

INSPECTION REPORT

ASTON CLINTON SCHOOL

Aston Clinton, Aylesbury

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110332

Headteacher: Mr K Salter

Reporting inspector: Mrs Jacqueline Ikin
OIN 3349

Dates of inspection: 14th – 17th October 2002

Inspection number: 246983

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4-11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Twitchell Lane
Aston Clinton
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire
Postcode: HP22 5JJ

Telephone number: 01296 630276

Fax number: 01296 632413

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs S Hall

Date of previous inspection: 9 February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3349	Jacqueline Ikin	Registered inspector	English Religious education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
1333	Elizabeth Forster	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2420	Brian McCutcheon	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Geography Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
2414	David Westall	Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology	
19082	Tessa Farley	Team Inspector	Special educational needs Information and communication technology History Music	

The inspection contractor was:

OASIS
Waterstone Cottages
Naunton
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL54 3AS

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33 Kingsway
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WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Aston Clinton School is about the same size as other primary schools. There are 240 pupils, 148 boys and 102 girls, on roll and boys outnumber girls in most classes. Pupils come mainly from the village of Aston Clinton. The school is well thought of within the local community. The school has a unit for ten pupils which specialises in the education of pupils with speech and language difficulties and serves the whole of Buckinghamshire. There are three pupils who speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. This is not a totally accurate reflection of pupils' backgrounds, and the socio-economic circumstances of the area are mainly average. There is a wide range of attainment on entry and this fluctuates considerably from year to year. Overall, it is a little below average. About 15 per cent of pupils join the school after the usual starting age, which is above average. Most children have attended some form of pre-school provision. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is about average. However, the school has an above average number of pupils with statements of special educational needs. These needs include emotional and behavioural difficulties, physical impairment, moderate learning difficulties and speech and communication difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school has effective provision for personal, social and moral development and, as a result, pupils are well behaved, confident and keen to learn. An atmosphere of mutual respect pervades the school and everyone is included and valued. The leadership and management of the school and the teaching that is provided are satisfactory overall and there are strengths which strongly promote the school's values. This ensures that pupils make good progress in music and physical education, and satisfactory progress in most other subjects. However, the systems that the school uses to check the effectiveness of its work lack precision and this reduces the pace and effectiveness of its improvement efforts. Overall, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in music and physical education are above average as a result of the additional provision the school makes and some good teaching in these subjects.
- There is good provision for pupils with speech and language difficulties and this ensures that pupils make good progress and that they are fully included in all aspects of school life.
- Teaching and provision in the reception class are good and this ensures that children get an effective start to their schooling.
- Provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral and social development ensures that values of mutual respect are prevalent throughout the school.
- The school has a very strong partnership with parents and the community, who are exceptionally supportive of the school and hold it in very high regard.
- The school makes very good provision for extra-curricular activities. This enriches the curriculum and contributes to pupils' interest in learning and the progress that they make.

What could be improved

- The standards that are achieved in writing.
- The systems that the school uses for gathering information about the effectiveness of its work.
- The role of subject coordinators in monitoring, evaluating and developing teaching.
- School improvement planning and its links to the budget.
- The precision of assessments to track pupils' progress and plan for the next steps in learning in the subjects of the National Curriculum.

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 February 1998. Since then it has made satisfactory progress overall in addressing the areas identified for improvement. There are now schemes of work for all subjects, and the total teaching time accords with national recommendations. The provision that the school makes for pupils' spiritual development is good and assemblies now always contain an act of worship. The health and safety issues that were identified at the time have been addressed. Although there have been developments, the quality of teaching has been sustained and the trend in the school's average score for English, mathematics and science is broadly in line with the national trend. The school has not made enough progress in raising standards in writing, the development of procedures for monitoring the work of the school and in the development of the role of the subject coordinators.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	D	D	D	D
mathematics	C	B	C	C
science	D	C	C	C

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The table shows that the results of national tests taken in 2002 for English, mathematics and science were in line with the national average and broadly in line with the average for similar schools in mathematics and science and below the average for English. Closer examination of the results shows that pupils' attainment in reading is broadly average. They are below average in writing because fewer pupils achieve at the higher levels. The evidence of the inspection reflects these results and shows that the standards that are currently achieved in Year 6 are average overall in reading and mathematics, but below average in writing and a little below average in science. There are residual gaps in pupils' knowledge in this particular year group, which are now being overcome due to some good teaching. These gaps in knowledge are not apparent in Year 5. The results of 2002 national tests for pupils in Year 2

are well below the national average and the average for similar schools in reading, writing and mathematics. This can partly be explained by the fact that half of that particular year group were very young for their year group when they took the tests. The findings of the inspection are that pupils in the current Year 2 are achieving standards that are broadly average in reading and mathematics, but that are below average in writing. Pupils in the reception class make good progress to achieve standards that are in line with those expected by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils throughout the school achieve above average standards in music and physical education. Standards are in line with those expected in religious education and art and design throughout the school, and in information and communication technology and design and technology in Years 3 to 6. There was insufficient evidence to judge standards in geography throughout the school, and in history, information and communication technology and in design and technology in Years 1 and 2.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school, concentrate well and work hard in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils generally behave well and are always polite, friendly and helpful to each other and to visitors to the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils grow in confidence and learn to respect and take care of themselves and each other. Relationships throughout the school are very good.
Attendance	Attendance at the school is good. The vast majority of pupils are punctual and this ensures that lessons can start on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good in the reception class. Effective planning ensures an appropriate emphasis on the early skills of literacy and numeracy and there are good opportunities for children to learn in practical ways. This ensures that pupils make good progress and that they are well prepared for their work in Year 1. The quality of teaching for pupils in Year 1 through to Year 6 is satisfactory overall and in nearly half of the lessons seen during the inspection it was good. There is good teaching in music and physical education. Teachers have a secure understanding of the national literacy and numeracy guidance and this is reflected in lessons. Pupils are well managed and there is good use of time and resources. When weaknesses occur it is because the absence of a cohesive assessment system for National Curriculum subjects reduces teachers' ability to plan for pupils' different needs and abilities in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs in the language unit are taught well, and those with special needs in the main school are given good support. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum for pupils in the reception class provides a good range of learning opportunities. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is broad and balanced and meets the statutory requirements. Extra-curricular provision is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils in the specialist language unit is good and ensures that they make good progress. Provision for mainstream pupils is satisfactory. The school recognises the weaknesses in the way that pupils' progress is monitored and has begun to address this.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is satisfactory and ensures that pupils have full access to the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good, and for pupils' cultural development it is satisfactory. This strongly promotes values of mutual respect and good behaviour.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The pastoral care of pupils is good and pupils' welfare is monitored carefully. The procedures that the school has to monitor and assess pupils' progress in the subjects of the National Curriculum are unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and key staff strongly promote the school's values of respect and inclusion. Roles and responsibilities are appropriately delegated but systems of accountability are informal and there is a lack of precision in the school's planning for improvements.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are highly committed to the school, take a keen interest in its work and fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. Although the school makes satisfactory use of local authority national test data, it appropriately recognises that its own systems are not sufficiently linked to the National Curriculum. The role of subject coordinators in the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching is under-developed.

The strategic use of resources	The school makes satisfactory use of all its resources and there are appropriate plans to sustain the provision that the school makes in the event of reduced funding. However, there are insufficient links between school development planning and the budget.
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The school's staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall and meet the needs of the curriculum. The school satisfactorily applies the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are easy to talk to. • The school is well led and managed. • Children have good behaviour. • Children are encouraged to become mature and responsible. • There is a good range of extra curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework set.

Inspection findings generally support parents' positive views. The leadership and management of the school promote pupils' personal development well, however there are weaknesses in procedures for evaluating the school's work and planning for improvement. The quality and quantity of homework set were found to be similar to that in most schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. There is a wide spread of attainment on entry to the school, and the profile of each year group varies considerably from year-to-year. Overall, it is a little below that expected for four-year-old children. Children achieve well in relation to their starting points, and, by the end of the reception year, the majority attain standards that are in line with those expected for their age in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. They also acquire satisfactory standards in their personal and social development. Pupils continue to achieve satisfactorily in reading and mathematics, as they progress through the school, to attain standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Standards in science are average for nearly all year groups with the exception of Year 6, where current standards are a little below average. Standards in writing are below average and pupils do not achieve as much as they should. As a result of the school's good provision for music and physical education, standards are above average in these subjects. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about standards in history, information and communications technology and design and technology for pupils in Years 1 and 2, and geography throughout the school. In other subjects of the curriculum, achievement is broadly satisfactory and pupils reach standards that are in line with those expected by the end of Years 2 and 6. Standards have been maintained in most subjects of the curriculum and improved in physical education and music. Although the school has started to address below average attainment in writing since the last inspection, more needs to be done.
2. The speaking and listening skills of most pupils are average. By the time they reach Year 6 pupils speak clearly, have a good vocabulary and are keen to find out about new words. Most pupils listen attentively to their teachers and each other, show a keen interest in what is being said and ask and answer questions fluently. They present their ideas clearly when performing to an audience. For example, in an assembly based on the life of Henry VIII, Year 5 pupils were very effective in engaging the interest of younger pupils in the school because of the lively explanations and good expression in their voices and actions.
3. Standards in reading are average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 read simple texts accurately and use an appropriate range of strategies, including their knowledge of phonics, to decode new words. This is an improvement since the last inspection. They respond well to punctuation marks and can find hidden meaning in the text that they read. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils can analyse and appreciate a wide range of fiction and information texts, and can justify their choice of reading matter. Pupils throughout the school enjoy making independent choices of books from the school library for reading at home and at school. When weaknesses occur it is because pupils have insufficient opportunity to develop their skills in using the library and information and communication technology in the course of their work in the classroom. The school is aware of this and is planning for improvements.
4. Standards in writing are below average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils take care with their handwriting and use punctuation and grammar with increasing accuracy. However, in Years 1 and 2, pupils make too many mistakes in spelling simple words. Although they are developing their understanding of how different kinds of writing can

be structured, they do not achieve as much as they should because of weaknesses in their organisation of writing and the development of their imaginative ideas. Weaknesses in pupils' spelling remain in Years 3 to 6. In Year 5, most pupils are beginning to transfer their knowledge of how authors use different styles of writing for impact to their own writing and this, coupled with some effective teaching, is having a significant impact on the standards being achieved by this year group. However, standards in Year 6 are not as high as they should be because of residual gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, they do not make sufficient use of complex sentences or vary their styles of writing to make it more interesting. Some good teaching in Year 6 is being effective in helping pupils to overcome these difficulties. Pupils make satisfactory use of their writing skills in science, religious education and history, for example, in note taking and writing factual accounts. There is, however, scope to extend these opportunities and the use of information and communication technology to support their work in writing.

5. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress in mathematics and standards are broadly average by the time they reach Year 2. Most pupils in Years 3 to 6 make sound and sometimes good progress. By the time they reach Year 2, pupils have acquired the key skills of numeracy and have a basic knowledge of shape, length, weight and capacity. They acquire a secure knowledge of place value, can extend simple number sequences and demonstrate an accurate knowledge of number facts, which they use to solve simple word problems. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils use whole numbers with reasonable accuracy, and have a satisfactory understanding of measure and data handling. They use their knowledge of number to solve practical problems, and explain their calculations. In Year 6, current standards are a little below average. This is not as high as in previous years because pupils in the current year group have some gaps in their learning. For example, they have not fully consolidated their understanding of fractions. The school is aware of this and there is evidence that these deficiencies are being overcome as a result of the efforts of the Year 6 teacher. Pupils' skills in applying their numeracy skills in other subjects of the curriculum are satisfactory, although pupils' skills in using information and communication technology for mathematics require further development.
6. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in their scientific learning and standards are broadly average in most year groups, including Year 2. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use observation and handle materials to answer scientific questions. They follow simple instructions in the course of their enquiries and communicate their findings in a range of ways. Pupils in Years 3 to 5 continue to explore scientific phenomena and, by the time they reach Year 5, have a sound understanding of the basic properties of solids, liquids and gases. However, in Year 6 current standards are a little below average because of weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and skills, for example, of scientific enquiry. The school is aware of this and good teaching is now beginning to address the residual gaps in their knowledge.
7. Overall standards in information and communication technology are average by the end of Year 6. As a result of the regular teaching of information and communication technology in Years 3 to 6, pupils acquire a range of skills in a variety of applications including entering data to produce line graphs, writing poetry, and the use of the Internet for research. When weaknesses occur, they are in word processing, control technology, the presentation of information and the use of emails. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about standards in Years 1 and 2.
8. Pupils' attainment in music is above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils sing with enthusiasm, enjoyment and commitment. The school makes effective use

of the local authority peripatetic music service, which greatly enhances musical provision in the school. Pupils play a wide range of musical instruments with increasing control and are provided with many opportunities to sing songs, explore rhythms, use percussion instruments, and learn music for Christmas concerts. There are many worthwhile opportunities for pupils to listen to music and this makes a significant contribution to their musical appreciation, and their knowledge and understanding of the musical elements.

9. Pupils make good progress and achieve above average standards in physical education because of good teaching in the subject, the breadth of the curriculum that it offers and a range of after-school activities that make a significant contribution to the subject.
10. Pupils who have specific language difficulties make good progress in their learning including in English, mathematics and social skills, and also in work related to their individual education plans. They are included as full class members and achieve well across the curriculum. The standards they achieve in national tests represent sound personal achievement overall in relation to their starting points on entry to the school. For other pupils with special educational needs there is clear evidence of sound progress within lessons, assisted by very good class support. However, there is insufficient use of evidence to evaluate their overall long term learning achievements.
11. Inspection evidence did not find any significant difference in the standards attained by boys and girls. In some lessons activities were not sufficiently differentiated to provide enough challenge for the more able pupils and because of this they do not always achieve as much as they could. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils of all abilities have positive attitudes to learning and standards in pupils' personal development have been maintained since the last inspection. With a few exceptions amongst the oldest boys, they are keen to work hard in lessons and to do their best to meet teachers' expectations. They concentrate well, listen to instructions, persevere with their tasks and take a pride in presentation. They can be trusted to work independently of their teachers in most lessons and they complete their homework conscientiously. Pupils have developed good classroom manners and the vast majority willingly contribute to discussions. Pupils feel valued and, consequently, are confident to try new tasks. For example, in swimming lessons even the non-swimmers and the less water-confident pupils were fearless about jumping in at the deep end at the start of the session. In a few lessons, where teachers instruct rather than involve the pupils, or where there may be insufficient match of task to pupils' ability, interest can wane and pupils are less productive. Many pupils take advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered and a large number also enjoy the opportunity to learn a musical instrument.
13. With very rare exceptions, pupils are polite, helpful and friendly and behave well at all times. They enter school quietly and settle down happily to tasks or reading until registration begins. Pupils quickly learn to work sensibly with others and even the youngest are happy to take turns. Some pupils are keen to volunteer to do jobs such as sharing out resources or collecting up books. They are eager to follow teachers' instructions and tasks such as tidying up are not seen as a chore, for all participate to complete it efficiently. Pupils are invariably considerate when moving around the school, with the holding open of doors for others becoming second nature. They

develop a sensitive awareness of the needs of others and are trustworthy. Pupils respond well to the variety of opportunities to work in pairs or groups; in a dance lesson, infants were happy to take turns to follow their partner's actions in creating a dance and provided an appreciative audience when others were performing. The school has few rules and pupils agree class rules at the beginning of the year to supplement them. However, the high expectations of good behaviour promoted in the school and the willingness of pupils to respond accordingly, mean that systems of rewards and sanctions are very low key and there is little need for reminders of them in lessons. Similarly, playtime behaviour, if a little energetic on the junior playground, is never intentionally rough or unkind. Incidents of bullying are rare and there is no racism.

14. Relationships in the school are very good. Pupils care about each other and feel valued. At play and during lunchtimes, pupils enjoy sharing play equipment and are happy to welcome newcomers to their games. Relationship between pupils are respectful and supportive and any help for children who receive additional speech and language support is provided with sensitivity and encouragement from their peers.
15. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities for jobs and older pupils volunteer to help with younger ones at playtimes or to help with administrative tasks such as the folding of newsletters. Although there is no regular forum for pupils to express their ideas about the school, they believe that any suggestions they make will be listened to. They are pleased that their request that girls should be allowed to wear trousers was granted, and refer to this with a sense of pride and a feeling that their opinions are valued.
16. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by their peers and by all staff. Teachers and learning support assistants know these children well and support them sensitively and positively at all times. Relationships between pupils are good in both supervised and more free situations and children are helpful and supportive to each other. This contributes to the success of the inclusive philosophy the school has developed. By incidental example, and more importantly by carefully planned teaching, children in supportive groups are helped to become aware of the range of an individual's strengths and of his/her weaker areas. Through these sessions, pupils' skills of empathy and understanding are heightened, and supportive actions and behaviours are developed.
17. All pupils show respect to others and those who have additional support from the speech and language department are fully integrated into the school and readily welcomed and supported by their peers. Attendance at the school is good and levels of unauthorised absence are in line with the national average. Registration procedures meet statutory requirements. The vast majority of pupils arrive in good time and sessions start promptly throughout the day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching is good in the reception class. In the rest of the school teaching was satisfactory overall, and in nearly half the lessons seen it was good or better. The teaching of music and physical education are particular strengths. The quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection and results in pupils making satisfactory progress in the majority of subjects. Where weaknesses occur it is mainly because weaknesses in assessment are not sufficiently linked to the National Curriculum subjects and this results in a lack of precision in planning for

pupils' differing needs. This is particularly evident in writing and science. However, it is also evident in other subjects when all pupils in the class undertake similar tasks.

19. Strengths in teaching across the school are good classroom organisation and preparation for lessons. These ensure that the maximum use is made of the time available for teaching and lessons flow smoothly. There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils leading to a high level of mutual respect and trust, which makes pupils feel safe and secure from an early stage. There is genuine use of praise and encouragement and, as a result, all pupils are keen to be involved and to respond to teachers' questions. There is good teaching of physical education and music which results in above average standards in these subjects. Particularly successful elements of these lessons resulted from the teachers' good subject knowledge which enabled them to make quick evaluations of pupils' work and give effective feedback that helped to improve their knowledge and skills.
20. The quality of teaching for reception-aged pupils is good overall. The teacher is knowledgeable about the needs of young children and the requirements of the curriculum guidance for this age group. Planning is well structured and clear, and ensures that there is an appropriate balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated tasks. The range of activities that is provided is effective in enriching children's experience and in helping the children to learn through play and talk. Interaction between the teachers and the children is good and supports children's learning, encouraging them to think for themselves and helping them to make progress. Children are sensitively but firmly managed and this gives them security in their early days of schooling.
21. The teaching of English is satisfactory throughout the school. Teachers have a satisfactory knowledge of the literacy strategy and there is an appropriate emphasis on the teaching of phonics and grammar. This has resulted in improvements in these basic skills. There does, however, need to be a greater focus on helping pupils to apply their knowledge of phonics and spelling patterns in the course of their writing. Teachers use questions skilfully in the course of whole class sessions to help pupils to build on their knowledge and understanding from previous lessons and to develop their ideas. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to work in pairs to share their ideas and this ensures that everyone is involved in making contributions to whole class sessions. Throughout the school, lesson objectives are clearly linked to the national strategy for literacy. They are shared with pupils so that they understand the purpose of lessons. Although all teachers use a similar format for planning, the quality of the content is variable between classes and in some cases it is scant. It is not always clear what pupils of different abilities are to know, understand or be able to do as a result of the lesson or series of lessons. Where teaching is most effective, good use is made of a wide range of literature to deepen pupils' knowledge of the grammar, form and structure of English. Lively and enthusiastic explanations are very effective in engaging pupils' attention and motivating their learning. For example, the text of 'Mark the Shark' was used well in a Year 2 lessons to engage pupils' interest in spelling patterns. In a mixed Year 3 and 4 class lesson pupils were motivated to write an 'incident report', when the teacher engaged them in a role play situation where they pretended that there had been a burglary at the school. When weaknesses occur there is an over-use of published worksheets and schemes for group work sessions. This constrains learning for some pupils because they are repeating technical skills which they have already acquired. The school now needs to increase opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their knowledge and skills of how writers use language for effect.

22. The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory throughout the school. Teachers' secure knowledge and understanding of the subject results in well-structured lessons, firmly based on the national guidance for numeracy. There is a good pace to the best lessons, particularly when teachers use skilful questioning to probe pupils' understanding, extend their thinking and encourage pupils to articulate their own mathematical ideas. For example, in a very effective Year 1 lesson, pupils described hidden shapes, and this helped them to gain an early understanding of the properties of different shapes. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils were asked to explain their interpretations of graphs and this increased their understanding of how graphs can be used to present quantifiable information. All teachers ensure that there is sufficient time left at the end of sessions to summarise key ideas and vocabulary. Although the work that is given to groups of pupils is broadly matched to their differing needs and capabilities, more could be done to extend some of the higher attaining pupils.
23. Satisfactory teaching was seen in science. Planning is soundly based on the national guidance and teachers appropriately share what is intended to be learned with the pupils so that they understand the purpose of the lesson. In the best lessons, teachers take care to introduce and reinforce an appropriate scientific vocabulary. When weaknesses occur it is in some whole class sessions where all the pupils in the class undertake the same tasks and there is a lack of challenge for those who are more able.
24. The teaching of religious education is satisfactory overall, and there are some particular strengths in the opportunities that teachers give pupils to learn in practical ways and through discussion. This enables pupils to acquire a sound understanding of complex issues such as the symbolism and beliefs surrounding religious traditions. Teaching in art and design is satisfactory throughout the school. It is most effective when teachers provide opportunities for pupils to use their skills in making a creative response to images that they see, for example, in Year 5 when making subtle impressions using watercolours, and in Year 2, where pupils have produced good pastel interpretations of natural materials. When weaknesses occur it is because tasks are too prescriptive.
25. Too few lessons were seen in design and technology, history and information and communication technology in Years 1 and 2 to make a judgement about teaching in these subjects. However, the teaching of these subjects in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory. The teaching of important design and technology making skills is clear and systematic and pupils respond well to this, frequently by regarding the subject as their favourite. There is sometimes an over-emphasis on prescriptive designs for constructions, however, and this limits the development of pupils' design and planning skills. Some evidence of good teaching was seen in history, which brought the subject to life. This was often based on visits to historical sites which provided good opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in learning about the past. Sometimes English and history teaching is linked effectively. Information and communication technology is taught systematically and, in most lessons, there was a clear lesson structure, links were made with ongoing classroom work and skills and understanding were well developed through co-operative activity. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the teaching of geography across the school.
26. The teaching of pupils in the language unit is generally good, particularly in focused group teaching sessions, and overall this enables these children to make good progress during their time in the school. The caring and positive inclusion of pupils with a range of language needs is a strength of the school. Class teachers are made fully aware of their needs, and are assisted in offering appropriate in-class support

based on the advice of the experienced teacher in charge. Class teachers are assisted by the very professional support provided by learning support assistants. They show good knowledge of individual children, with appropriate levels of support in day-to-day learning contexts. They recognise and support opportunities for children to learn from each other and show skilful interventions or observations, as appropriate. There are well structured opportunities for them to observe and evaluate children's progress. These opportunities are carefully planned by the teacher who manages the language department.

27. The whole school use of the 'Soundfield' system has enhanced the voice clarity of the teaching offered to all pupils, and demonstrates the school's commitment to supporting the effective teaching of special needs pupils in all classrooms. This system assists all pupils in clearly hearing the class teacher and enhances teaching quality for all.
28. Individual children have their specific language needs met in programmes of teaching led by the language department teacher. This enables individuals to work in differing groups in order that specific learning needs can be met. The teaching in these sessions is planned to meet pupils' needs but interpreted flexibly to match their interest and moods. The pace is lively and activities change frequently to maintain engagement. A variety of support materials, including books, puppets and games, are used and play activities are well used to structure the language development opportunities. The school fully meets the statutory requirements for annual reviews for all children with a statement of special educational needs. Many children have benefited in the past from the skilled assessments and advice of a speech therapist. This post is still to be filled in the current school year, and is recognised by the school as important in contributing to the ongoing success of the language department.
29. Other pupils with special educational needs receive satisfactory teaching overall and generally make sound progress. Class teachers are fully aware of the range of needs in their classes, but recorded planning does not always reflect this. The provision of skilled classroom assistants to help pupils, for example, during many literacy and numeracy lessons, enables special needs pupils to benefit from the additional interaction and support they provide. However, the effectiveness of the support is reduced because of weaknesses in the school's procedures for checking and reviewing the progress of individual pupils, and the lack of assessment information contained in their records. This also results in little evidence to show the extent of progress that special needs children without a statement make in the long term. The school has recognised this issue and is currently introducing selective use of standardised measurement tests, for example, of reading and spelling, and developing systems to assist in tracking the progress pupils make. The part-time teacher for special educational needs has arranged a timetable which provides teaching sessions for a range of special educational needs pupils; however, the activities undertaken do not sufficiently match the needs identified in pupils' individual education plans.
30. Good provision is made for the youngest children who join the reception class part-time by giving them some additional afternoon sessions before they start in school. The school makes sound provision for pupils whose special talents require them to miss some teaching time to participate in competitions. Teachers are generally aware of strategies needed to address the differing ways that boys and girls best learn. They also ensure that those pupils who speak English as an additional language understand what they have to do in lessons and receive the support they need.

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

31. Overall, the curriculum for children in the reception class provides a good range of learning opportunities. It is appropriately based on national guidance for children under five and is particularly effective in developing their personal, social and emotional skills and their early understanding of language and mathematics. The curriculum provides a good foundation for children's next stage of learning.
32. Following the last inspection, the time allocated for teaching in Key Stage 2 was extended and is now broadly in line with national recommendations; and the school now ensures that all assemblies contain a collective act of worship. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is broad, balanced and relevant, and meets statutory requirements. Across the school, the curriculum is securely based on national guidance for literacy, numeracy and most other subjects, and local guidance for religious education. Schemes of work have been improved since the last inspection, and staff are now able to plan within a sound framework to ensure appropriate coverage of the curriculum. However, there are weaknesses in the school's provision for pupils' learning in geography, where the current scheme of work does not ensure the progressive development of key geographical skills. The school is aware that the scheme of work for physical education needs updating and plans to do this in the spring term. There is limited use of information and communication technology to support and enhance pupils' learning across the curriculum.
33. Personal, social and health education is well promoted across the school and includes satisfactory drugs and sex education programmes. The school is currently focusing on the Healthy Schools initiative and, as part of this, will be reviewing its arrangements, including those for sex education. Parents, teachers, learning support assistants and friends of the school give generously of their time to provide a very good range of extra-curricular activities which enhance the curriculum. These include football for boys and girls, netball, cross-country running, athletics, short tennis, recorders, chess, tuition for brass and wind instruments, choir, gardening, sewing, a computer 'drop in' club, and French. Residential visits in Years 5 and 6 also make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.
34. Pupils benefit richly from the opportunity to learn about their local area and good use is made of the village in history and geography. The recent visit, arranged in cooperation with the builders of the new bypass, has made pupils aware of the planning to preserve environmental habitats for badgers. It also made history seem more real when learning about the discovery of Anglo-Saxon skeletons and the foundations of a previously unknown Roman road uncovered during excavations on site. Year 4 pupils participated in an archaeological dig on the site and brought back pieces of pottery to study in greater depth in the classroom. The school is alert to other benefits that local businesses can provide and the cost of the school newsletter is met from advertising revenues.
35. The school strongly promotes the value of local activities in the village, such as cubs and the church choir, and school events are well publicised to ensure that local people feel that they can make a contribution to school life. Consequently, the school is valued in the village and benefits from initiatives it would not be able to afford, such as the restoration of the Victorian clock on the old school building. The police and fire

service are invited to talk to pupils about personal safety, and sporting activities are enhanced by the use of coaches from local rugby, football and cricket clubs.

36. The school has good links with two groups of secondary and feeder schools and makes effective use of opportunities, resources and expertise offered in these partnerships. Particular care is taken over transition arrangements and this ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, settle smoothly into their new schools. Pupils in Year 1 have taster French lessons and older ones the chance to attend a French club run by staff from the local grammar school, which has specialist language status. The school has also been able to borrow additional instruments from other schools to support its year of music. There are close links with the village playgroup and arrangements have been made this year to invite summer born children to come into school for three afternoons a week to help them get used to routines and expectations. This creative experiment, funded by the school, not only helps younger children make the most of their limited time in the reception class but also helps ensure the continuing viability of the playgroup. There are sound procedures to ensure the smooth transition of pupils to secondary education.
37. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and to all extra-curricular activities, with support for funding for residential trips being available if required. No pupil is excluded from participating in visits or residential trips because of their health or medical needs. The curriculum is closely planned to ensure equivalent coverage for pupils in mixed and single aged classes.
38. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. A strength of the school is its ethos which strongly promotes values of respect for self and others, and allows pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to reflect on the fundamental questions of life that are appropriate to pupils' age and stage of development. For example, in the course of the work in religious education, pupils consider the importance of prayer and the significance and importance of religious symbols to the lives of those who have a religious belief. In personal and social education, pupils are given a range of opportunities to reflect on their own thoughts and feelings. For example, they have considered their feelings when they lost something special and then found it, and the times when they have felt the emotions of hate, happiness and sadness. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on the emotions of others are given in subjects of the curriculum such as in history and English. For example, in their work on the Tudors, pupils have considered the feelings of love, fear, loathing and joy in the context of Henry VIII's wives. In their work in literacy, they consider the characters in books and discuss their feelings and motivations. Pupils are given ample opportunities to express joy in the course of their own singing and to think of the beauty of the world around them in the course of their creative writing.
39. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. This is similar to the finding of the last inspection. The school's behaviour policy provides a clear moral code as a basis for behaviour and this is consistently promoted through the school. The school places a particular emphasis on pupils taking responsibility for their actions. When they have done something wrong, they are expected to acknowledge that it is wrong and to make amends. They are also given opportunities to consider moral dilemmas and to consider the outcomes of the different actions that they might take when taking decisions. Pupils are given good opportunities to explore and develop moral values. For example, they have considered the rights and wrongs of telling lies in the context of their own lives, and of war in relation to the lives of others. The quality of

relationships between all those who work in the school provides a good model for the relationships and interactions of fairness and integrity which the school seeks to promote.

40. Provision for the social development of pupils is good. The school's clear values of mutual respect underpin its life as a community and as part of the local and wider world. Inclusive values are promoted well. Racial, religious and other forms of equality are promoted well and pupils are encouraged to recognise and respect both the similarities and differences between individuals. Pupils are given a range of opportunities to work with each other, either in pairs or in small groups, for example, in response partner work in literacy and in discussions on moral issues in religious education. After-school activities such as being part of sports team, visits to places of educational interest and whole school productions also provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to learn how to work together and meet with others. The school makes good use of the links that it has with the village of Aston Clinton through governors, staff and parents who live locally and this helps pupils to develop a sense of how their local community works. The school also encourages pupils to develop their understanding of their responsibilities in the wider world by organising a regular programme of charitable events. Underpinning the school's provision for pupils' social development is an expectation that they should take responsibility and this happens on an informal basis. However, there is scope to develop this provision further in the course of lessons.
41. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory overall. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection. Pupils are given good opportunities to explore their own culture, for example, in the course of dance, art and music. Opportunities are also given for pupils developing their understanding of other cultural traditions, for example, in the context of religious education when they study Jewish and Hindu traditions as well as those that are Christian. Some authentic experiences have been created, for example, in an international week, when each classroom was transformed into a different country, complete with examples of traditional food and artefacts. A group of Kenyan teachers and students have also visited the school and talked to children in each class about their way of life and giving opportunities for pupils to ask questions. As part of the school's year of music, pupils have been given an opportunity to meet and hear a didgeridoo player, and plans are in hands for them to hear a range of music from other cultures, for example, African drumming and a Japanese choir. However, there is scope for the school to develop more opportunities for pupils to learn about the cultural diversity of British life through first hand accounts and experiences.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. Aston Clinton is a school where the provision of good pastoral care and the fostering of a harmonious and inclusive community are given high priority. Teachers and support staff have close links with parents and this enables them to know pupils' needs and provide appropriate support. Adults are good role models for the pupils and relationships throughout the school are based on respect, encouragement and the nurturing of high self-esteem. The school has a strong commitment to inclusion, where each child is valued and supported to play a full part in all aspects of school life. Consequently, children who have support in the school's speech and language department are readily welcomed and helped when joining their classmates for other lessons. The school makes good use of external specialist support for pupils when it is available.

43. Arrangements for child protection are well established and particular attention is given to ensuring that all adults who might come into contact with pupils during the school day are vetted and are properly briefed about procedures. The school is participating in the Healthy School Standard, which ensures that aspects of personal, social and health education such as drugs and sex education are appropriately included in the curriculum. Pupils have planned opportunities to learn about personal safety, including road and fire safety. For example, they have visited 'Hazard Alley' in Milton Keynes and learned to keep themselves safe in a range of realistic scenarios. There are also regular opportunities to discuss aspects relating to their personal development and feelings; this helps pupils to articulate any worries, learn about the views and feelings of others and to develop positive attitudes.
44. The school is successful in promoting high standards of behaviour and a sense of pride in the school. Pupils have a clear understanding of the school rules and the expectations for good manners and courtesy. The behaviour policy is consistently implemented and appropriate records are kept of the occasional incidents of poor behaviour or bullying. Pupils are eager to help and undertake responsibilities in the school and they do this well. Positive values such as friendship and respect for others are used as themes in assemblies; and a weekly assembly is used to celebrate the achievements and efforts made by pupils both in and out of school. This helps pupils develop high self-esteem. The school readily accepts pupils from other schools who have had problems with their behaviour, and makes effective provision for them. There were no exclusions last year
45. Arrangements for monitoring attendance are satisfactory but the open access to classrooms means that there are no central records of pupils who arrive late. The school works appropriately with the education welfare officer to monitor the few pupils whose levels of attendance or punctuality give cause for concern. Children joining the school have a well planned series of familiarisation visits before starting part-time in reception class. The school's introduction of afternoon sessions for the youngest children ensures that they also have the opportunity to become used to the buildings and routines for a similar period and this ensures a smooth transition into reception for all.
46. The school has well established procedures for accidents, emergencies and medicines and maintains good supporting documentation. Appropriate arrangements are made to meet the needs of pupils who require support for medical or physical conditions during the school day. The health and safety policy is implemented through regular site inspections by the governors, although written risk assessments are not yet in place. Pupils are reminded of the importance of safe practice in lessons such as physical education, and are particularly careful about ensuring an orderly passage through the school by holding doors open for others. However, there are some elements of the school's health and safety procedures which require review and the governors and headteacher have been informed of these.
47. The school's strategies for assessing pupils' standards and progress generally require improvement. Consequently, assessment is not making a sufficiently important contribution to teachers' planning. All teachers use sound, and sometimes better, questioning skills to identify when pupils need more help in lessons. However, there is a lack of coherence in whole school assessment procedures which results in limited analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the performance of individuals or groups in most subjects. Indeed, in subjects other than English, mathematics and science there is very little evidence of assessment strategies to inform the next steps in pupils' learning. Procedures for the assessment of pupils with special needs in the

language department are sound. However, there is scope for improvement in assessments for pupils with special needs who are not in this department which the school recognises and has begun to address. There are currently few strategies for checking the progress and achievements of these pupils in the course of lessons, and the lack of appropriate records makes it more difficult for teachers to review their individual education plans and to set well informed targets for improvement. The progress of the most advanced learners in the school is inhibited by weaknesses in the assessment of their needs, which leads to a lack of challenge for them in some lessons.

48. The school uses a range of commercially produced tests, and these provide useful data. However, this is not always used to inform teachers' planning as much as it should, and some well established tests have limitations in that they are not strongly linked to the outcomes expected for pupils in the National Curriculum. There is useful analysis of the results of national tests in Years 2 and 6, but coordinators have not studied the results in English, mathematics and science with enough precision to identify, precisely, what pupils could or could not do in the tests. The school currently makes no use of the non-statutory tests related to the National Curriculum, but is appropriately considering their introduction. The school has started to introduce target setting for pupils in English and mathematics, but this is at an early stage of development. When the school was last inspected, school assessment procedures were found to require development, and there was a lack of consistency in practice. In addition, the assessment information that was available was not always used to inform teachers' planning. The school has made insufficient progress in addressing these weaknesses, which still exist.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. The school has established a very strong partnership with parents, who are exceptionally supportive of the school and hold it in very high regard. The strength of this partnership comes from the strong belief that parents are a valued part of the school community and should be kept well informed about school life. From their earliest contact with the school, parents are encouraged to take an interest in what is taught, with a weekly opportunity at lunchtime when children in reception can show their parents their work. This session contributes well to making parents feel that the school is open and welcoming. New parents also receive helpful booklets indicating how they can help their children with reading and involve children in maths activities at home. Parents receive a summary each term of what is to be taught and can see the results in the work displayed at the open day held in the summer term. Workshops on curriculum subjects and other topics of interest such as drugs awareness are held regularly, and meetings are arranged each year to inform parents about what is expected as their children enter the junior school and about national tests and local selection procedures for senior school. The school also organises whole school activity days, for example, on reading, mathematics and science, when there are opportunities for parents to work with the pupils and to listen to talks by local authority subject advisers.
50. Documentation about the school is clear and informative and the weekly newsletter is eagerly anticipated by parents as it contains not only information about school events, but also contributions from pupils and parents about activities and possible initiatives. Last year, designated the year of science, the newsletter contained regular scientific challenges for parents and children to research and responses showed this was a

popular activity. Parents are also consulted from time to time about their views of the school and their suggestions are followed up where appropriate.

51. The school gives parents indications about homework expectations, but is not specific about the time this should take. Homework was the only matter about which parents indicated some dissatisfaction on the questionnaires, but inspection evidence suggests that amounts set are in line with normal expectations. Parents have the usual range of opportunities through the year to discuss their children's progress and annual written reports give satisfactory indications of pupils' attainment, although there is a need to ensure that they include targets for improvement.
52. For their part, parents are very supportive of the school and their children's learning, the exceptionally high response to the questionnaire being just one indicator of their regard for the school. Many parents are willing to give their time to help regularly in classes or in the library and others help to run or assist with extra curricular clubs. Parents are willing to join self-help working groups to undertake jobs such as improving the environment of the school and are happy to share their knowledge and expertise with children in talking about their jobs or skills. The Parents and Friends Association runs well supported and successful fund raising events and the funds are spent on resources and activities to help improve the school. The parents' commitment to the school makes a major contribution to school life and the richness of the curriculum; and their good example is reflected in the positive attitudes to school that is apparent in the pupils.
53. The school has very strong links with parents of pupils who are attached to the language department. They have close links with the teacher in charge of the department who liaises with them regularly, and with outside agencies involved in supporting their children. These parents are regularly involved in formal and informal reviews of their children's progress. Home school notebooks for all pupils keep parents informed of day-to-day achievements and issues. Additional home school books are given for some pupils with special educational needs when it is judged to be appropriate. These are completed by class teachers or learning support assistants as well as by parents.
54. There are regular links with parents whose children have special educational needs and these parents are generally pleased with the school's efforts on their children's behalf. Copies of individual education plans are sent to all parents, and supporting activities for them to undertake with their children at home are recorded in the plans. However, there is a need to ensure a regular check on the reviews of individual education plans.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The school benefits from headteacher's enthusiasm and commitment to the school and its community and he is held in high regard by staff, parents and governors. An atmosphere of care and respect pervades the school and this strongly promotes the positive attitudes that pupils have to their learning. All members of the school community, including the senior management team, know that their work is valued and that they have an important part to play in the school's development. There are, however, important weaknesses in the systems that the school uses to check its effectiveness and to plan for improvements.

56. The governing body give sound support to the school. Governors work closely with the headteacher, and an appropriate range of committees is in place. The chairs of committees carry out their responsibilities efficiently and meetings are always well attended. Governors with responsibilities for monitoring aspects of the curriculum, such as literacy and numeracy, take an appropriate interest and ensure that they keep up to date with developments and progress. They take a keen interest in the school, visit it regularly and ensure that the statutory requirements are met. The governor for special needs is kept well informed about special needs issues and has formal and informal discussions with the staff managing special needs. The headteacher also keeps the governing body well informed about special needs issues. The governors are very supportive of the school's inclusive policies. The positive and constructive approach they take to school development has a beneficial effect on both the academic and pastoral life of the school. Governors receive comprehensive information about the work of the school and have a broad understanding of its strengths and of the challenges it faces.
57. The systems that the school uses to monitor and evaluate its performance are unsatisfactory overall. The headteacher makes use of computer-based systems generated by the local authority to analyse the results of national tests for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6. He also carefully charts the results of the commercial tests that the school uses. However, the school rightly recognises that this is not giving it the information that it needs to accurately pinpoint the areas that need to be addressed in order to improve standards. The headteacher observes lessons in all classes and gives useful written and oral feedback to teachers to help them improve their work. However, the role of the coordinators in monitoring teaching and learning has not been developed sufficiently and, as a result, they do not have a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects across the school. There are useful opportunities for annual discussions about their work with the headteacher but coordinators are not sufficiently accountable for the use of their non-contact time and do not formally plan for how they intend to develop their subjects. The lack of precision in the information that the school collects to inform its improvement efforts results in the school development plan being too generalised. It lacks clear success criteria and measurable objectives in terms of how standards, teaching and learning will be improved. There are also insufficient links to the budget.
58. The school has effective administration systems to ensure the day-to-day running of the school. Newsletters, curriculum and policy documentation are all extremely well presented to ensure that all those within the school community are kept informed. All visitors to the school are made to feel welcome and day-to-day matters are dealt with calmly and efficiently. This makes an important contribution to the calm and orderly atmosphere that is prevalent throughout the school. Finances are soundly managed and governors are provided with clear reports about spending. Governors appropriately apply the principles of best value and debate expenditure rigorously. Strategic financial planning ensures that there are sufficient funds to sustain developments in the longer term and overall the school gives satisfactory value for money.
59. The arrangements for the management of special needs for the pupils attached to the language department are good. The teacher in charge is a member of the senior management team and, with the support of the headteacher, she effectively manages the funding and the school's provision for meeting the needs of these pupils.
60. The deputy headteacher is the school coordinator for general special educational needs. She also manages two other subject areas. Although she has made a start

in improving the administrative systems for special educational needs, her other duties have taken much of her non-contact time and she has had less time for this important area of the curriculum. For example, most individual plans have only annual updates, and reviews are not documented. Systems are not yet sufficiently secure to ensure that the progress of pupils with special needs is systematically monitored and sustained. As a result, the school's recently revised policy for special educational needs is not being fully implemented. The part-time special needs teacher is new to her role and requires further training, support and monitoring to ensure that the best use is made of her time.

61. The school has recently updated its policy for equal opportunities and racism, although this is not specific about how the progress of different groups should be monitored. More able, gifted and talented pupils are identified at the start of each academic year but the absence of rigorous assessment procedures means that there are no clear indications on whether or not they have fulfilled their potential. The school has a strong commitment to ensure that all pupils can benefit from what the school has to offer and this is clearly practised by all adults through the encouragement and support they give to pupils. A Soundfield' system has been installed throughout the school which enhances the audibility of teachers; this not only benefits pupils attending the department but also helps those children who may have marginal hearing loss or lack the attention span for sustained concentration.
62. There are sufficient teachers who collectively have the experience and expertise to cover the subjects of the curriculum and the age and ability range of the pupils. There are good procedures for staff development and induction, which make a significant impact on the quality of teaching. Performance management procedures are fully in place and the results are used appropriately to identify training needs.
63. The accommodation is good and the development of the well organised computer suite is having a significant impact on improving standards. The well organised library has a wide range of good quality books and is well used by pupils who take every opportunity to choose books to take home and read. The school benefits from a highly committed premises manager who has improved the general maintenance of the building and ensures that it is kept in immaculate order by the conscientious cleaning staff. There is good use of display throughout the school to support, inform and celebrate learning. The school has a satisfactory range of resources to support and enrich the curriculum in all subjects.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. In order to raise standards, improve the quality of pupils' learning and also to make leadership and management more effective, the school should:
 - (1) Raise standards in writing so that:
 - pupils have the skills that they need to spell accurately in the course of their writing;
 - pupils' understand the structure of different styles of writing and of how authors use language for effect and apply this in their own writing;
 - teachers' planning is consistent and results in the differing needs of pupils, including the more able, being met in lessons;
 - pupils have the skills they need to use information and communication technology in their writing.

(see paragraphs 1, 4, 21, 86)

- (2) Improve the systems that the school uses for gathering information about the effectiveness of its work so that:
- they allow the headteacher, senior staff and governors to pinpoint the areas that need to be addressed in order to raise standards in the subjects of the National Curriculum;
 - the subject coordinators' role in monitoring standards and developing teaching and learning is both effective and accountable.

(see paragraphs 57, 90, 97, 103, 123, 139)

- (3) Improve school development planning so that:
- there are clear and measurable success criteria ;
 - actions are precise and clearly informed by the school monitoring and evaluation systems;
 - budgetary implications are clearly identified;
 - arrangements for monitoring and evaluation are clearly identified.

(see paragraphs 57, 60)

- (4) Improve assessment so that:
- there are rigorous procedures for each subject of the National Curriculum which are used consistently throughout the school;
 - teachers have the information they need to plan the next steps in learning for individuals and groups of pupils, including higher attainers;
 - teachers are able to monitor pupils' progress and use the information for target setting;
 - individual educational plans for pupils with special educational needs in the main school are reflected in the classroom and are regularly reviewed and updated.

(see paragraphs 10, 18, 23, 30, 31, 89, 90, 102, 108, 112, 123, 132, 137)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	69
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	4	30	34	1	0	0
Percentage	0	6	43	50	1	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	n/a	240
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	n/a	12
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	n/a	42

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	37
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.4
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	25	13	38

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	19	21
	Girls	11	12	10
	Total	31	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	82(67)	82(78)	82(91)
	National	84(84)	86(86)	90(91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	21	24
	Girls	10	8	11
	Total	29	29	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76(72)	76(85)	92 (85)
	National	85(85)	89(89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	21	17	38

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	15	16
	Girls	17	13	15
	Total	30	28	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	79 (72)	74 (74)	82 (85)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	n/a	n/a	n/a
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	n/a (64)	n/a (82)	n/a (87)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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	220	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	14	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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)	12. 8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.75
Average class size	24

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	319

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	n/a
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a
Total number of education support staff	n/a

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
	£
Total income	668,016
Total expenditure	668,407
Expenditure per pupil	2,541
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,375
Balance carried forward to next year	35,984

Total aggregate hours worked per week	n/a
Number of pupils per FTE adult	n/a

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9.4

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	240
Number of questionnaires returned	218

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	52	44	3	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	34	55	6	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	52	3	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	51	15	3	6
The teaching is good.	35	52	4	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	52	13	1	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	38	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	44	7	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	39	48	10	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	47	47	2	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	47	4	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	51	2	0	6

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

65. Children are admitted to the reception classes, on a part-time basis, in the term prior to their fifth birthday. Induction arrangements include appropriate opportunities for parents and children to visit the school in the term prior to starting; and sensitive entry procedures result in pupils having a positive start to school. Most children have attended some form of pre-school provision, including the local pre-school playgroup. The school has good links with the playgroup and is currently trying out an agreement where parents of the summer born pre-school children are offered the opportunity for their children to attend three afternoon sessions at the school. These are supervised by the reception teacher and supported by playgroup staff.
66. There is a wide spread of attainment on entry to the reception class, but for the majority it is a little below average. Children make good overall progress in relation to their starting points and most reach standards that are in line with those expected by the end of the reception year. They are well prepared for Year 1 of the statutory curriculum because of the effective teaching they receive in the reception class. The quality of teaching, across the six areas of learning, is mainly good and otherwise sound. The school provides a well planned curriculum which is soundly based on national guidance for young children in the Foundation Stage. Assessment arrangements are sound and are used well to inform planning for children's different needs. There are good arrangements to ensure that children gain the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Personal, social and emotional development

67. The personal, social and emotional development of most children, as they enter the school, is at the level expected for their age. They make good progress and rapidly gain in confidence because of the supportive and caring ethos in the reception class. Children are helped to feel secure and settle quickly into well established routines. A range of interesting and stimulating activities are provided and this results in children being eager to learn from an early stage. They develop good relationships with their classmates and positive relationships with adults as a result of taking part in activities which require them to share equipment and materials and to work collaboratively. The many opportunities that are provided for sharing and working together result in children having a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong, and the consequences of their actions on others. Whole class sessions in which each child is given a chance to speak are very effective in helping children to understand the basic rules which make for harmonious groups, turn taking and working together. There is good support for children with special educational needs, and those children who are less confident, from the teacher and the classroom assistants. The high expectations of work and behaviour that all staff have of the children are consistently reinforced and, as a result, good habits of working are established from an early stage.

Communication, language and literacy

68. Assessments of children's early literacy skills, made during their first term in the reception classes, show that their performance is generally a little below the level expected for children of this age. As a result of good teaching, children make good progress in relation to their starting points, learn well and attain standards that are

broadly in line with those expected for their age by the end of the reception year. Most children develop the vocabulary they need to name and classify objects, and retell their experiences. Although many children are initially quite reticent in a whole class situation, they gradually develop confidence to answer questions and also ask questions of their own, or pass comments; for example, in listening to the story 'After the Storm', when they suggest that the main character in the story wanted to plant an acorn so that it would grow into a new tree to replace the one that has blown down. They listen carefully during whole class discussions and respond appropriately to instructions.

69. All children enjoy sharing stories and poems with their teacher. They show a good understanding of the elements of a story, follow the events as the plot unfolds when they listen to stories being read aloud and remember the sequence of actions. They act out these actions in the course of their role play and during their play in the sand with small figures, when they show a good understanding of the main events and characters in the stories they hear. They look closely at the illustrations in books and can use them to find out more about the characters and their feelings. As a result of these experiences, children learn that pictures and words are symbolic ways of preserving meaning. The higher attaining children are already aware of how books work and turn readily to them, and a minority read simple stories independently. Evidence from pupils' records shows that the majority of children develop a satisfactory awareness of phonics, which enables them to read words in simple texts accurately by the end of the reception year.
70. By the end of the reception year, most can form their letters accurately and write their own name neatly. Many are able, with help, to compose and write down short simple statements and sequences of ideas. Higher attaining children can use their knowledge of letter sounds to build simple three-letter words, and make very plausible attempts at spelling the words they need to convey their own ideas, using their emerging writing skills.

Mathematical development

71. When children enter the school at the age of four, their mathematical development is at about the level expected for their age. They make good progress, so that by the end of the reception year the majority attain levels that are in line with those expected for children about to enter Year 1. For example, at this early stage of the school year, most children can count accurately from zero to ten and back again; and know the value of the digits between zero and six. They develop and consolidate their understanding of number through appropriate activities such as 'clapping', 'tapping' or 'stamping'; and through their enjoyment of songs and rhymes such as 'One, two, three, four, five, once I caught a fish alive', when working together with the teacher. At other times, games and a range of carefully chosen activities are used to promote their mathematical learning. For example, some children choose to be 'shape detectives' and move around the reception classrooms with clipboards identifying shapes; while others are introduced to the game 'Four makes a square' or print pictures using different shaped blocks. As a consequence of good teaching, some of the strategies which are a valuable part of numeracy lessons in Year 1 are introduced gradually and informally, so that children become accustomed to them. For example, each of the children is encouraged to offer 'thumbs up' or 'thumbs down' to express their agreement or disagreement with mathematical statements made by their teacher or other children.

72. Many children can identify simple two-dimensional shapes such as a square, circle, rectangle and triangle; and some can describe, in simple terms, the properties of these shapes using the correct mathematical vocabulary. They also recognise the language of position such as 'behind', 'in front' and 'inside', as a result of following directions in physical education; and of comparison such as 'short', 'shorter' and 'shortest', for example, when working with toy bears. When playing with sand and water they begin to develop an understanding of capacity and to use the language of 'full' and 'empty'. They create simple patterns, for example, painting symmetrical 'butterfly' shapes and experiment with how many things they can do in a minute.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

73. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world are in line with the levels expected for their age by the end of the reception year. This is the result of effective teaching which ensures a wide range of opportunities for learning. These include direct teaching, practical play experiences and visits to places within the locality. Children begin to gain an early understanding of place as a result of walks around the school, for example, to observe the changing seasons. They also benefit from speaking about places where they have recently spent a holiday and listening to the contributions of others. Attractive displays such as 'Did you go to the seaside?' stimulate further discussion as does trying bread that is popular in different parts of the world, when thinking about harvest time in this country. Children become increasingly aware of the area in which they live and of the existence of 'other' places near and far.
74. Reception children make good progress in the development of their scientific knowledge and understanding of the world. They benefit from examining a range of flower bulbs; and skilful teaching enables them to notice similarities and differences between the bulbs. Children take great care to plant the bulbs carefully and understand they will need water to grow. Children are taught to notice the effects of autumn in the school environment, and are encouraged to examine a range of autumn fruits. During the inspection, some children chose to select conkers from the classroom display and carefully examined these with magnifiers. Their descriptions of the conkers, and their awareness of their texture, reflected their careful analysis. Children know the names of a range of common creatures and know that some hibernate in winter. Well focused teaching has enabled some to talk confidently about birds 'migrating'. During last term, completed work from reception children shows they achieve well when studying frogspawn, tadpoles and frogs, and made good progress in developing their understanding that living things develop and change.
75. Children make good progress in developing their skills in designing, cutting and sticking when making winter homes for creatures that hibernate, using shoe boxes, card, wool and leaves. They also achieve well when examining a range of musical instruments, and making their own simple instruments from recycled material. Children have ample opportunities to use construction kits, and enjoy playing with jigsaw puzzles.
76. Evidence from this year's long term planning, and from photographs of last year's activities and displays, shows that children learn about the passage of time and about changes in relation to their own lives and the toys they have. They consider, through their role play, how domestic activities are carried out and how these have changed over time, for example, washing. They observe the changing dates and seasons and changes in the weather, and they learn to use everyday terms that distinguish the past and the present.

77. The classroom computer is available for children to use to develop and practise mouse control skills and also develop their learning in other areas, for example, mathematical knowledge. Children co-operate well when sharing the computer, and show sound development of appropriate control of the mouse, combined with good opportunities to develop early counting and number recognition skills.

Physical development

78. Children in the reception class benefit from appropriate opportunities to develop their manipulative skills when using construction toys, and when painting, drawing and cutting. They make good progress and develop an appropriate degree of dexterity for their age. Appropriate use is made of the hall for physical education and involves the children in familiar activities within a new setting. They develop their independence when changing into appropriate clothing; and are well prepared for more formal lessons in Year 1 by using this large space on a regular basis. During the inspection, children moved with confidence as they played games with their teacher and learning support assistants. They made good progress in extending their awareness of themselves and of space; and improved their control and co-ordination as they worked independently or together as a larger group. They enjoyed familiar singing games such as 'Cold and frosty Morning', 'I was going to Jamaica' and 'In and out those dusty bluebells' and were able to collaborate and take turns when necessary. The adults worked well as a team and, together, raised the children's awareness of the effect which exercise has on their bodies and of the importance of 'warming up' and 'cooling down'.
79. The school is liaising with the contractor building the nearby A41 by-pass and there are plans to improve the provision for outdoor physical play in the near future. Current provision is satisfactory, overall. During the inspection, limited use was made of this area because of inclement weather. Children have access to a range of small and large equipment such as balls, scooters and wheeled vehicles and some equipment which promotes climbing activities. The school is aware that when building improvements have been completed, it will be possible to extend the opportunities for physical development, and for outdoor learning, in the other areas of experience.

Creative development

80. Children's creative development is fostered effectively by the good range of play activities available in the reception class. During the inspection, for example, small groups dressed in builders' clothes and used construction kits and plastic tools to create their own constructions. Children have ample opportunities to learn through small world play, and can use a simple puppet theatre to create their own performances. They benefit from learning to mix their own paint colours, and make effective prints using leaves from the local environment. Work completed last term shows reception children achieved well when painting pictures showing sunny and rainy days.
81. The children in the reception class readily join in with nursery rhymes and action songs and enjoy these whole class opportunities to respond to songs and rhymes. In assemblies, many of the children are already trying to join in with repeating phrases in school hymns. In structured group music making sessions the children have good opportunities to explore the range of sounds made by untuned percussion instruments. They are learning the names of the instruments and how to play them correctly. They are provided with opportunities to follow the rhythm of familiar songs

from a popular children's filmmaker. They are asked to describe how the music makes them feel. Music from 'The Jungle Book' film was appropriately responded to, with opportunities to use words to describe feelings. These young children are provided with good opportunities to explore instruments, and to respond creatively to familiar tunes. Good provision also enables their listening and musical appreciation skills to start to develop. Children are confident in using taped stories and games independently.

ENGLISH

82. The results of the 2002 national tests in English for Year 6 pupils were below the national average and well below the results of similar schools. In national tests for Year 2 pupils the school's performance was well below the national average and the average for similar schools.
83. The results for Year 6 pupils in 2002 are an improvement on the previous year with more pupils attaining the expected levels and above. Overall, however, results remain below average because few pupils attain at the higher levels in writing. The 2002 results for pupils in Year 2 show that the school's performance is well below average in reading and writing. This is because of weaknesses in pupils' spelling and few pupils attaining at the higher levels. The results for Year 2 pupils can be partly explained by the fact that nearly half of the cohort were born in the summer and so were younger than many other pupils who took the test. However, the school's assessment system is not specifically linked to the National Curriculum and this is a contributory factor. Teachers throughout the school do not have the precise information that they need to check pupils' progress and plan for the next steps in learning over the longer term. The findings of the inspection are that in reading standards are broadly average and pupils make satisfactory progress overall in relation to their prior attainment. Standards in writing are below average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, reflecting the results of national tests. In writing, pupils' progress is unsatisfactory overall and higher attaining pupils do not achieve as much as they should. Pupils with special educational needs make good overall progress as a result of the effective support provided by teachers and learning support assistants. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also make sound progress. Overall standards in English are similar to those found during the last inspection.
84. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are soundly developed throughout the school and they reach the standards expected nationally by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils in all year groups sustain concentration and interest throughout sometimes lengthy discussions in the literacy hour. As listeners, they follow quite complex instructions and explanations without needing to be told more than once. In Year 2 they begin to show confidence in talking, particularly when the topics under discussion interest them. For example, in a Year 1 and 2 lesson that prepared pupils to write their own story about a party, pupils discussed their ideas together sensibly, speaking clearly, listening carefully and responding appropriately to what others had to say. They worked well together selecting the relevant information that they needed, prior to recording their ideas. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils acquire, and subsequently use, an appropriate repertoire of technical terms related to literacy, such as suffix and synonym. They have a sound vocabulary and enjoy finding out the derivations and meanings of new words. For example, in Year 6, pupils listened carefully when the teacher broke the word 'autobiography', into its component parts and then explained the meaning of each part. They enjoyed offering their own words, such as 'biodegradable', and 'autograph', which had similar component parts.

Discussions in personal and social education also contribute to pupils' skills in questioning, expressing opinions and exchanging ideas responsibly with appropriate sensitivity to those around them. Opportunities to take part in class assemblies also provide a useful opportunity for pupils to present their ideas to an audience. For example, in a presentation of work on the life of Henry VIII, Year 5 pupils spoke with great clarity, enlivening their performance with expression, actions and humour.

85. The evidence of the inspection shows that the majority of pupils attain the standards expected nationally for reading by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 respond well to stories and are beginning to understand some of the differences between fiction and non-fiction texts. When reading text aloud the more able readers read with fluency and accuracy observing the cues presented by punctuation, for example, to pause or to indicate the use of a question mark. They rarely, however, use a great deal of expression in their reading, and this is an area for development. With encouragement, they retell stories that they have heard, talk about the various characters, and identify with different viewpoints and feelings. Most pupils use their knowledge of phonics to decode unfamiliar words. Higher-attaining pupils use inference well to work out hidden meanings in the text, although average and lower-attaining pupils still rely mainly on their developing knowledge of phonics and sight words. By Year 6, most pupils have developed preferences in their personal reading and higher attaining pupils talk with enthusiasm about their favourite books and authors and read widely at home. By the end of Year 6 most pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of how information books work. Pupils throughout the school make satisfactory use of the school's well stocked library to choose both fiction and non-fiction books to read at school and at home. However, they do not make sufficient independent use of their library in the course of lessons. There is little evidence to show how pupils in Year 1 and 2 use information and communication technology to find information. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are making broadly satisfactory use of computers in the course of their work although their skills in desk top publishing are underdeveloped in literacy lessons.
86. Pupils' knowledge about language and their competence as readers are in advance of their skills as writers where overall standards are below average. In Year 2, most pupils can produce simple pieces of writing such as stories and reports, and retell familiar stories in their own words. Most pupils demarcate their sentences with full stops and some are beginning to use more advanced form of punctuation such as speech marks and apostrophes. The spelling of familiar words is usually phonetically plausible but pupils make too many mistakes in spelling simple words. They are beginning to develop their understanding of how different kinds of writing can be structured according to its purpose. For example, they have written the instructions for making bread and know that stories have a beginning, middle and end. However, more able pupils do not achieve as much as they should because their skills in organising their writing and developing their ideas clearly and imaginatively are not sufficiently embedded. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' skills in using the basic grammatical structure of sentences is usually secure and their use of punctuation to mark sentences and within sentences is usually correct. Handwriting is usually fluent, legible and joined. Weaknesses remain in spelling however, and although classes are well supplied with dictionaries, pupils do not turn readily to them in the course of their work. In Year 5, most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the characteristics, features and styles of different kinds of fiction and information texts. They transfer this knowledge to their writing and, as a result, are beginning to produce work of good quality. For example, they know something of how writers use language for effect and how they try to engage their readers by using metaphor and simile. They have applied this knowledge in their creative writing and, for example, one pupil

wrote in their poem about the night, *'The spook flits through the gloomy night, Howling and hissing as a high pitched cat'*. Year 5 pupils know how authors use punctuation, long and short sentences and imagery to generate suspense, and choose their words carefully for impact. This is evident in their writing about how they would react if the playground suddenly went silent. Pupils have used exclamation, question marks and short staccato sentences to create mood and atmosphere. Pupils in Year 6 do not demonstrate these skills as well as the pupils in Year 5. Although they are interested in language and the way in which words work, they have residual gaps in their knowledge and understanding of the strategies that they can use to make their writing more interesting to the reader. They rarely produce complex sentences, and use a limited range of 'connectives' or 'joining words'. As a result, achievement is lower than it should be in this year group.

87. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, and in some lessons it is good. Whole class sessions, in which passages of text are analysed and the understanding of words is developed, are generally well taught. In the best lessons questions are carefully planned to challenge pupils at a range of levels, for example, in a Year 5 literacy lesson a higher attaining pupils was asked to explain the word 'genre' whilst an average attaining pupila was asked to explain the word 'synonym'. The most effective teaching actively involved pupils in sharing and analysing text, and this motivated them to think for themselves, building on what they already knew and developing their knowledge and understanding. For example, Year 2 pupils joined in with the teacher as she read the poem, 'Mark the Shark'. They then used individual whiteboards to record their observations of words that had specific phonetic patterns. In some lessons, for example in Year 6, pupils were encouraged to ask about words or passages that they didn't fully understand. As a result of teachers' careful explanations, misconceptions were dealt with and learning was moved on. There is evidence of role play and drama being used effectively to promote learning. For example, in a Year 3/4 writing lesson the teacher used the situation of an imaginary burglary at the school to engage the children's interest, and encourage them to ask questions. This had a positive effect on their motivation to write factual accounts of the incident, as part of their work on report writing. Teaching in the element of the lesson following whole class work is generally satisfactory but weaknesses occur when there is an over-reliance on published worksheets and exercises in books which often constrain learning or repeat what pupils already know. This limits the progress that pupils make and does not provide the level of challenge that more able pupils need. Planning for literacy lessons varies between classes. Where it is good, clear learning objectives are identified for each element of the lesson and there is careful planning for guided and shared writing activities in which pupils are helped to apply the skills that they have learned from the study of text. However, there is often insufficient planning for the different needs of pupils, particularly more able pupils, and it is not clear how planning for pupils with special educational needs in the main school is linked to their individual education plans. Teachers have established very good relationships with their pupils, creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in all classes. Classroom assistants are well deployed and give good support to individuals and groups of pupils to help them to complete tasks and take part in lessons. The 'Soundfield' system is particularly effective in ensuring that all pupils can hear what teachers are saying.
88. The subject manager has been in post for a relatively short time and her role in monitoring and evaluating the subject by analysing data and observing teaching and learning has not yet been developed. As a result, she does not have a sufficiently accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses in standards, teaching and learning to inform action planning for improvement. The school uses commercial

standardised tests to assess progress in reading and literacy and this gives the school a broad view of pupils' development. However, these tests are not sufficiently linked to the National Curriculum and so fail to give a precise picture of the progress that pupils are making, and they do not give teachers the information that they need to help pupils take the next steps in learning. The school recognises this and is appropriately considering the use of the non-statutory assessment tests that are closely aligned to the National Curriculum and that can give more precise guidance on the levels that pupils are achieving in Years 3 to 5.

MATHEMATICS

89. On entry to Year 1, the mathematical knowledge and understanding of most pupils are broadly average. The results of national tests taken by Year 2 pupils in 2002 were well below the national average, and below the average results of similar schools. The number of pupils demonstrating above average standards for their ages was below the national average. This can partly be explained by the age of the pupils. Nearly half of that particular group of pupils were born in the summer and consequently are up to a year younger than many of their classmates. They have also received less full-time schooling. The school's 2002 national test results for pupils in Year 6 are in line with the national average and those of similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving above average standards was a little below the national average.
90. Inspection findings show that most pupils in the current Years 1 and 2 make mainly sound, and sometimes good, progress from their starting points at the beginning of Year 1. Pupils with special educational needs make good overall progress as a result of the effective support provided by teachers and learning support assistants; but more able pupils do not make sufficient progress in some lessons. Overall, the standards achieved by the current Year 2 pupils are broadly average, which is similar to the findings of the last inspection.
91. Most pupils make mainly satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress in their work with shape, length, weight and capacity; and in acquiring key numeracy skills. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, pupils could calculate quickly 'in their head' during the mental/oral starter, responding enthusiastically to the 'coin' challenges set by their teacher and enjoying the fun of mathematics. As a consequence of very effective teaching, they then went on to make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of two-dimensional shapes. Pupils could explain clearly how they were able to identify different shapes and most could describe the characteristics of them. In a Year 2 lesson, good teaching enabled pupils to draw on their knowledge of two-dimensional shapes when identifying common three-dimensional shapes; and then to sort these according to the number and type of 'face'. In both Years 1 and 2, pupils are acquiring a secure knowledge of place value, can describe and extend simple number sequences and are learning to employ the correct number operations when making calculations. They make sound overall use of their mathematical knowledge and understanding in investigations and relevant situations in other subjects but would benefit from more opportunities to apply their skills.
92. The evidence of the inspection is that most pupils in Years 3 to 6 make mainly sound, and sometimes good, progress although more able pupils mark time in some lessons. The standards achieved by the majority of pupils currently in Year 6 are a little below average as a result of some gaps in their learning whereas, in the last inspection, Year 6 pupils were judged to be in line with national expectations. The

- school is aware of this and there is evidence that the efforts of the Year 6 teacher, ably supported by her learning support assistant, are rectifying these deficiencies.
93. Pupils develop a sound understanding of the number system and of measures, shape and space; and can handle data. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils counted confidently in twos, threes and fours during the mental/oral starter and developed their understanding of the term 'multiple'. As a consequence of good teaching, they were then able to use this knowledge to extend their recognition and understanding of unit fractions such as $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{8}$. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils demonstrated secure numeracy skills, during the introduction to the session, when responding to their teacher's challenge to quickly calculate combinations of two digit numbers which total 100. Initial answers such as $88 + 12 = 100$ were extended, for example, to $37 + 63 = 100$, as the teacher encouraged pupils to describe the mental strategies which they were using and to apply these to find different combinations. In the main part of this good lesson, pupils then developed their knowledge and understanding of bar line graphs and of relevant vocabulary. By the end of the lesson, pupils could identify the 'mode' and work out the 'range' from the data provided. Good use was also made of information and communications technology as a group of pupils constructed a graph using appropriate software.
94. Teaching is satisfactory overall, although some good and very good teaching was also seen. Teachers' planning appropriately takes account of guidance contained in the national numeracy strategy and the recommended three-part numeracy lesson is well established across the school. Learning objectives are clearly defined and, in most lessons, are appropriately shared with pupils, usually at the beginning of each lesson. Resources are well prepared and appropriate, and instructions and teaching points are clearly explained. Teaching assistants are carefully briefed and provide good support, particularly for pupils with special educational needs. In the more effective lessons, teachers have high expectations and manage pupils well. There is a good pace to these lessons particularly in the mental/oral starter and teachers use skilful questioning well to help pupils to develop their understanding and to extend their thinking. However, in some lessons, pupils are not interactively involved through questioning which is well targeted in order to challenge them, or have insufficient opportunities to offer their methods and solutions for discussion. All teachers ensure that sufficient time is left at the end of numeracy lessons to summarise key ideas and vocabulary, and these sessions generally provide a broadly satisfactory conclusion. A well equipped computer suite has been established in the last 12 months and some use is made of information and communication technology to extend pupils' mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding. However, the school recognises the need to make more regular and effective use of information and communication technology to support and enhance the teaching of mathematics across the school. Teachers know their pupils well and make sound use of day-to-day assessments of pupils' progress to inform their planning. End of unit assessments are also used by individual teachers and a commercial test is given, annually, to check on pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. However, school systems to monitor the progress and to set and review targets for individual pupils are not sufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels and this restricts the careful tracking of individuals and specific groups of pupils.
95. The coordinator teaches younger pupils and works closely with the Year 6 teacher who benefited from the initial national numeracy strategy training. She is conscientious, monitors teachers' planning and has observed lessons in all Year 1 and 2 classes and some Year 3 – 6 classes. Both teachers talk to pupils across the school about their learning in mathematics and provide advice and support for colleagues. Some analysis of the results from commercial tests has been

undertaken and this has informed school decisions such as which scheme to purchase to promote and support problem-solving activities. However, the regular sampling of pupils' work and the analysis of national test papers, in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement, currently lacks rigour and should be improved. In addition, the subject would benefit from the formulation of an annual action plan which reviews the progress made in the previous year and clearly identifies priorities for the future.

SCIENCE

96. On entry to Year 1, pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding are average, overall. The results of the statutory teacher assessments in 2002 were in line with the national average in relation to the percentage achieving the expected level in Year 2, and the test results in science in Year 6 were broadly average.
97. The inspection evidence shows that standards are similar to those found in the last inspection. Pupils are making mainly satisfactory progress in their scientific learning, across the school, and standards are broadly average in nearly all year groups, including in Year 2. The exception is in Year 6, where current standards are a little below average, overall. All available evidence supports the school's view that pupils in the current Year 6 class made limited progress in their scientific learning in the last academic year. The school has addressed this weakness successfully in Year 5 so that the current classes are making sound progress. Nevertheless, it fully recognises that standards in the Year 6 class are not as high as they should be as a result of gaps in pupils' learning, and the Year 6 teacher is working very hard indeed to help pupils to make up lost ground.
98. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from effective support in lessons from teaching assistants, and make mainly sound but often good progress in their learning. The progress of the most advanced learners is much more spasmodic and is just adequate, overall, because they often mark time when given work which is too easy. Those with English as an additional language make sound progress.
99. In Year 1, pupils make satisfactory progress when examining a range of fabrics to decide which will be the most effective to keep them warm. In lessons observed during the inspection in Years 1 and 2, pupils made sensible predictions about materials which would be waterproof, and followed their teachers' careful instructions to test the materials to discover if their ideas were correct. While pupils make sound progress overall in these lessons, the most advanced learners in Year 2 would benefit from opportunities to be more actively involved in conducting the experiments, making decisions and in drawing their own conclusions. In the Year 3 class, pupils develop their understanding that some materials are particularly suitable for specific purposes. For example, they test the strength of different kinds of paper by using the papers to make bags, and discover how much weight each bag can bear. In the mixed Year 3 and 4 class and in the Year 4 class, pupils make mainly adequate progress when learning about forces through simple experiments with elastic bands. In Year 5, pupils have a sound understanding of the basic properties of solids, liquids and gases. They undertake experiments to help them to understand that water can displace the air in porous materials, and learn from using syringes that compression can change the volume of air. In Year 6, pupils' scientific enquiry skills are generally underdeveloped. For example, most pupils find it difficult to devise experiments to separate materials despite recent lessons focused on sieving, filtering and evaporation. In addition, while all pupils understand that heating or cooling can

change some materials, a significant minority are not fully secure about which changes are reversible.

100. The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory, across the school. Teachers' planning is sound, overall, and is based on the useful guidance provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. However, the planning often needs to take more account of the needs of the more able pupils who need more challenge when all pupils in classes undertake the same tasks. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in most science lessons by teaching assistants who help them to tackle the work successfully. Teachers appropriately identify the learning intentions of lessons in their planning and usually share these with pupils at the beginning of lessons. Teachers' explanations are nearly always easy for pupils to understand, and their subject knowledge is satisfactory. All have constructive relationships with their classes and are able to motivate pupils effectively. As a consequence, pupils usually listen attentively to the teachers during science lessons and persevere well. On occasions, some lessons need to move along at a slightly faster pace, but most enable pupils to cover sufficient ground in the time available. In the most effective lessons, teachers take particular care to introduce and reinforce appropriate scientific vocabulary. Teachers' questioning skills are at least sound and mean they are usually able to identify pupils who need more help in lessons. However, there is a lack of coherence and rigour in whole school assessment procedures which results in limited analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the performance of individuals and groups. As a consequence, the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress often provide insufficient detail, and target setting in science is underdeveloped.
101. There is a new coordinator for science this term, and she is building on the work of the previous, well established, coordinator who has recently taken responsibility for another subject in the school. Procedures for checking teachers' planning are sound, and result in the school covering the requirements of the National Curriculum in science. In addition, science resources were audited and improved recently by the coordinator; and pupils benefited from a range of visitors who worked with pupils as part of a particular whole school focus on the subject in the last academic year. When the school was last inspected, there was little monitoring of teaching in the subject, and this is still the case. The last subject coordinator very occasionally visited classes to see teaching but no notes were taken of strengths and areas for development. There is no planned programme of lesson observations in science by the new coordinator, although some time is allocated, each term, for coordinators to develop their subjects. In addition, examples of pupils' work in science have not been analysed, from across the school, to judge pupils' progress and standards. The results of the statutory tests in Year 6 have not been rigorously analysed to discover, precisely, where pupils succeeded and where they needed to do better. As a consequence of the above, the school is in a relatively weak position to identify strengths and weaknesses in science, and to target areas for improvement. The subject would benefit from the formulation of an annual action plan.

ART AND DESIGN

102. Pupils make mainly sound progress in art and design and standards are broadly average across the school, including in Years 2 and 6. Standards have been maintained in the subject since the last inspection, and there are examples of good work in Years 2 and 5.

103. In Year 1, pupils demonstrate satisfactory painting skills when creating pictures of their activities during the summer holidays, and make adequate progress when making collage pictures of trees. In Year 2, pupils' prints made from leaves are typical of the work of slightly younger pupils, but they have achieved well when using pastels to draw fruits and vegetables from direct observation. The best examples of the pastel interpretations show pupils were able to blend the colours effectively and study the fruits and vegetables very carefully. The Year 2 paintings of the summer holidays represent sound achievement, overall, and some are boldly painted with vibrant colours. In a lesson observed in Year 2, pupils made adequate progress in developing the practical skills of collage making, but the prescribed nature of the activities meant they made very little progress in their creative development.
104. In Year 3, pupils are made aware of the work of a range of artists, which helps to develop their understanding about art. However, while they have benefited from looking carefully at a range of pictures by Diego Rivera, most have gained little from attempting to copy small reproductions of his paintings, using pastels, felt-tipped pens and paint. In Years 3 and 4, pupils make sound progress when carrying out exercises which help them to appreciate the relative positions of key features of the human face, and when drawing their friends. At present, however, their emphasis on 'correct' proportions tends to override their creative response when interpreting their friends' faces. As a consequence, the images, though satisfactory for pupils' ages, tend to be a little stereotyped and are not as expressive as they might be. In Years 5 and 6, pupils have made adequate progress and achieved broadly satisfactory standards when creating images which show movement – for example, of footballers or dancers. While the drawings of the Tudors created by Year 6 pupils are just satisfactory for their ages, some Year 5 pupils achieve well when painting subtle impressions, using watercolours.
105. The quality of teaching in art and design is satisfactory, across the school. Teachers' subject knowledge is sound overall. However, pupils are occasionally given tasks which have limited value, and this suggests there is scope for improvement in the understanding of some teachers. The organisation of lessons is a strong feature of the teaching, and all teachers succeed in motivating their classes effectively. Consequently, pupils concentrate well and their behaviour is good in art and design lessons. In some lessons, teachers need to provide more opportunities for pupils to make a creative response, and the use of templates to produce images is undesirable. In contrast, the good pastel interpretations of natural materials in Year 2, and the delicate paintings by some pupils in Year 5, clearly indicate pupils have benefited from well focused teaching to achieve these results.
106. The art and design coordinator took responsibility for the subject about a year ago, and is keen to fulfil her role well. She recognises that the current subject policy (1997) is outdated and has plans to formulate a new policy later in the current educational year. The coordinator checks teachers' planning and has a sound overview of the broad spread of activities which are provided. However, she has yet to analyse examples of pupils' art work with sufficient rigour to identify strengths and areas for development across the school. At present, there are no coherent strategies for judging pupils' progress and future learning needs in the subject, and this means assessment is not making a sufficiently important impact on teachers' planning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

107. In Years 1 and 2, no design and technology lessons were taught during the inspection, and there was no evidence of pupils' completed work. As a consequence, it is not possible to judge pupils' progress or the quality of teaching in the younger half of the school, or standards in Year 2. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' overall progress in the subject is satisfactory and standards are in line with national expectations, including in Year 6. Standards were also average when the school was last inspected.
108. In Year 3, work from last term shows pupils achieved well when designing and making money containers. They have evaluated different commercially made purses, and made good progress when testing a range of fabrics to decide which to use for their own purses. During the inspection, pupils in the mixed Year 3 and 4 class made satisfactory progress when learning to use bench hooks and hacksaws to create small picture frames from wood. They know how to strengthen the corners of the frames with triangles of card. However, they sometimes need to measure with more precision and this affected the quality of a minority of the frames. In Years 5 and 6, pupils achieve satisfactory standards when following their teacher's instructions to make simple toys which move by the use of cams. In a lesson observed during the inspection, Year 5 pupils had creative ideas about designing their own models but generally found these difficult to translate into coherent, clear designs. Overall, evidence suggests that pupils make better progress in developing their making skills than their designing skills in the older half of the school.
109. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6, and results in pupils' sound achievements in the subject in the older half of the school. Teachers have adequate subject knowledge and teach important making skills in a clear and systematic way. Pupils respond well, and demonstrate positive attitudes and good behaviour in design and technology lessons. Indeed, the subject is a favourite for many pupils. On occasions, teachers tend to prescribe the designs for constructions too strongly, and there is scope to give more emphasis to the development of pupils' skills in designing. Teachers' planning is satisfactory, and is soundly informed by the useful guidance provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The school has, therefore, successfully addressed the criticism in the last inspection that there was no scheme of work to promote continuity in pupils' learning. Although no lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2 during the inspection, it is clear from teachers' planning that the subject receives sufficient attention; and pupils in Years 1 and 2 have already benefited, this term, from opportunities to plan and prepare fruit salads.
110. The design and technology coordinator has taken on her role very recently, and is keen to develop her knowledge in the subject. Discussions with the new coordinator, and an analysis of the information she was provided with by the last, well established, coordinator, shows that procedures for monitoring teachers' planning for the subject are sound. However, there are no whole school strategies for teachers to assess the progress and standards achieved by pupils in their classes with enough rigour. In addition, overall procedures for monitoring the subject are underdeveloped. While the new coordinator is to be given some time, within the school day, to develop her role, she would benefit from specific guidance about how to use this time to best effect, including by beginning to analyse pupils' standards and progress across the school. At present, inadequate monitoring procedures mean it is difficult for the school to identify strengths and weaknesses in the subject, and to target areas for improvement.

GEOGRAPHY

111. As a result of timetabling arrangements no geography lessons were observed during the inspection. An analysis of teachers' planning was undertaken in addition to discussions with staff and pupils. However, few examples of pupils' work were available for scrutiny because the inspection was undertaken early in the school year. In addition, the school's long term planning for the subject does not include a significant focus on geography for pupils in Years 5 and 6 during the first term of the year. As a consequence, it is not possible to make a secure judgement about the progress which pupils make or the standards that they achieve.
112. Evidence from long and medium term planning indicates that pupils are provided with some opportunities to explore the locality of the school and to compare this with contrasting localities in the United Kingdom and overseas. In Year 1, for example, pupils undertake simple fieldwork in the school grounds and develop mapping skills by drawing their routes from home to school. They raise their awareness of the local area, and of the region, when they visit the local church or journey farther afield, for example, to the Cogges Farm Museum in Oxfordshire. All pupils in Years 1 and 2 study the weather and consider the effects of the rain, wind and sun. They also learn about hot and cold climates and the importance of wearing appropriate clothing. In Years 2 and 3, pupils talk, write and draw about places they have visited during their summer holidays and use globes to build up their knowledge of places near and far. Older pupils study the local area and compare and contrast this with the new town of Milton Keynes. This involves valuable fieldwork which is consolidated during the Year 6 residential visit to Barmouth in Wales. Pupils in Year 6 have also recently benefited from a visit to the nearby construction site of the new A41 by-pass. Physical geography appropriately receives attention in the Year 5 and 6 units of work which focus on 'Rivers' and 'Mountains'.
113. The school is making use of helpful guidance published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in order to inform planning for this subject. However, the current scheme of work does not ensure the progressive development of key geographical skills, across the school. All available evidence suggests that when subjects such as science, history and geography are grouped together, particularly in Years 3 to 6, too little attention is then given to the promotion of pupils' geographical skills. These studies make some contribution towards helping pupils to extend their geographical knowledge and global awareness but provide few opportunities for them to develop their geographical skills and understanding. In addition, the school has insufficient resources of good quality to support the study of contrasting localities overseas. As a consequence, too much emphasis is sometimes given to acquiring knowledge about various countries, which is not always well matched to pupils' understanding and does little to promote their investigative skills.
114. The coordinator has been managing the subject for a number of years but has recently been away from the school on maternity leave. She has attended relevant in-service training and completed a ten day course on the 'Role of the Coordinator' in 1996/97. However, there has been little school based in-service training for staff for a number of years. The coordinator has assisted teachers with the formulation of schemes of work, and monitors teachers' planning. Some observations of teaching were carried out last year but the scrutiny of pupils' work across the school, in order to identify strengths and any areas for development, currently lacks rigour.
115. Resources for geography are broadly satisfactory but those for the study of contrasting localities, overseas, are unsatisfactory and should be improved.

HISTORY

116. No history lessons were seen in Years 1 and 2 during the inspection and there was little evidence of pupils' previous work. It was, therefore, not possible to make a judgement about standards and teaching in these year groups. However, information from teachers' planning and the school resources, indicates that pupils are provided with good opportunities for using and exploring historical artefacts and considering changes in ways of life during the past century and beyond.
117. By the end of Year 6, standards in history appear to be mainly in line with those expected nationally. A discussion with a group of Year 6 pupils indicated a generally strong interest in history, with good knowledge of historical facts and chronology. This was observed in other lessons, when pupils indicate they have a good knowledge of the periods they are studying and some ability to make comparisons between different periods. For example, they can name some differences between life in Roman Britain and life in Ancient Greece, and in being rich or poor in the Victorian or the Tudor period. They are less secure when probed about the sources of evidence for their knowledge and possible interpretations of it. They answer factual questions well in lessons and, in better lessons, are encouraged to use and reflect on their knowledge; for example, in a lesson when pupils had to consider the view of Henry VIII's divorce from the perspectives of different characters of the period.
118. The scheme of work shows there is coverage of the required National Curriculum units of work with eight historical periods taught to older pupils. The teaching and progression of historical skills are less explicitly planned into the curriculum. The sound progress made in gaining historical knowledge and understanding of facts is, therefore, less firmly linked with progress in skills of historical enquiry. History is a subject where good use is being made of information and communication technology to support research, using both CD-ROM information and the Internet; for example, pupils found out about characters from the Tudor period including the six wives of Henry VIII, and about Greek Gods.
119. Evidence from the lessons observed, and from discussions with pupils, indicates that pupils generally have positive attitudes towards history, especially when they work practically through drama, with primary resources or have a linked visit. They will remember clearly the diet of the Aztecs after having a practical opportunity to grind maize, and eat some of the vegetables grown at that time. They remember clearly the learning associated with assemblies, for example, Henry VIII and his wives, which was entertainingly shared during the inspection week, and remember and look forward to visits linked with historical periods, for example, the Tudor linked visit to Sulgrave Manor.
120. The quality of teaching is generally sound and sometimes good in Years 3 to 6. Lessons which bring history 'to life' engage most of the pupils and provide good opportunities for learning. Lesson plans vary in depth and quality, but are generally focused, and teachers are usually clear about the content of their teaching. Sometimes English and history teaching is linked effectively. For example, skills of chronology and different methods of note taking were developed and used to research the life of John Cabot. Teachers often make effective links with homework in history. This supports and extends pupils' learning and there were several good examples of this, particularly in the project books on Henry VIII's wives. When teaching is good, pupils are engaged and interested because of the variety of resources used, the activities undertaken and the interest developed in well paced lessons. Probing teacher questions help pupils reflect on their knowledge and interpret facts and opinions. An example of this was shown in the lesson when pupils had to carry out

research about the way of life for Tudor children. This resulted in the good development of pupils' enquiry skills, when personal notes were made in pairs to inform a short presentation to the rest of the class. History lessons often provide good opportunities for speaking and listening and pupils readily think of questions to ask, for example, when considering the Aztec way of life and diet. Sometimes, however, teaching opportunities need to allow pupils to consider how answers to questions can be found, the reliability of the evidence that is available and used, and the possible interpretations of it. The emphasis on the need for this further development of pupils' historical skills and understanding was featured in the previous inspection report.

121. Since the last inspection the school has improved the planning for the systematic coverage of historical periods with National Curriculum links, and the availability of linked resources. The last report noted that there were no systems for assessments to be made of pupils' progress in history and this is still the case. This means the school has no procedures in place to determine standards in history. The monitoring of the teaching and of standards in history is very informal, unsystematic and weak and there remains scope to develop the coordinator's role in this respect.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

122. Insufficient work was seen in Years 1 and 2 to make a judgement about standards in information and communication technology in this area of the school. Sufficient work was seen in Years 3 to 6 to judge that standards are in line with those expected by the end of Year 6. Standards are not as high as in the last inspection. Weaknesses in control technology remain, and there are also weaknesses in the use of emails and the more advanced skills of presenting information.
123. Pupils in Year 3 have positive attitudes to information and communication technology. As a result, they quickly acquire the basic skills to select and change the type, size and colour of fonts as they learn to use word processing tools to share and communicate their ideas to others, for example, when writing a poem in the course of their work in English. These skills are developed further as pupils move through the school when pupils edit their work using tools such as cut and paste as they make choices and decisions about how best to amend their writing and change the position of text. They have used their skills in combining text with graphics to produce posters about firework safety, and also to illustrate their own writing. Pupils are introduced to the use of the Internet to find things out and they develop their skills progressively to make increasing use of information and communication technology to research information in the course of their work. For example, they have visited a Mexican art gallery site to inform their work in art and design. They have also used the Internet in the course of history and geography. Pupils have developed their pattern making ideas using a computer programme in the course of their art and design work. They make use of spreadsheets to support their work in mathematics and science, entering data on screen with increasing confidence, and then producing bar and line graphs to illustrate their results.
124. Teaching in information and communication technology is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement in Years 1 and 2. Lessons are generally well prepared, and routines and procedures are well established to ensure that pupils make the maximum use of the time that they have in the computer suite. Suitable learning challenges are set in lessons to ensure that all pupils make progress. There are good arrangements to ensure that potential barriers to learning are removed. For example, pupils with special educational needs make good

progress because they are well supported by classroom assistants, and those who have specific language difficulties benefit by working with more experienced language users in their class. As a result, they are able to work at levels commensurate with their abilities, have full access to the curriculum and make sound progress. Although teachers in Years 3 to 6 make good use of the computer suite facilities to support learning in other subjects of the curriculum, computers were under utilised in Years 1 and 2 during the inspection.

125. The school has found difficulty in recruiting a coordinator for information and communication technology. However, the headteacher has the necessary skills and expertise in the subject and has been able to take over responsibility to good effect. For example, he runs an after-school drop-in club for information and communication technology and this is always well attended. The previous coordinator had an effective action plan which resulted in appropriate training for teachers and the provision of new resources. This plan has now been completed and a new plan should be written. More also needs to be done to monitor teaching and learning through observing lessons. There is a good range of ongoing informal assessments but accurate formal assessments need to be developed.

MUSIC

126. Overall standards in music are above average by the end of Years 2 and 6, and the quality of singing and the opportunities for pupils to listen to music, and to learn musical instruments, make an important contribution to this. These were also identified as strengths during the previous inspection. There are wide opportunities to learn a variety of instruments, for example guitar, keyboard, flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello and trumpet. The teaching by the Local Authority peripatetic music teachers contributes significantly to the musical enthusiasm and skills that pupils display. Class teachers organise a variety of music linked clubs, for example, clubs for different stages of recorder abilities, a choir and a school orchestra. The pupils are all involved in annual productions, which they remember and talk about. Music has an important, high status within the school and the opportunities for pupils to engage in music and the support to music are a strength of the school. The school's provision for music also makes an effective contribution to pupils' cultural development. As part of the school's 'Year of Music' which will culminate in a music week in 2003, pupils have been given an opportunity to meet and hear a didgeridoo player. Plans are in hand for them to hear English chamber music as well as a range of music from other cultures, for example, African drumming and a Japanese choir.
127. Seven music lessons involving pupils of many ages were observed during the inspection week, most having an emphasis on performing and appraising music. There was less evidence of pupils having opportunities for composing and creating their own musical ideas, although some opportunities for more creative opportunities were given to older pupils when they were asked to devise their own football chants. The lessons observed were taught both by music specialists and by other class teachers and the quality of teaching was mainly good. In one very good lesson, young pupils were able to echo their teacher's singing well. They used a range of body movements and sounds, were well motivated to participate and were actively engaged in enjoying their singing, including some with language development needs. This teacher was adept at making quick assessments and giving feedback, and assisting individual pupils to progress in their understanding and confidence, resulting in very good progress overall during the lesson. In most of the lessons observed, pupils made good progress in their learning of music; and the use of commercially

produced materials enables teachers to plan effectively linked experiences. In one lesson, featuring rhythm patterns, pupils could recall what they had learnt the previous week and this was built upon in some good teaching using untuned percussion instruments. This lesson was well prepared with good supporting materials and the children were actively engaged, for example, using whiteboards to record simple rhythm patterns. After practice, they were able to improve and were able to play three parts together successfully. They were well introduced to the correct musical vocabulary and concentrated well, throughout the lesson.

128. There is at least one weekly class music lesson in all classes, plus hymn practices every week, and regular singing in assemblies. Pupils' singing in assembly was consistently very tuneful and joyful, and singing in the hymn practice sessions assisted in developing clear diction and good control of pitch and rhythm. All pupils show an appropriate understanding for their age of changes of tempo and dynamics when singing well remembered songs and hymns together. Older pupils readily and confidently join in two part singing and sing harmonies. Most pupils clearly enjoy singing and teachers generally make music lessons fun.
129. The planning for the teaching of classroom music is being developed from a commercial scheme based on the Qualification and Curriculum Authority units of work. These units are supporting the progression in all elements of music learning throughout the school and, if they are fully implemented, will progressively develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of music and their musical skills. The school is fortunate to have four musicians who have a good level of musical knowledge. There may be a need to consider more staff music training for other staff, including learning support assistants, to ensure they feel secure with what they have to teach and can join in with musical activities in the class more confidently. Some staff appropriately make musical links to other subjects, for instance, with the use of Tudor dance music in a historical study.
130. Pupils generally have positive attitudes in music lessons, especially when they have opportunities to play with their voices and use instruments. In large group music sessions, the pace is brisk and pupils remain well involved by the positive atmosphere and enthusiasm of the teachers. There were some opportunities to listen to each other, teaching points were well made and pupils improved their learning. For example, they learnt where the correct breaks in the singing should occur in one verse of a hymn. Younger pupils enjoyed being involved as 'copy cats' and followed the teacher's voice and actions well. They were actively engaged in learning musical skills in this motivating session. Across the school pupils use their reading skills well, from a young age, to sing quite complex words in hymns.
131. Pupils have opportunities to listen to a variety of musicians each week throughout the year. Daily opportunities are provided for pupils to listen and appreciate music from a variety of ages, cultures and types. Opportunities provided in some lessons for pupils to listen and appraise music, for instance, in a Year 1 class a unit of work included a piece of music linked to the imagery of a steam train. Pupils were able to describe when the music became faster and louder and were developing skills in indicating changes in tempo and dynamics and sound quality. Focused teacher questions and comments helped the pupils to respond appropriately to this experience and also provided good opportunities for speaking and listening.
132. The joint coordinators are keen to promote the school's 'Year of Music' and involve children actively in music making activities. They recognise that the music policy needs updating. There is currently no secure method of assessing pupils' progress

in music across the school, and a simple recording system should be developed to enable them to judge and report more securely about standards in music. The coordinators have not used opportunities to support and monitor the quality of teaching in classes and need to develop further the evaluative aspects of their role. The resources for music are adequate and well organised.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

133. During the inspection, dance was observed in Years 1 and 2, swimming in Year 4 and games in Years 5 and 6. In the lessons seen, pupils made mainly good, and occasionally very good, progress as a result of teaching which was never less than good. As a consequence, the standards which pupils achieve in physical education are a little above average.
134. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils benefited from very good teaching as they worked on sequences of movements related to the theme of a circus. A warm up activity of taking giant steps and jumps was followed by a skilful demonstration, by the teacher, of a clown dressing for the performance. This provided pupils with ideas that stimulated their imagination and, as a consequence, they worked with great enthusiasm and made good progress in planning and performing their own sequences of movements. Pupils then worked in pairs, taking turns and collaborating well to improve their performance. As the lesson progressed, they responded positively to opportunities provided by the teacher to observe the performances of others and were able to evaluate these sensibly before refining their own efforts. Year 2 pupils also made good progress in a lesson with a similar theme. They listened carefully to the instructions from their teacher and moved safely around the hall, always aware of one another and changing speed and direction on command. The teacher set tasks which were appropriate to pupils' physical and intellectual abilities and provided learning situations in which pupils could work alone and collaboratively with others, solve problems, improvise and demonstrate their level of skill, knowledge and understanding. In both lessons, relationships between pupils and teachers were good and time was used very effectively.
135. The school organises swimming so that pupils benefit from the continuity provided by visits, over a term and a half, to the local Green Park swimming pool. A qualified instructor, who is supported by the class teacher, provides the teaching. The lesson observed involved pupils from Year 4 and they benefited from a good, well organised session. The instructor, who ensured that the lesson was purposeful, enjoyable and undertaken at a good pace, provided very clear guidance; and the class teacher supported her with helpful encouragement and advice to individual pupils. Both adults had high expectations for pupils' achievements but were aware of the needs of less confident pupils. As a consequence, all pupils enjoyed the session and were justifiably pleased with their efforts. Over time, the vast majority of pupils attending the school achieve an award for swimming 25 metres and a significant number do even better.
136. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were observed during their weekly 'Games' lessons. In both sessions, class teachers enjoyed the support of an enthusiastic and skilful learning support assistant who worked closely and effectively with them to promote pupils' skills. The 'warm up' activities were led, on both occasions, by the learning support assistant and were greatly enjoyed by all pupils but, in particular, those in Year 6 who moved in good rhythm to some stimulating music. Year 5 and 6 pupils also had opportunities to work on their own, in pairs, or larger groups, as they learnt and practised skills and tactics which can be applied to 'attacking' and 'defending' in ball

- games such as hockey or netball. In both lessons, which were judged to be good, teachers managed pupils well, demonstrated an awareness and understanding of safety issues and ensured that pupils were aware of health and fitness aspects. During games of hockey in Year 6 and 'bouncing bench ball' in Year 5, pupils showed good sporting behaviour as they put into use the skills they had learned earlier in the lesson. They thoroughly enjoyed their 'Games' lessons and made good progress in developing and refining their skills.
137. The very good range of extra-curricular activities makes a significant contribution to the provision of physical education at the school and the standards which pupils achieve. These include football for boys and girls, netball, short tennis, cricket and cross country running. Pupils also have the opportunity to represent the school in competitive matches in football, netball and cross-country running as well as in District Sports organised by the Amateur Athletics Association. One pupil from the school recently had the honour of carrying the Commonwealth Games baton as it travelled through Buckinghamshire.
138. The coordinator assumed responsibility for this subject at the beginning of the current term. She was previously the coordinator for science and is, therefore, well acquainted with the role of subject coordinator. She has received good support from a colleague who used to manage the subject and was trained as a physical education teacher. The coordinator is enthusiastic about physical education and has made a good start. She has already observed teaching in Years 1, 2 and 6 and has provided teachers with helpful feedback. The school is aware that the policy and scheme of work for the subject need updating and has appropriately identified this as a priority in the 2002/03 School Development Plan.
139. Resources for physical education are satisfactory and are very well organised.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

140. Pupils' work and teachers' planning show that pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and achieve standards that are broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection.
141. Pupils have a sound knowledge and awareness that religious traditions in the United Kingdom are mainly Christian and know about some of the other principal religions which are represented in society, for example, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. They know some of the traditions of the Christian faith as celebrated in the United Kingdom. They are also aware of some of the stories and festivals of other faiths.
142. Pupils have a sound understanding of the distinctive features of religious traditions and how they relate to people's lives, by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 know about some of the stories of the Bible, for example, the 'feeding of the five thousand' and 'the lost sheep' and know how they link with the Christian teaching about sharing and the importance of the individual. They have learned why harvest is a special time of year for Christians and recognise the importance of being thankful and of giving to others as part of the traditional festival service. They have also learned about some of the traditions of other major faiths, such as the Jewish New Year. Older pupils know the names of the books which are considered holy by the major faiths and understand some of the reasons for them being so special. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 know that the Jewish people believe that all their rules come from God and that they are all recorded in the Torah. They know about the Ten Commandments and how they are used to guide the lives of both Christians

and Jews and also that the Jewish people have many other rules, for example, rules about foods that guide their lives.

143. Pupils have a sound grasp of basic religious concepts and symbolism. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have learned this, for example, by visiting the local church and considering special times in people's lives, such as weddings and christenings. They are aware of the significance of water and the sign of the cross when a baby is christened and the significance of the rings in a Christian wedding ceremony. They are also aware that these ceremonies are different for people of other religions and beliefs. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have developed their knowledge of signs and symbols further. They know about the significance of the cross through visits to the local church and of the importance of prayer as a means by which people of many faiths believe that they can communicate with God. In Years 5 and 6, pupils have a sound understanding of the symbolism of the mantel that it used to protect the Torah and why the Yad, which is used to follow the words of the Torah, is not made of any material that could be used for war.
144. Pupils' ability to form thoughtful views on religious issues is satisfactory. For example, younger pupils discuss why it might be important to keep promises, as an aspect of their work on weddings, and consider the importance of new beginning as part of their work on the Jewish New Year. Older pupils consider the issues of right and wrong in the context of learning about the Ten Commandments and expressed their own ideas in relation to the Jewish food laws. All of these views are underpinned by a clear sense of respect for the beliefs of others which is consistently promoted by teachers.
145. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and there were some good lessons seen in the course of the inspection. Although planning formats vary, all lessons are planned so that they closely reflect the recommendations of the agreed syllabus. The best planning was seen in Years 5 and 6. Clear learning objectives, key questions and assessment opportunities are all identified. Teachers use an appropriate range of teaching methods, including whole class discussions and role play. For example, in Years 1 and 2, pupils' understanding of the Christian wedding tradition was developed well, not only by the provision of artefacts belonging to the teachers themselves, but also by whole classes being involved in a re-enactment of a wedding ceremony, complete with bride, groom and guests. Teachers explain quite complex ideas clearly and make particularly good use of resources to illustrate what they are saying. The school does not have a secure assessment system for religious education and this limits teachers' capacity to plan precisely for pupils' differing needs and abilities in the subject. Consequently, tasks are generally very similar for pupils of all abilities within classes and take little account of pupils' varying knowledge and understanding of religious issues.
146. The subject leader is relatively new to the post and, although she has a clear view of how the subject should be improved, her role in monitoring and evaluating teaching, learning and attainment has not yet been developed. There is an appropriate range of resources to support the teaching of religious education, including a range of artefacts to support the teaching of different faith traditions. However, pupils have insufficient opportunities to hear authentic accounts of faiths other than Christian. Well-planned assemblies make a significant contribution to pupils' religious education.

