning and help pupils to make progress.

9. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. In lessons, pupils listen attentively to the teacher and each other and follow instructions well. They have a very good understanding of how they

are expected to behave and respond well to the guidance given by adults. At leisure, they are lively and friendly and enjoy good natured, energetic play. Around the school they behave sensibly and show respect for others. There are a few pupils whose behaviour can be challenging but they are well managed by all staff who show a sensitive approach to their needs. There have been no exclusions and no poor behaviour was seen during the inspection. Parents are pleased with the very good behaviour in the school. The good behaviour of pupils helps to create a calm atmosphere for learning, which supports the progress pupils make in lessons.

10. The personal development of pupils, and relationships in the school at all levels, are very good. All adults know pupils well, show care and respect for the children in their charge and set a good example for them. Pupils are kind and polite to each other both in class and in the playground. Older pupils undertake monitor responsibilities in the playground and help younger children. At playtime, several younger pupils approached the two playground monitors to ask for help zipping up their coats, assured of a helpful and kind response. Whether in class or around the school, pupils undertake responsibilities with care and pride. Pupils show initiative and independence as a result of the good opportunities that are provided throughout the school, which has a significant effect on their personal development.

11. Attendance is very good and well above the national average. This positive picture has been maintained since the last inspection. However, despite the persistent approach of the school, a few families continue to show disregard for prompt attendance at school in the morning. In all classes there is a punctual start to the day so that pupils arriving late in class miss a part of the lesson.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning in the reception class are good, often very good
- Teachers and classroom assistants support pupils' learning well
- Planning for lessons is of good quality
- Basic skills are taught well
- Teachers use a good range of methods and strategies for learning
- Pupils are interested in their work and concentrate well

Areas for development

- The degree of challenge for higher attaining pupils, especially in mathematics lessons
- The pace and structure of parts of a few lessons
- The assessment of pupils' skills so that work can be better adapted to their needs

12. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and particularly strong in the reception class. Throughout the school, it was at least good in 11 of the 20 lessons observed, and very good in three. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection, even though all the teachers are relatively new to the school.

13. The staff in the Foundation Stage class (reception) have high expectations of what the children can achieve. These are evident in the way in which they work with the children, providing interesting and challenging tasks, and encouraging the next steps in learning. For example, in one session observed, the older children were well supported in writing their own nursery rhyme, which resulted in a very good standard of work for this age group. All sessions are very well planned to achieve a good

balance between whole-class and individual work, with a good range of tasks to develop children's skills across all the recommended areas of learning. Where the class works together, the teacher presents the activity in a lively and interesting way, which keeps all the children focused on their learning. For example, a number of sessions concentrated on developing the children's concept of length, such as comparing the lengths of two pieces of ribbon or ordering children's heights. The children found these activities particularly interesting because the teacher played 'devil's advocate' in suggesting the wrong answer and encouraged the children to correct her. She also involved the children continuously in estimation, measurement and explanation. When children have a choice of activities, there is always a good range of interesting and purposeful tasks to be done, such as building the highest tower with wood blocks or rehearsing a nursery rhyme play to be presented to the class. As a result of this good teaching, children are very keen to learn, show a high degree of confidence and achieve well.

14. Teachers and classroom assistants know the children very well and capitalise on the very good relationships they have built with them to support them effectively in lessons. For example, in a mathematics lesson for Year 2, the pupils found the addition problems they were given very difficult, but support from the graduate trainee teacher for the lower-attaining group, and the teacher for the rest of the class, enabled them to be successful. Teachers and classroom assistants know when individual children need help, so those with special educational needs are particularly well supported and make good progress. Because pupils receive good support for their learning, they tackle their work confidently and make good gains in learning in many lessons. The good relationships teachers have with their pupils also ensure that the management of pupils' behaviour is effective.

15. Teachers plan individual lessons in some detail, based upon good longer-term plans. For example, a Year 2 ICT lesson taught the pupils how to programme a floor robot so that it would move along a twisty course. The structure of the lesson was meticulously planned so that skills were taught carefully before the pupils attempted the task. What the pupils were intended to learn was clearly set out in the planning and shared with the pupils so they knew exactly what they had to do. As a result, the pupils concentrated well on the task, learnt a lot through their mistakes and successes, and achieved what the teacher intended. Planning for future lessons showed how the teacher intended to build on the pupils' current skills. Most lessons are equally well planned, even though a few do not challenge pupils so successfully.

16. Basic skills are taught well, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The numeracy lessons observed began with counting and calculating activities, which the pupils enjoyed, such as the odd and even number work seen in Year 1. Teachers are adept at beginning these sessions with fairly simple tasks and then increasing the difficulty to challenge the higher-attaining pupils. In literacy lessons, the pupils enjoy whole-class shared reading, such as 'Owl babies' in Year 1, which is often used to highlight a particular feature of the text, in this case speech. Each literacy lesson has a focus on the sounds of letter, or groups of letters, which supports pupils' reading and spelling skills. Regular reading at home also boosts pupils' progress in this vital skill. As a result of the school's methodical approach to teaching basic skills, pupils make steady progress in reading, writing and number work, which results in standards being well above average by the end of Year 2.

17. A good range of teaching methods and strategies promotes pupils' learning. Teachers work with the class as a whole, explaining new concepts or leading lively question and answer sessions that extend pupils' learning. They introduce good variety into these sessions, such as using a glove puppet to illustrate speech or involving the pupils as characters in a story. The pupils particularly enjoy these sessions because they have very good skills in expressing their ideas. Most lessons also involve some group or individual work, so pupils have the opportunity to carry out a task independently or to work collaboratively with others. For example, Year 2 pupils shared ideas for a story with the whole class,

worked in pairs to tell each other their stories, and then worked well independently, many producing good-quality writing. Other formats are also used successfully. In a Year 1 personal and social education lesson, the pupils gathered in a circle to share their ideas about the things that make them feel good about themselves, which prompted many valuable responses. The good range of teaching methods keeps the pupils keen and develops a wide range of learning skills.

18. The pupils are good learners. They show a good level of interest in all lessons and a high degree of interest in many. For example, in an ICT lesson for Year 2 pupils, there was a buzz of anticipation as pupils programmed their floor robots and speculated as to whether they would move accurately down the course. When pupils are asked to carry out a task independently, they settle quickly to their work and show very good levels of concentration. For example, in a Year 1 physical education lesson, pupils showed great enthusiasm, effort and concentration as they tried to improve the quality of their movements. Many pupils show good determination to complete a task, such as the child in Year 2 who found a number activity challenging, but wanted to finish the work in the time allowed. The pupils' good learning skills are a significant factor in supporting their progress.

19. In many of the lessons seen, pupils were appropriately challenged by the work they were given. In a few mathematics lessons, however, and evident in pupils' past work, the level of challenge was insufficient. For example, Year 1 pupils' past work showed very little difference in the tasks given to pupils of varying attainment. In mathematics lessons, lack of challenge of the higher attaining pupils was also a weakness. For example, higher attaining Year 2 pupils were able to calculate 25+8 and 35+8 mentally, but were asked to show how they had split the eight to carry out the calculation, which was unnecessary and slowed their pace of work. Likewise, higher-attaining Year 1 pupils grasped the general principle that any odd number would end in 1, 3, 5 etc, but spent their time putting missing numbers on a snake and colouring it in. Teachers do not always match activities carefully enough to pupils' existing level of attainment so that pupils can take the next step in their learning.

20. In a few lessons, the pace and structure do not support pupils' learning effectively. The whole-class part of the lesson lasts too long, which results in pupils' not having enough time to complete their independent task. In some cases, the whole class part of the lesson, pitched to meet the needs of all the pupils, does not challenge the higher attainers sufficiently. These pupils are not encouraged to make an early start on their independent activities, which would provide a greater challenge. In a music lesson for Year 2, too many activities were planned, so the pupils did not have enough time to develop their skills in each of the tasks.

21. In English and mathematics, teachers have good procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment and progress. Nonetheless, pupils' past work in mathematics shows that they often complete the same tasks, regardless of their existing attainment, indicating that assessment is not used rigorously enough to ensure appropriate challenge for all pupils. In subjects other than English and mathematics, the ongoing assessment of pupils' skills is not as strong. In these subjects, pupils generally complete the same work, so the steady development of each child's skills is not given enough emphasis. Whilst pupils' work is marked regularly, teachers seldom take the opportunity to assess its standard or to suggest ways in which it might be improved.

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

Overall, the curriculum is **satisfactory**.

Strengths
- The curriculum for children in the reception class is very good.
- Strategies for teaching literacy are effective.

- Good links are made between work in different subjects
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good
- Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good
- Good relationships with other schools support the development of the curriculum

Areas for development

- Aspects of provision for mathematics
- In some subjects, there is too little emphasis on developing pupils' skills

22. The curriculum for children in the reception class is carefully planned to cover all the recommended areas of learning. From day to day, the staff provide a broad and balanced range of activities. Learning is organised at a well-judged pace, with times when children come together for whole-class learning, times when they work in small groups with an adult, and times when they work independently. For example, in one session observed, the whole-class focus was on measuring length, and the teacher compared and ordered the heights of six of the children, including much lively discussion and valuable development of mathematical vocabulary. A range of activities followed, some related to the theme. A small group of children worked very effectively with a classroom assistant ordering the lengths of 'fish', which revealed that there were still some misconceptions about the meaning of the words longer and shorter. Yet another group worked independently with construction materials, making the tallest tower they could build. The balance of each type of activity, allowing just enough time for children to get the most out of the task, ensures that learning remains fresh. The richness and good organisation of the curriculum contribute significantly to children's good achievements in the reception class.

23. The national strategy for literacy is used effectively to support pupils' learning. Teachers follow the recommended pattern for lessons and ensure that pupils have a good balance of whole-class, group and individual activities. The promotion of pupils' speaking and listening skills is a particular strength, as was seen when Year 1 pupils used the story 'Ow babies' to discuss how speech is used in text. Reading skills are developed well, often through shared reading of a text, with pupils predicting what might happen next or focusing on particular letter sounds and words. Writing skills are encouraged through a wide range of writing tasks for specific purposes. For example, Year 2 pupils used 'Anansi at the pod', a story setting with which they were familiar, to write their own imaginative stories in a similar vane. Teachers use the structure of the National Literacy Strategy effectively, which supports pupils' good achievement in English.

24. Teachers make good links between work in different subjects, which avoids unnecessary fragmentation of the curriculum and makes the work more relevant for the pupils. A particularly good example is work in art, design and technology and ICT. Year 2 pupils used ICT to design 'Joseph's coat of many colours', which gave a real purpose to the ICT activity. They used their art skills to decorate the finished products, which provided a range of challenges. Pupils' literacy skills are used and developed well through work in other subjects. For example, the useful evaluations Year 2 pupils have written about their design and technology projects contribute to that subject as well as developing writing skills for a particular purpose.

25. The school is very positive about meeting the needs of all pupils, and provision for those who have special educational needs is good. The staff ensure that these pupils get the most out of activities in lessons, and classroom assistants play a particularly valuable role in supporting learning needs. The school has implemented the new Code of Practice effectively. Good quality individual education plans are drawn up by teachers in collaboration with the headteacher, who co-ordinates provision. Pupils'

special needs are identified carefully, their progress is monitored and reviews are carried out at appropriate intervals. Pupils with a statement of educational need are very well supported by all adults in the school and take a full and active part in all aspects of the curriculum. Reviews of their progress take full account of the views of parents, outside agencies and pupils. As a result of good provision, pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets that have been set for them.

26. As a result of the clear and consistent emphasis placed on their social and moral development, pupils gain in confidence and maturity as they move through the school. Parents appreciate the fact that the values and attitudes the school promotes have a positive effect on their children. The school behaviour code, which emphasises respect and caring for others, is well linked to planned opportunities to discuss social and moral concerns through the personal and social education programme. Within the small school community, each individual is encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions and recognise the effect of what they do on those around them. A good emphasis on being part of a class and having a wider responsibility is evident in the class targets and whole-class rewards system that are part of the school behaviour policy. High expectations are set for pupils to behave well, be honest and fair and show understanding for other people and their needs. Pupils meet these expectations well and this helps to maintain within the school a caring and well-ordered environment in which pupils show enjoyment in their work and play and a desire to learn and do well.

27. Since the last inspection, the school's Beacon status has encouraged the development of the curriculum. In collaboration with eight local schools, teaching materials for a number of areas of the curriculum have been developed, for example a range of booklets about areas of learning in the Foundation Stage, which share good practice and provide starting points for planning. Teachers say that the meetings with staff from other schools are a very valuable forum for curriculum development.

28. Whilst pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics during Year 1 and Year 2, the curriculum is not sufficiently broad and balanced. There is considerable emphasis on number work, and too little attention to pupils' understanding of shapes, measuring and data handling. In Year 1, in particular, there are too few activities that require the pupils to use and apply their skills, and they are seldom set tasks where they can explore and investigate patterns in numbers and shapes. As a result, although the middle and lower attaining pupils receive a largely appropriate curriculum, the higher attainers do not experience the range of challenging tasks that would help them to make better progress.

29. In art, geography, history, music and religious education, the curriculum is not as well structured as in other subjects. Lessons largely focus on content rather than the skills the pupils should be developing. Although, inevitably, pupils do develop skills as part of their work in these subjects, teachers do not assess and monitor the development of these skills, so they cannot be sure what the pupils need to learn next. In subjects such as design and technology, where teachers have particular expertise, they know how to develop pupils' skills steadily. In the weaker subjects, they are still developing the whole-school systems to support teaching and learning, because all teachers are relatively new to the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

The overall provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The school provides a very caring environment in which pupils' personal development is well promoted
- Procedures for promoting good behaviour are effective

- Procedures for checking on and improving attendance are good
- Teachers gather a good deal of information about pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science

Area for development

- Staff responsible for significant areas of pupils' care require additional training
- Information gathered from assessing pupils' attainment is not used systematically to ensure that future work is challenging

30. As at the last inspection, the school is a caring community, which ensures that all pupils are well included in its life and learning. Pupils feel safe and confident when they are in school. The small size of the school, and the strong emphasis placed upon care, ensure that pupils are well known to all adults in the school and staff respond effectively to their individual needs. Nowhere is this more evident than in the care and support provided for pupils who have special educational needs. Very good relationships between staff and pupils, based on respect and kindness, contribute to the standard of care for children.

31. Behaviour is very good and there were no incidents of oppressive or unkind behaviour seen during the inspection. Nevertheless, the school monitors and evaluates the school behaviour policy and regularly reviews the sanctions and rewards applied to behaviour. Any incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with on an individual basis and pupils know and understand the behaviour code of the school. The ongoing review of procedures to promote good behaviour ensures that the school is an orderly and calm place in which pupils can learn well.

32. The school has maintained very good attendance, over a number of years, but continues to monitor attendance closely and follow up any small issues which may arise. A current priority for the school is to improve the punctual arrival in the morning of a few families. Clear procedures have been established to promote good attendance and punctuality and the computerised registration system is well used by the school to highlight any problems which might develop for individual pupils.

33. Although the school provides a high level of care for pupils, a few key staff with overall responsibility for child protection and first aid do not have up to date training. The school is aware of this omission and plans are well in hand for staff training to be undertaken as soon as possible.

34. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory overall. A good amount of information is gathered about pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science. Teachers plan a special week each half term when pieces of work for each pupil are assessed and placed in a record book. This helps teachers to track the rate of individual pupil's progress and use the information to plan for future work. As a result, targets have been introduced to give clear indications of what each pupil needs to achieve, for example to develop better progression in story writing.

35. Teachers are beginning to make better use of the assessment information they gather. However, the information is not yet used consistently to ensure that work is well matched to pupils' needs. As the school is small, teachers know pupils well and work is generally at the right level to ensure progress. Nevertheless, higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough in mathematics in Year 1 or Year 2, and in reading in Year 2. In other subjects, pupils of different abilities are often given the same activities and this results in average standards being reached by the majority of pupils, even though many have high attainment when they join Year 1. The lack of clear systems to evaluate and analyse assessment information limits the school's capacity to increase challenge for all pupils, particularly the more able.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

The school has a **good** partnership with parents.

Strengths

- Good and effective links have been forged with parents
- The school provides very good information for parents
- Parents are well involved in the work of the school, particularly through the friends' association

36. Parents are supportive of the work of the school. Good and effective links have been established with parents and this close relationship has been maintained since the last inspection. Through the regular termly parents' meetings, and informally, staff and parents remain in close touch and are able to discuss children's progress and development. Staff are available to parents at the end of each school day and, during the inspection, a number of helpful informal discussions between teachers and parents were seen. There is a home/school agreement in place and the school has recently canvassed the views of parents on a range of subjects. Effective relationships with parents add considerably to the school's ability to provide a secure place for learning in which pupils can be confident and successful.

37. Parents receive very good information about the progress their child is making and are well briefed about what is happening in school. The curriculum evening early in the autumn term is very valuable and gives a full summary of the work to be done in class each year. A booklet is also produced on the curriculum for each class so parents have a written record to which they can refer through the year. The prospectus, annual report of governors to parents and a regular flow of newsletters are informative and well produced, so parents are provided with a comprehensive range of information. The Record of Achievement for each pupil is very good, clear in presentation with a good range of information about pupil's achievements, progress and personal development. Individual targets are set for pupils and there is an example of a good piece of work for parents to see.

38. Parents show their support for the school in practical ways, especially through the Friends of Gawcott School Association (FGSA), making a valuable contribution to the school and the facilities provided for the pupils. The committed and energetic fund raising activities of FGSA have made a significant contribution towards the computer room that will soon be built. A few parents help in school on a regular basis and also help with extra-curricular activities. The support that parents provide with homework is variable, but overall good, and their support and interest in their own children's work helps to promote high standards.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Overall, the quality of leadership and management is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The headteacher has led the school successfully through a period of considerable change
- Teachers, classroom assistants and other staff are a committed, hard working team
- The governing body has a perceptive view of the school's strengths and areas for development
- Financial planning is good and additional funding is used constructively

Areas for development

- New management systems have yet to be fully implemented or tested

- The school improvement plan does not provide the focus needed to guide developments

39. During the last 18 months, the school has seen a complete change of teaching staff. There were a number of changes of headteacher prior to the current headteacher taking up her post in January 2002. All staff and governors say that the last 12 months has been a time of re-building relationships within the school community, developing agreed ways of planning the curriculum and teaching, and re-establishing the leadership and management of the school. The headteacher has led the school successfully through this period of considerable change, and it is now a stable, well-organised and improving school. She has a clear vision for the future and is determined that pupils will not be disadvantaged because theirs is a small country school. For example, she is the driving force behind the building of a new computer room, which will provide much-needed facilities for children in the school as well as people in the wider community. She has gained the full confidence of the staff, many of whom are relatively new to the school. She has delegated curriculum responsibilities to other teachers and included classroom assistants in performance management arrangements. All adults support the management of the school. Although there is still much to be done, the headteacher has laid firm foundations for future improvement.

40. Although Gawcott is a small school, a fairly large number of adults contribute to the education of the children. Teachers, classroom assistants and other staff are a committed, hard working team. The three full-time teachers share responsibilities well, for example in the co-ordination of subjects. During the past year they have focused on ensuring that good standards in English, mathematics and science have been maintained. As a result, in spite of all the changes, children in the reception class get a good start to learning at school, and older pupils have maintained standards that are well above average. Classroom assistants make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning. This is particularly evident when they work with small groups and individuals, often lower attainers or those with special educational needs. They have good skills in organising pupils' learning, and supporting them without doing all the work for them. The wider team, including administrative and cleaning staff, provides good support for the smooth running of the school.

41. The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, even though many of them are new to the role. They share the headteacher's vision and are impressed by the improvement in pupils' attitudes to learning during the last year. Individual governors visit the school regularly. They are developing guidelines that will enable them to monitor and evaluate the school's performance more rigorously, in specific areas. For example, the development of handwriting skills has been a concern and governors want to find out more about this, so they can support the school in seeking improvement. They are committed to maintaining the school's strengths and have worked with the headteacher and staff to analyse pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Year 2. As a result, the school has identified the need to challenge the most able children more consistently. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively, and they are beginning to play a fuller part in planning the way forward.

42. In common with all small schools, funding is limited and, even though the school receives some additional funding owing to its Beacon School status, there is little leeway after staffing and building costs have been met. Nonetheless, the school plans the use of its finances well and uses any additional funding constructively. The school plans ahead methodically, for example successfully negotiating the change from first school to infant school status. Appropriate steps are taken to check that the school is providing the best value in all aspects of its work. For example, parents have been consulted about their views of the school, and results in national tests are compared with those gained by pupils in similar schools, both locally and nationally. Wise use of funding has resulted in the school being well staffed, including a graduate trainee teacher who is making a very good contribution. The school's Beacon funding is used effectively for staff to share good practice with other local schools. It has also

enabled the headteacher to have a little more time for management tasks, which has been very valuable during a period of change.

43. For most schools, where change is gradual, there is an existing set of policies and procedures, agreed by the staff, which underpin the way in which they teach. For example, an assessment policy would set out when and how pupils' attainment and progress are to be assessed and recorded. This school is still in the process of putting in place effective systems to manage its work. For example, the structure of the curriculum for English, mathematics and science are in place, but policies and practices for other subjects are not so clear. The school has a programme for checking on the quality of teaching and learning through planning, work sampling and lesson observations. At present, however, this is not sufficiently focused to enable the school to identify areas for improvement precisely. The heavy workload of the three full-time staff means that areas such as the development of assessment in subjects other than English, mathematics and science have still to be tackled. Although the school has identified areas for improvement, such as to increase challenge for all children, particularly the more able, staff do not have clear action plans that would help them to know exactly what they have to do to be successful. At this stage in its development, however, the school has made satisfactory progress in re-establishing policies and procedures.

44. The current school improvement plan was put together rapidly, following the appointment of the headteacher. It does not provide the focus needed to guide developments because it was not based on a systematic evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The proposed improvements are suitable but are not linked to the aims of the school or past successes. The methods the school uses for judging whether it has been successful are too vague. The headteacher and governors are well aware that, after the recent period of change, they now need to focus on detailed action planning for a limited number of key priorities.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

45. To maintain the existing good standards, and to aim for further improvement, the headteacher, staff and governors should now

- Increase the challenge provided for higher attaining pupils, especially in mathematics, by:
  - using assessment more effectively to identify these pupils' existing attainment;
  - planning activities that enable these pupils to take the next step in their learning;
  - providing more opportunities for these pupils to investigate patterns in numbers and shapes;
  - setting individual targets for future attainment that are challenging and that guide teaching and learning.

(paragraphs 6, 19, 28, 65, 67, 72)

- Improve further the good quality of teaching, by strengthening practice in the few lessons where there are weaknesses, as follows:
  - having higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly in mathematics;
  - increasing the pace of parts of lessons, so that pupils get more work done;
  - re-considering the structure of lessons, so that it best meets the learning objectives and the needs of all pupils;
  - checking pupils' progress in lessons more closely, and using marking more effectively, to support pupils' learning.

(paragraphs 19-21, 35, 67)

- Ensure that plans for school improvement are well focused on raising pupils' attainment, by:
  - sharpening the focus of strategies to monitor and evaluate the work of the school;
  - identifying areas for improvement precisely, and being clear about what will constitute success;
  - pursuing only a manageable number of initiatives at any one time;
  - monitoring the progress towards improvement systematically.

(paragraphs 43-44, 62, 69)

In addition to the key issues, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. Each is followed by a reference to the paragraph(s) in which it is discussed.

- Raise standards in pupils' spelling. *(3, 60)*
- Pay more attention to the development of pupils' skills in subjects such as art and history. *(7, 29, 76, 84)*
- Ensure that staff have appropriate training in child protection procedures and first aid. *(33)*
- Continue to develop the outdoor learning area for children in the Foundation Stage. *(49)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number		3	8	9			
Percentage		15	40	45			

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 five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR–Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	60
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR–Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	8

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.7
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	*	*	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		**Reading**	**Writing**	**Mathematics**
2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	13	13	13
Percentage of pupils	Girl School	Girl 100 (100)	94)	Girl 100 (100)

ENGLISH

56. Results in the 2002 national assessments for Year 2 pupils were well above average in both reading and writing. All pupils reached the expected Level 2, and an above average proportion gained

completed each half term, are a particularly good way for teachers and parents to see how well pupils are improving.

69. Management of the subject is satisfactory. There has been a complete change of teaching staff during the past 18 months, so the co-ordinator is fairly new to the role. She gathers some information about standards of attainment and the quality of teaching and learning, but this is not yet systematic enough to enable the school to identify areas for development precisely. Nonetheless, the staff are aware of aspects of the subject that need improvement, and they work very well as a team, so the

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above average and better than at the last inspection.

electrical circuits

83. In history, pupils' understanding of how things change with the passing of time, begins with them learning about the changes that take place as they grow from babies. In a Year 1 lesson observed, the teacher encouraged pupils to look carefully for clues that would help them decide whether or not a rocking horse was old. This drew out good discussion, and pupils recognise that appearances can be deceptive. Work displayed in the classroom justifies their choice of 'old' or 'new' for the toys arranged in the museum corner. In Year 2 pupils develop a sense of 'now' being different from 'then' and use it to describe differences in fire fighting methods today and at the time of the Great Fire of London.

84. In both subjects, pupils are taught the expected topics from the National Curriculum. In geography, the curriculum is well planned to link with other areas such as assemblies, ICT, music, dance and design and technology. In history, teachers make good use of a range of well planned activities to make learning interesting. For example, writing 'templates' help pupils to record key details from the story of Guy Fawkes. In both subjects, ICT is used so pupils can do simple research. A relative weakness is that much of the work seen is best suited to average attaining pupils. Pupils' attainment and progress are assessed by teachers' observations of their written and oral work. Although this allows teachers to plan satisfactorily for the next stages of learning, a lack of focus on the development of pupils' skills means that teachers are not so good at challenging, potentially higher attaining pupils. Co-ordinators have been appointed recently, so there has been little done recently to check on how well pupils are learning.

INFORMATION and COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

85. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory and, by Year 2, attainment in all aspects of ICT is close to the standards expected nationally, and above expectations in word processing and using computers to