

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ABBOTS RIPTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Abbots Ripton

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110850

Headteacher: Mrs D Higham

Reporting inspector: Terry Elston  
20704

Dates of inspection: November 4-6 2002

Inspection number: 247065

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4-11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Abbots Ripton Huntingdon Cambridgeshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body, Abbots Ripton School
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sue Schwier
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

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20704	Terry Elston	Registered inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, design and technology, pupils with English as an additional language.	The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
19431	John Holmes	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?
32111	Heather Taylor	Team inspector	Children in the Foundation Stage, science, art and design, music.	
32128	Anita Atkinson	Team inspector	Pupils with special educational needs, English, history, geography.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is a small village primary school, but numbers are rising; in 1993 there were 66 pupils but now there are 114. The recent building of new houses close to the school is partly responsible for this growth, but the school also attracts many of its pupils from outside the catchment area. Many people in the village work for Lord de Ramsay's Estate. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. Around 20 per cent of pupils have special educational needs, and four of these have statements of these needs; these figures are close to those found nationally. Very few pupils come from ethnic minority families, and none has English as an additional language. The attainment of pupils on entry is above average. The school gained an Achievement Award for improved national test results last year.

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

This is a very good school with a strong Christian ethos. The quality of teaching is good and pupils do well in the national tests, especially in English and science. The headteacher leads the school very well and is good at implementing ways of improving the quality of teaching and learning. The links with parents are of high quality and they are very much in support of the school. Pupils enjoy learning and behave well. The finances are managed well and the school provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils attain high standards in English and science because of consistently good teaching and a well-planned curriculum.
- The very good leadership and management make this a happy school where all strive hard to succeed.
- The high quality of the teaching for pupils in the reception class ensures that they make a very good start to school.
- Through the school's excellent links with parents they are well aware of how to help their children learn at home and school.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is very good, and central to the school's ethos.
- Pupils' very good attitudes to work and the high quality of the relationships throughout the school are important reasons why pupils make good progress.

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

- Standards in history and geography, particularly by the more able pupils are not high enough. \*
- In the Year 1/2 class, the rate of pupils' progress slows when they are joined by Year 1 pupils from the reception class for literacy and numeracy lessons; with 35 pupils in the class it is cramped and some find it hard to concentrate.

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

*\* The school already has this issue as a target in its improvement plan.*

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

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection in 1998. All of the main issues from that report have been resolved successfully, and:

- standards have been raised in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology(ICT);

- assessment is now good; it is used well to track pupils' progress through the school and helps teachers see how pupils can attain higher standards;
- teachers' work is now evaluated well, and they are given clear directions on how to improve their teaching;
- all subjects now have good policies and planning documents to guide teachers; and
- the planning for children in the foundation stage is now very good.

Other significant improvements include:

- higher standards in design and technology and music (although those in history have fallen);
- better quality of resources; and
- stronger links with parents.

In view of the strengths in the leadership and teaching the school is well placed to improve further.

## 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				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	D	B	A	C	very high A*
mathematics	E	C	C	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D
science	A	A*	A*	A	well below average E very low E*

Year 6 pupils' results in science this year were particularly impressive, being in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The mathematics results were lower because relatively few pupils attained the higher Level 5 in the tests. Never the less the school exceeded its challenging targets in both English and mathematics. Some caution should be exercised when looking at these results because of the low numbers of pupils involved, and one pupil counts for seven percentage points. These small numbers also account for the erratic trends shown in the table. The evidence of this inspection shows that the school has maintained these standards in English and science and improved them in mathematics where they are now above average. Standards by Year 6 pupils are also above average in design and technology and music and average in all other subjects. In the Year 2 national tests, pupils' scores in mathematics were very high, and in the top five per cent of all schools. They were well above average in reading and above average in writing. Overall, pupils make good progress to achieve these standards. Children make a very good start in the reception class, where the very good teaching and curriculum planning enable them to attain above average standards in all areas of their learning. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and nearly all attain or come close to national standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave. More able pupils generally do well, and achieve high standards in science, but their progress in history and geography suffers from the lack of opportunities for them to gain a deeper understanding of topics.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are very good. Pupils are very proud of their school, enjoy their work and delight in their successes.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, both in class and outside in the playground. Pupils know the rules well, and acts of bullying are rare.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good. They are keen to take responsibility, work independently when required and are quick to show initiative. Relationships are very good, and have a good impact on pupils' behaviour and the progress they make.
Attendance	Good, and above the national rate, but too many pupils are brought late for school and miss the important start to the day.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good and meets the needs of all pupils. The school's literacy and numeracy lessons have a good focus on teaching important basic skills, which explains why pupils read fluently and are confident with number. This starts in the reception class where the excellent teaching of basic skills means that children's speaking, reading and number skills develop quickly. In Years 1 and 2 the planning of lessons is good and the teachers make lessons interesting so that pupils enjoy learning. The control of pupils sometimes suffers when the class is too large and pupils sit in cramped conditions on the carpet. Time is lost here as pupils fidget and lose concentration. In Years 3 to 6 the lessons have a brisk pace and teachers make learning fun for pupils. Teachers' high expectations of pupils' work makes them try hard to do their best in lessons. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers and skilled teaching assistants focus clearly on pupils' particular needs, and they make good progress as a result.

Strong features of pupils' learning include their keenness to learn from mistakes, the breadth of their background knowledge, and the effort they put into their work.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is sound and meets all legal requirements. It gives pupils a wide variety of experiences, while focusing appropriately on the tasks necessary to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. There is

	a good range of activities after school to enrich the curriculum. Good personal, social and health education gives pupils clear ideas on how to live healthily and express their feelings. Too little time is devoted to history and geography to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is good. Pupils are supported well, have clear targets set for them and their good progress is monitored systematically.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. High quality spiritual provision across the curriculum and in assemblies is at the heart of the school's Christian ethos. The very good provision for social and moral development is reflected in pupils' respect for others in the school and clear sense of right and wrong. Good cultural provision, with many opportunities for pupils to visit places of interest, take part in the creative arts and learn about how other cultures live and worship.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils well. Their academic progress and personal development are evaluated carefully and this helps teachers provide good support for pupils.

The school's links with parents are outstanding. Parents are very well informed about the school's work and work closely with teachers to raise pupils' standards.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher leads and manages the school very well, which is why this is a happy and successful school. She has created a strong team spirit where all pupils and staff work hard. Very good support from the deputy headteacher who shares the headteacher's high expectations of pupils and staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	They do this well. Governors take a keen interest in the school, and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They work effectively with staff on the targets for the school improvement plan, and are confident to put forward their own priorities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is evaluated systematically, and teachers benefit from good guidance as to how they can improve. Good tracking of pupils' progress but the use of assessments to target areas of weakness, particularly in the national tests, is only just starting.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school makes efficient use of all its resources to promote pupils' progress and maintains a good balance between cost and effectiveness. The forward planning has appropriate targets that are helping to raise pupils' standards. The significant under-spend in last year's budget is appropriately earmarked to replace old computers.

The school has satisfactory procedures for securing the best value from its spending and monitoring the impact this has on pupils' standards. The supply of resources is good and makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning.

## **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The very strong leadership.</li> <li>• Consistently good teaching.</li> <li>• Pupils' good behaviour.</li> <li>• The very good quality of information they get about the school's work and their child's progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few parents feel there is too much homework.</li> </ul>

Parents' views are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. The inspection team agrees with their positive views, but finds that there is, in fact, the right amount of homework that increases appropriately as pupils get older.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

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

1. In the national tests, standards attained by pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 have improved well over the past four years, and show the school's commitment to high standards of work. Between 1998 and 2002, for example, Year 2 pupils' attainment has risen from:
  - above average in reading to well above average;
  - average in writing to above average; and
  - above average in mathematics to very high standards.
2. The picture is much the same with Year 6 pupils. Their results in English and science are particularly high, and show the strengths in the teaching, assessment and curricular planning in these subjects. In mathematics, there have been some variations from year to year, with fewer pupils attaining the higher Level 5 than in other subjects in the Year 6 national tests. Teachers have worked hard to improve standards in mathematics, particularly by focusing on developing pupils' numeracy skills, and the effectiveness of this is clear in the significantly higher standards of the current Year 6 pupils compared with last year's group.
3. When children first start school their levels of attainment are above the expected levels locally and nationally. The attainment of children currently in the Reception year is above average. Assessments made shortly after children enter school show that they score well in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and in personal, social and emotional development. In the reception class children make good progress and by the end of the year the majority of children are attaining above the levels expected in all six areas of learning.
4. By Year 2, this inspection finds that pupils' standards are well above average in all aspects of English, and science and above average in mathematics. The school has worked hard to develop pupils' skills in these core subjects, and the impact of these efforts is clear. Standards are above national expectations by Year 2 in design and technology and music and in line with expectations in all other subjects.
5. By Year 6, this inspection finds that standards are well above average in English, very high in science where three quarters of pupils are exceeding the national level and above average in mathematics. The standards in all three subjects are higher than those found at the time of the last inspection, and reflect the significant improvements in the assessment of pupils' progress and the setting of challenging targets to extend pupils further. Standards are above national expectations in design and technology and music and in line with expected levels in all other subjects.
6. Overall, pupils achieve well given their attainment on entry to the school. Children make a very good start in the reception class, and make good progress because of the high quality of the teaching. Pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 is steady, but is sometimes slow in numeracy and literacy lessons when two classes combine for literacy and numeracy lessons; the cramped conditions when all pupils sit on the carpet to be taught together make it difficult for some to concentrate. Pupils make the best progress in the good group work that follows whole class lessons because they concentrate better and the tasks given to them are demanding and

matched well to their abilities. Pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6 because the teaching is consistently good and constantly challenges them to succeed. Comparing the results Year 6 pupils achieved in this year's national tests with those they achieved when in Year 2 it is clear that they have made very good progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school ensures that sufficient time is dedicated to teaching important skills in these subjects and teachers use assessment effectively to target areas of weakness. The school's leadership views subjects such as history and geography as 'enrichments' to the core subjects; the expectations of pupils are lower in these subjects, assessment is less rigorous and pupils achieve lower standards as a result.

7. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress especially in English and mathematics, and by the time they reach the end of Year 6 almost all pupils come close to meeting national expectations. They make good progress in reading, benefiting from good support from teaching assistants within the class during the literacy hour and from well-planned activities when withdrawn from the class in small groups.

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

8. Pupils really enjoy school and have a very good attitude to learning. The pupils work very well together. The relationships are very good with a very good level of trust and respect between pupils and teachers. Pupils are friendly and confident in class and around the school; they are articulate and talk easily with adults. Pupils listen carefully to teachers and show interest when others are speaking, responding well to questions. They answer questions sensibly and contribute confidently in discussions. The pupils are very proud when school achievement assemblies recognise their good work and behaviour.
9. The only occasions when pupils lose concentration are when the Year 1 pupils from the reception class join Years 1 and 2 pupils for literacy and numeracy lessons. With such a large number in this group, conditions when they are sitting on the carpet are very squashed, and they soon become restless.
10. Pupils' behaviour is good both in class and around school. They treat the school with great respect, and are careful not to drop litter. There was no oppressive behaviour observed in the school during the inspection. One pupil was excluded in the past year. Pupils display a good level of self-discipline and this explains why behaviour around the school is so good. As an example of pupils' awareness of right and wrong, one went to the headteacher following a discussion during assembly and apologised for a misdemeanour.
11. Pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils of all ages are very keen to take responsibility for some small aspect of school life. The older pupils enjoy caring for younger ones at lunchtime, and serve their food with great maturity. Pupils enjoy the responsibility of being a member of the School Council, which has a very good impact on their social development by showing them how to work together as a team. For example, they are currently raising money for fresh water for the classrooms. They serve for one term before new elections take place, and all see this as a fair arrangement. When questioned, the Council members spoke honestly about the importance of their role, with one saying, *it makes you feel important, and we are listened to by adults*. The pupils do much to help in school by acting as monitors at lunchtime and registers monitors. Pupils appreciate being consulted about the class rules, and they show a clear understanding of the school rules about behaviour.

12. The spiritual development of the pupils is very good. They are reflective in assemblies, and enjoy visits to Ely Cathedral where they read their own prayers and play recorders. Pupils wrote moving accounts describing their feelings about how they felt when they entered, wondering at the beauty of the building.
13. Pupils develop a good cultural awareness, particularly about the history of their local area. They have few opportunities to meet people from different cultures, but they gain much from links with a school with a high ethnic population who visit. Pupils' cultural development is enhanced when they take in the local Music Festival and attend residential trips.
14. Attendance is above national average and has a good impact on pupils' learning. There is no unauthorised absence and parents are good at notifying school of absence. Holiday request forms are completed for the few pupils who take time off during term time. Punctuality is generally satisfactory, but too many pupils are brought to school late and miss the start of the day.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

15. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and of a similar standard to that reported in the school's previous inspection. Overall, nearly two thirds of lessons were good or better and one quarter was very good or excellent. Parents are very pleased with the quality of teaching, with all of those replying to the pre-inspection questionnaire saying that it was good.
16. Teachers' planning of lessons provides a good structure to pupils' work, with clear statements of what different groups should learn. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good, and teachers display a thorough knowledge of the national strategies. Teachers show a good knowledge of subjects and this gives pupils the confidence to ask questions in the knowledge that the answers will be accurate. Teachers generally use resources well to interest pupils, but in history and geography they rely too much on worksheets and these limit the standards pupils attain.
17. For children in the foundation stage, the quality of teaching and learning is very good and has improved from the last inspection. There are very good relationships between the adults and children and strong contacts with parents, who are delighted with the start it gives their children. The needs of every child are catered for in an exciting and creative way, with a wealth of opportunity for pupils to learn at first-hand in practical experiences that promote learning and personal development very well. Adults use questions very well to make children think carefully about topics. In an excellent literacy lesson, for example, the teacher introduced a new poetry book to the children, and began by asking them about the writing on the front cover. They thought hard about this and soon came up with *it's the name of the person who wrote the book*. Moving on, the teacher asked about the Contents page and one child proudly said, *the contents page is used to find particular rhymes and the page we can find it on*. The teaching of the basic skills in the reception class is excellent, because the teacher teaches a particular skill, such as how to write a particular letter or add cubes together, and then builds on children's new knowledge systematically and regularly. This is why children quickly learn to read, write and use number. A significant factor in the very good level of learning and achievement of the children is the high quality of support from classroom assistants. They lead and support learning effectively in all lessons and play activities, and this enables all pupils to learn quickly.

18. In Years 1 and 2, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers plan well so that pupils have a good balance of learning new skills, time to try them out and a session at the end to see how much progress they have made. However, the arrangement for teaching the Year 1 pupils from the reception class together with the Year 1/2 pupils for literacy and numeracy lessons does not always work well. In whole class work, for example, there are up to 35 pupils with one teacher and two teaching assistants. When all are sitting cramped on the floor and on chairs surrounding the group pupils soon start to fidget and it is difficult for even three staff to meet the needs of all pupils. This happened in two literacy and numeracy lessons observed, and the pace of pupils' learning was slow because the teacher had to continually remind pupils to listen carefully and not to shout out their answers. Pupils' progress accelerated in the group work that followed because they had more space, the tasks were prepared carefully to meet the needs of all groups and they were supported well by the teacher and teaching assistants. As a result, pupils concentrated well and in the end produced some very good work.
19. In Years 3 to 6, the lessons move at a fast pace, and pupils learn quickly. Teachers have high expectations of pupils who respond well to their challenges. This is particularly the case in science where the demanding tasks given to pupils, especially in investigational work, leads to very high standards. For example, in a very good lesson on magnetism, the teacher began by asking pupils to think about how magnets were used in everyday life and one pupil quickly thought of how 'roller-coasters' kept on the track. Once the teacher was sure pupils had the necessary basic understanding, pupils were asked to research magnetism in books. The teacher maintained the pace of pupils' learning by visiting groups to pose challenging questions about, for example, the polarity of magnets, and asking, *can you make paper clips move without touching them with your magnet?* Pupils quickly progressed to conducting their own experiments, predicting their results and organising their own resources. By the end, all had made very good progress and thoroughly enjoyed a very demanding task.
20. Teachers manage classes very well with a firm but kind approach so that pupils enjoy learning and make the most of their time in class. Teachers share the lesson's aims with pupils at the start; this works well because it helps pupils to focus on the task, and gives them a secure knowledge of their own learning. Teachers are good at asking the right questions to make pupils think, and all are careful to pitch their questions so that each pupil can contribute to these sessions. As a result, pupils with special educational needs are fully included in lessons and more able pupils contribute at their own level. This also works well with different year groups in a class. This was illustrated well in a Year 3/4 lesson when the teacher saw that the younger pupils were not putting their hands up to answer questions. At this point, the teacher asked just the Year 3 pupils to answer, and it was clear that some were getting left behind. After a quick recap on the best strategies to use to solve number problems, the Year 3 pupils were far more confident and answered as many questions as older pupils.
21. Throughout the school, the teaching and learning of creative skills is good. Teachers and pupils enjoy subjects such as design and technology, music and art and design, and teachers give pupils a good mix of formal teaching and freedom to experiment. This explains the good quality of much of the art, design and technology and music in the school. These strengths were illustrated in a Year 5/6 lesson when the teacher wanted pupils to understand how drive belts work. She talked to them briefly about the principles of movement and energy and then let pupils loose on a range of household appliances such as sewing machines and vacuum cleaners. It was just the right balance of instruction and exploration and pupils made very good progress in their understanding of how these machines work.

22. Teachers set homework regularly, and this consolidates work done in class well. This was a weakness in the last inspection and the school has responded well to the criticism that the setting of homework was inconsistent.
23. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and ensures that pupils make good progress towards their targets. Teachers set achievable targets and provide activities that are well matched to individual pupil's needs. Pupils are clear about how their targets can be achieved and are proud when they have made that step. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning and ensure they are included in all activities. In one lesson observed, pupils with special educational needs were making a paper hat, following instructions. The teaching assistant gave very clear instructions and used expression well to enable the pupils to complete the task successfully.

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

24. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. It is broad and reasonably balanced, although the time allocated for foundation subjects is limited and this explains why standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are higher than in other subjects. The curriculum for children in the foundation stage is planned very well, and the provision for outdoor play shows a very good improvement since the last inspection.
25. The school provides a sound curriculum for the academic and personal needs of pupils. There are equal opportunities for all pupils and no significant difference in achievement because of gender, disability, race or culture. The school responds well when pupils are found to need extra support, and supplements the curriculum with sensitive provision to make learning more meaningful. For example, a reading club is organised for Year 4 boys who lose interest in reading. As a result the boys regain their interest and enthusiasm for reading and by Year 5 are usually back on track. The school ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to take part in the full range of activities provided. Teacher's questioning and allocation of jobs or privileges does not indicate bias towards any group within the school
26. The school has worked hard to make the numeracy and literacy hours effective, and their good structure ensures that pupils make good progress in reading and number work. The planning for foundation subjects such as history and geography focuses securely on the skills pupils should attain by a certain age. While this achieves its aim, the lack of planning for more able pupils together with the limited time made available mean that few pupils develop a deeper understanding of these subjects. Where units of work are linked, for example in Year 5 and 6 where a study of the novel 'Goodnight Mister Tom' is taught together with a history unit on World War Two, all groups of pupils make good progress.
27. The curriculum for the foundation stage is very good in all areas of learning. The indoor curriculum is imaginative and stimulating and children quickly develop confidence and independence. Relationships are very good. There is very good provision for the development of children's social and personal skills, especially within the role-play area. The outdoor area offers the children an interesting and varied curriculum. There is easy access and children are able to select activities independently.
28. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school complies fully with the new national requirements. The curriculum is well organised so that pupils take part in all activities. Teaching assistants are closely involved in the planning process and make an

important contribution to pupils' learning, especially in the basic skills of reading and number. In cases where pupils are being withdrawn for extra reading activities, the teachers make sure that they receive support, in order to 'catch up' if work has been missed.

29. The planning of activities for pupils who are gifted and talented is sound. Those with very good musical skills have many opportunities to practice musical pieces and play or sing to audiences. Pupils who are exceptionally good academically are identified during the year and benefit from good extra sessions in the summer term where they are given challenging problems to develop their thinking skills.
30. The school has a good programme of personal health and social education. This is carefully structured to give pupils valuable information about issues such as drugs misuse, road safety and the importance of a good diet to stay healthy. Pupils' personal development is enhanced by special times when the class sits together and discusses issues such as friendship and bullying. These sessions work well, and their impact can be seen every day in the way pupils behave and show respect for each other. The school has a good programme of sex education, mainly for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and staff training is planned in order to develop this aspect across the whole school.
31. The number of visitors invited into school does much to enrich the curriculum. They provide very good quality information and lively ideas. Residential visits for pupils in Years 3 to 6 promote their confidence and independence as they learn to live with others away from the security of home.
32. Many members of staff work to provide good opportunities for pupils from Years 2 to 6 to take part in activities outside the classroom. Where the school feels there is a need for additional activities, a charge is made, and specialist teachers are brought in. For a small school therefore, a good and varied programme of extracurricular activities is provided.
33. The school makes good use of the local community to enrich the curriculum. The headteacher has established very good links with the churchwardens in the absence of a local vicar. Pupils visit the church regularly and teachers take care to include such visits in their planning. Visitors to the school provide good learning experiences for the pupils.
34. The provision for pupil's spiritual, moral, and social development is very good. In assemblies pupils are given excellent opportunities to think and reflect on their own experiences and values, as well as those of others. Pupils' social development is enhanced by the very strong emphasis on 'The Family of Abbots Ripton'; pupils are encouraged to feel special and develop a very strong sense of belonging to the whole school. Parents speak very highly of this 'belonging' and how it helps their children work closely together and take responsibility for their actions. The very good provision for pupil's moral development is founded on the teachers' high expectations for pupils' behaviour and the very good role models that all staff provide. School rules and class rules are discussed with pupils at the beginning of the year, and these are important foundations for the development of pupils' understanding of right and wrong. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Many valuable cultural events take place out of the classroom, such as trips to London museums, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 regularly take part in an annual music festival, where they enjoy singing.

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

35. The staff know the pupils well as individuals and have good procedures for monitoring and supporting their personal development. Good child protection procedures are in place with up to date policies, and all staff are well aware of the procedures.
36. The school has good procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour and very good procedures to monitor and eliminate oppressive behaviour. The school gives achievement awards for behaviour and good work each week at the achievement assembly, and these have a good impact on the way pupils work and behave. The school has good procedures to monitor attendance, and this is why the rate of attendance is so good.
37. The pupils are supervised well at lunchtime in the dining hall, and the system that has younger pupils served by older ones works well. Those pupils who choose to bring a packed lunch have good facilities provided in a classroom.
38. The school's monitoring of the personal development of pupils is good. Pupils' development is recorded regularly, and valuable information is passed on when the pupil moves class. A good feature of this file is the facility for pupils and parents to contribute to the records because it creates a full picture of their life in school.
39. A good system of tracking pupil's progress has been established since the last inspection when this aspect was a weakness. The school uses this well to identify pupils for extra support and those who would benefit from additional literacy or numeracy programmes. The scores from English and mathematics tests are also used well to provide additional information on pupils' progress. The school does not do enough to analyse pupils' scores in the national tests, however, to see where teachers can improve their planning and teaching to rectify any weaknesses. The school recognises this and has it as a priority in its future planning.
40. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is thorough and gives a clear indication of each pupil's needs. Pupils are assessed at an early stage, and good individual plans are written. Teachers and support staff work closely together to set clear and achievable targets. The manager and co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs meet regularly with teachers to review progress and the information from these reviews is used well to set new targets.
41. The school has begun to develop a marking and assessment policy to ensure that marking helps pupils to improve; this generally works well and provides far more consistency than was found at the last inspection. The very effective systems for assessment in science give all pupils clear targets for development. Whole school targets for spelling and mathematics have been introduced as a way of establishing the process of target setting, and the school devotes some time for pupils to work on their targets. These are good initiatives that are starting to raise pupils' standards.

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

42. The school's links with parents are excellent. The attendance at the parents meeting was very good with 35 parents attending. The questionnaire had a good response with 59 returned out of 114 sent out. The responses indicated overwhelming support for the school with all questions except two showing over 95 per cent agreement. In five of the questions all parents felt the school was doing well. In particular, parents felt the school was very well led and managed, the school expected the children to work hard, the school worked closely with parents, the

behaviour was good and teaching was good. The inspection team agreed fully with the views of parents.

43. Abbots Ripton School Association supports the school well; it raises considerable funds and provides a range of social events for the school community. The events that have been organised in the past year included a Christmas Fair, Summer Fair and barn dance. The money raised was used well to provide such items as music stands, a camera and new library books.
44. The information to parents about the children's progress is very good. The reports give parents a clear view of how well their children are achieving, and includes useful information on the child's personal development. The reports have clear targets, which are discussed with parents at the consultation evenings. The attendance at consultation evenings is very good, and shows how much parents are keen to support their child at school. There is a valuable partnership with parents established before children start school. Prior to their child's admission, parents are invited to a useful induction evening when they are given important information about the school. To support this the school has prepared a very informative induction pack for parents. This also includes a booklet for children, produced by pupils already in the school. A number of visits to school are arranged prior to entry, including one over the lunchtime period. All this makes for a smooth transition for children from home to school.
45. Many parents of pupils with special educational needs are attracted to the school because of the good provision and care of pupils. They are well informed about their child's progress and the measures taken by the school to address their child's specific problems. Teachers consult regularly with parents of pupils with special educational needs and these meetings allow a valuable exchange of information concerning pupils' work at home and school.
46. The school sends out very interesting newsletters, and parents speak highly of the information sent each term on topics to be covered. The 'open door' policy means that all parents feel happy to approach school at any time. The school has an informative prospectus that includes full details of the curriculum in each subject. The excellent governors' report to parents is very readable, and does much to celebrate the work of the school.
47. The school's literacy and numeracy 'workshops' in response to parents' requests provides valuable information to enable parents to help their children at home. Parent's attendance at the welcome evening and at sports day is good. Parents come into school on a regular basis to listen to pupils read. The relationships with parents are a strength of the school and do much to help pupils learn.

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

48. The very good quality of the leadership and management is central to the school's success. Parents see the school's leadership as a great strength, and in their replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire 95 per cent of them agreed that the headteacher leads very well. The headteacher has a very clear understanding of the school's priorities, and communicates this effectively to the staff. This ensures that teachers are working to common goals and accounts for the continued improvement of the school. It also helps to explain the popularity of the school and the growing number of parents who send their children here from outside the school's catchment area. The headteacher works hard to develop very good relationships in the school, and has the skills to mix rigour with sensitivity to the needs of individuals. The headteacher's excellent preparation of staff for this inspection ensured that everyone was

ready for the inspection and saw it as a positive means of evaluating and celebrating the work of the school.

49. The headteacher is the central figure in the spiritual development of pupils. Her assemblies are moving occasions when pupils are expected to consider issues deeply and think carefully about what being in the 'Abbots Ripton Family' really means. The school song is sung with great reverence and pupils are very proud when asked to say the final prayer.
50. The school has a sound system to monitor pupils' standards and track their progress in the national tests and through the school. This is only just starting, but already has provided useful data on differences in the attainment of boys and girls, comparisons of current pupils' achievement with last year's cohort and progress from the time the pupils first came to the school. This analysis falls short of working out which specific areas pupils are struggling with in the national tests, and is not yet having an impact on pupils' results.
51. The school has a well establish ethos of self-evaluation that prevents any idea of complacency. This includes a useful questionnaire sent out to parents to gain their views on the school's provision and another for pupils to enable them to say which areas of the curriculum they enjoy most. This works well because the data is analysed carefully to see what patterns emerge and how the school can respond to the suggestions. In this way, weaknesses in spelling were identified and the staff had useful training to work out the best way to teach these skills. This had a good impact and pupils' skills improved significantly as a result.
52. The school has used the principles of self-evaluation well to address the main issues from the previous inspection. These were worked upon systematically and the school has made good progress as a result.
53. The headteacher, senior staff and some governors evaluate the quality of teaching effectively. Teachers are observed regularly, and given useful feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers value this process because it is done constructively, and helps them teach better. One teacher who found the process particularly helpful remarked, *I'm quite a different teacher than when I came – so much better and it's because of the monitoring that's happened.* The headteacher sees teachers' planning regularly, and makes helpful comments when improvements need to be made to make lessons more effective. As a result, the quality of planning is very thorough, and provides a good structure to lessons.
54. New staff benefit from good induction procedures. They have a comprehensive pack of information and a good number of visits before they start to familiarise them with the workings of the school. Experienced staff act as mentors to inexperienced teachers, and sometimes teach demonstration lessons to illustrate best teaching practice.
55. The headteacher works very closely with the deputy headteacher and together they make a very effective team. They share a common vision for the school's development, and are well respected by pupils and staff. The deputy headteacher has a good range of delegated responsibilities and sufficient time to carry them out well. Importantly, the deputy headteacher sets a very good example by her own teaching, and this gives her credibility when advising staff.
56. Subject co-ordinators support colleagues well. They evaluate the quality of pupils' work in their subjects regularly and this helps the school maintain a good rate of improvement. The management of provision for special educational needs is good. The role is shared between the

special educational needs co-ordinator and the Special Educational Needs Manager. This works well, bringing together an overview of the whole school needs with the day-to-day needs of individual pupils. All staff and Governors have received training in the new Code of Practice and have a clear understanding of the process within school. The school enjoys good support from the local education authority's special educational needs team if a particular pupil is not making enough progress.

57. The governors, well led by the knowledgeable Chair, are enthusiastic, and provide good support to the staff. They have a very good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and most visit the school often to monitor their areas of responsibility. They are keen to raise pupils' standards, and are enthusiastic about their monitoring responsibilities. They work closely with the staff and parents to form the school's improvement plan, and use their own rigorous programme of self-evaluation to make this even more effective. As a result, the school's forward planning is good, and provides a clear view of the priorities for improvement
58. The school manages its finances well, and benefits from knowledgeable support from the governing body. The finance committee works hard to target funds to important areas while keeping a tight rein on spending. The school had a significant deficit in its budget four years ago, but has done well to turn that into a significant reserve amount this year. While these reserves are a higher proportion of the budget than is found in most schools, they will enable the school to replace older computers soon and give a reasonable 'cushion' should numbers of pupils fall. The governing body works hard to ensure the best value is gained from its spending, comparing its spending with similar schools, for example, and the finance committee meets regularly to check whether the school is operating in a cost effective way. Governors' monitoring of the work done in the new computer area, for example, showed them the value of new computers situated in a designated area.
59. The staffing levels across the school are good. The admission number does give an organisational problem to ensure that all pupils fully participate in the two-year curriculum cycle, particularly in Years 1 and 2 when the class has 35 pupils for literacy and numeracy lessons. The school has a good number of support staff; they are very skilled, well trained and used well to support pupils' learning. Their work with pupils with special educational needs does much to help them make good progress towards their targets.
60. The accommodation is good, and makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. The school has four good-size classrooms, a hall and a wide corridor area that is used effectively as a computer area. One class is housed in a hut: this provides poor accommodation for these pupils and conditions are often cramped. The large flat field provides a good surface for physical education and games, and there is an attractive adventure playground to make playtimes more fun. The facility is being improved with the introduction of a maze, which the pupils have helped to design. The learning resources are good. They are plentiful, well chosen for their suitability and do much to make lessons interesting. The resources are very good for children in the foundation stage, and help to make lessons very exciting for children.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

61. In order to maintain the school's improvement the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) raise standards in history and geography by allocating more time to the teaching of skills so that pupils develop a deeper understanding of the subjects;**
- (2) ensure that classes for pupils in Years 1 and 2 are restricted to manageable numbers of pupils.**

## **OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL**

- Make better use of pupils' national test results to target specific areas of weakness, particularly in mathematics; and
- Improve the punctuality of pupils.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

27

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

49

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	6	10	9	1	0	0
Percentage	4	22	37	33	4	0	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		114
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Special educational needs**

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		34

#### **English as an additional language**

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

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	4.1

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.1

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	3	8

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Total	10	10	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (100)	91 (100)	91 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Total	10	10	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (100)	91 (100)	91 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year. Scores of boys and girls are omitted because of the low numbers.

### 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	6	8

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Total	13	13	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	93 (75)	93 (81)	100 (94)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Total	13	13	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	93 (81)	93 (81)	100 (94)
	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	92	1	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	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	1	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	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)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28.5
Average class size	29

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

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	170

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0

### *Financial information*

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	296808
Total expenditure	278112
Expenditure per pupil	2440
Balance brought forward from previous year	15234
Balance carried forward to next year	33930

Number of pupils per FTE adult	
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0
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	114
Number of questionnaires returned	59

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	22	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	73	25	0	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	78	22	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	56	32	10	2	0
The teaching is good.	86	14	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	76	19	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	92	5	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	90	10	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	78	22	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	95	5	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	88	10	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	71	22	2	0	5

## **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**

62. Since the last inspection there has been very good improvement in the foundation stage of learning and the key issue from the last inspection, to improve the provision for children under five, has been fully met. The school has done this by:
- developing the use of structured play to boost children's learning;
  - improving the outdoor provision so that the links between learning indoors and outdoors are maximised to the full; and
  - making available good quality resources, including highly trained classroom support assistants who have a significant impact on the very good progress and attainment of all children.
63. Children begin school life in the autumn term of the year in which they will reach the age of five. Induction is staggered to ensure that all children can make the adjustments to their daily routine effectively. This involves pupils attending on a part time basis during the first half of the Autumn term with a gradual increase to full time depending on date of birth. The majority of children enter the school having benefited from pre-school education and the school has very strong links with all six local pre-school groups. It also has a structured approach to home-school liaison prior to entry that ensures that a valuable partnership with parents is established before children start school. The provision for transition to school is very good. When children first start school their levels of attainment are above the expected levels locally and nationally. The attainment of children currently in the reception year is above average. Assessments made shortly after children enter school show that they score well in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and in personal, social and emotional development. Children make good progress and by the end of the reception year the majority of children are attaining above the levels expected in all six areas of learning.
64. The activities within the class provide children with a good range of worthwhile learning experiences through a well-structured curriculum, with an appropriate emphasis on learning through play and first hand experience. All activities are carefully planned around the six areas of learning for the foundation stage. English and mathematics lessons are carefully structured, children's reading and number work profit from the daily numeracy and literacy lessons as outlined in the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Staff ensure that children become independent learners by giving them choices, responsibilities and helping them to be aware of their own learning by sharing their targets and aims.
65. Within the first half term at school all children are assessed against nationally expected standards, and this provides a very good starting point to plan work at the right levels. The outcomes of these assessments are communicated to parents in a report that forms a very good basis for the subsequent parents' meeting with the teacher. Learning targets are agreed and parents are given valuable information to enable them to support their child effectively at home. This is done through homework diaries on a daily basis. Staff monitor the progress of all children carefully, and those identified as having special educational needs have individual targets and additional adult support to ensure they make good progress alongside their peers.
66. The quality of teaching is very good overall and there are some outstanding features within the teaching of children in the foundation stage. The dynamic teaching consistently engages the interest and enthusiasm of children, which is why they are keen to learn and enjoy their work.

Expectations are high and children rise to the challenges set. They are secure and feel safe to investigate and take risks in order to learn the new skills. Activities are always well planned and structured to make the best use of resources. A significant factor in the very good level of learning and achievement of the children is the high quality of support from classroom assistants. They lead and support learning effectively in all lessons and play activities, and this enables all pupils to learn quickly.

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

67. All staff work effectively to fulfil the school's aim to promote attitudes of honesty, commitment, self-discipline, responsibility, mutual respect and a healthy self-esteem. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour, provide good role models and offer positive rewards and praise to support each child's personal development. This results in good progress in the development of children's social skills, sense of responsibility and independence. The relationships between all adults and children are very good and enable children to develop confidence. Children are helpful, respectful and friendly towards each other. They co-operate well, readily sharing equipment and waiting patiently to take turns. They offer spontaneous praise for each other and take a genuine delight in the achievements of their peers. Children take responsibility, use equipment safely and to tidy up after themselves. When changing for gymnastic activity, they cope admirably in respect of taking personal responsibility for organising themselves and changing independently.

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

68. All children enjoy books and readily choose to read as part of independent activities. They listen to adults reading aloud with interest and contribute enthusiastically to discussions about the content of books. Staff encourage children to speak clearly and confidently, and to support their ideas with reasons using well-constructed sentences. This is good practice; children know what is expected of them and their language develops quickly as a result. Most children use a wide vocabulary and often include adjectives and adverbs to make their sentences interesting. In one outstanding lesson, children explained the function of the front cover of a book of number rhymes with very good understanding. They pointed to the title and knew that this was the name of the book. One very able child explained, *the contents page is used to find a particular rhyme and the page we can find it on!* Another child was able to select 'Five Little Fire Fighters' from the contents and turn to the correct page. The teacher's very good questioning enabled all children to understand how the presentation of text gave it hidden meaning.
69. The teacher develops children's reading skills well using a very good range of activities and resources. As a result all children show good ability to understand and retell stories and rhymes, ordering the main ideas correctly. They know that print carries meaning and letters represent sounds. They all show a good basic knowledge of phonic skills; they recognise the initial sounds of words, for example, and know which letters represent some of the sounds. The majority are confident to identify sounds and letters within their own name and recognise their own name within a number of words. A third of the class are already achieving standards in the Autumn term that would be expected at the end of the reception year. They use picture and phonic cues confidently to make sense of unfamiliar texts and are able to read key words within complex sentences. They are developing a good understanding of the use of full stops and exclamation marks, and know that sentences begin with a capital letter.

70. All children use a pencil and hold it effectively to produce recognisable letters with appropriate size. They make plausible attempts at writing their own name and familiar words. The adults provide many opportunities for mark making and writing within structured play activities to develop these skills to the full. The role-play area is set up as an ambulance, and works very well as children complete patients' details and produce 'accident reports' on prepared forms within the course of their play. They develop a good understanding of the use of writing to communicate information and meaning. By the end of the reception year all children achieve the national targets in this area with some working at a higher level within the National Curriculum.

### **Mathematical development**

71. Children are provided with a range of well-structured practical activities and make good progress in the acquisition and development of skills. The majority count accurately to ten. Numbers and shapes are well displayed so that children see them every day and learn about them constantly. In one very good lesson children were actively involved on a journey around school to develop their understanding of how words show the position of objects. Their learning, set within the context of the story of a journey of an ambulance, linked well with a recent visit to school by an ambulance and its crew and was made more effective as a result. The teacher's excellent use of language throughout the activity was very effective in developing children's learning; they were soon describing the journey the ambulance took using phrases such as, *turn left out of the hall and go between the classrooms then in front of the garden*. Children's learning was developed further when the adults created road-blocks and diversions, and asked them to describe their route and alternatives, making good use of the language they had recently learned. Good planning links the foundation stage curriculum well to the National Numeracy Strategy. Children participate well in the 'mental warm-up' at the beginning of the lesson, using their knowledge to count on and back. By the end of the reception year all pupils make very good progress and many exceed the expected levels of attainment for their age.

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

72. Most children have a good general knowledge when they start school. All staff build well on children's ideas and eagerness to find out more about the world around them. Activities are firmly based around investigation and play, using all five senses. In one very good lesson children explored the sense of touch, and made sensible suggestions for placing ice cubes in different places to influence the rate of melting. This provided a very good introduction to scientific investigation. In another good lesson, children used dolls to learn the names of parts of the body. The teacher's very good questioning and the provision of excellent first hand experiences helped children to understand the function of joints in limbs and learn the names of ankles, knees and elbows. By the end of the reception class, all children use the computer confidently; they navigate the controls well, access programmes and 'drag and drop' using the mouse. Studies outside enable the children to develop a good sense of place and to observe the cycle of change in the world around them. Children have a love of their guinea pigs, and are developing a strong sense of responsibility to care for living things. There is a very marked sense of spirituality within the classroom that reflects the caring, Christian ethos of the school. Children enjoy meeting visitors who come to the school and are confident and articulate in communicating with adults. An Ambulance Crew visited recently to enable the children to learn about their job. This led to excellent speaking and listening opportunities through the 'ambulance' role-play area. Very good teaching ensures that all children meet, and a good number exceed, the expected level of attainment by the age of five.

## **Physical development**

73. Children enter school with well-developed physical skills. These are built upon carefully through a structured programme that ensures children participate in physical exercise every day. In a very good gymnastics lesson children learned quickly because of the brisk pace and high level of challenge provided by the teacher. Her very good demonstrations helped all children improve the way they moved on their hands and feet. One child demonstrated how skilfully he could move around the hall on two hands and one foot. Another extended this to one hand and two feet with her tummy facing the ceiling. When apparatus is introduced children show high levels of independence in organising and moving benches and mats safely. Adults make good use of the outdoor play area that is easily accessible from the classroom to promote the development of children's bigger movements. Here children have frequent opportunities to use ride-on toys, climbing and balancing equipment, balls and skipping ropes. Their development is well supported through very effective intervention by classroom assistants who show them how to use the equipment safely. Children show good skills in their use of brushes, pencils and scissors when creating lively pictures and cutting out mathematical shapes. All children reach the early learning goals in this area with many achieving beyond expected levels for their age.

## **Creative development**

74. When they start school, children express themselves in a good variety of ways. By the time they complete the reception year the well planned variety of experiences to build on and develop children's natural curiosity and creativity ensures that all meet and many exceed the early learning goals in this area. Children's imagination, creativity and self-expression are developed well both inside the classroom and outdoors through music, dance, drama and art activities linked to a common theme. Within the role-play area children act out their ideas well. They use sand, water, construction kits and paint effectively to develop their ideas. Throughout their creative work children spontaneously discuss their ideas and extend their vocabulary well by constantly talking with adults. In one good lesson, children worked feverishly outside to solve the problem of wallpapering the model hospital and learned much about design and colour. In all creative work children are keen to learn and always strive hard to succeed.

## **ENGLISH**

75. In the latest national tests Year 6 pupils achieved standards that were well above the national average. Year 2 pupils' standards in reading were well above average, and those in writing were above average. Higher attaining pupils able did well; the percentage of Year 6 pupils who attained the higher Level 5 in English was above the national average while the percentage of Year 2 pupils who attained Level 3 was well above average in reading and above in writing. This inspection finds that the school has maintained these standards. Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection. These improvements have been achieved by:
- providing more challenges for the more able pupils;
  - making better use of ICT to improve pupils' skills in English; and
  - developing a more consistent and useful approach to assessment
76. By Year 2, pupils speak confidently and most listen attentively to their teacher. A few pupils in Years 1 and 2 have poorly developed listening skills, but this is more an issue of an overcrowded class than poor concentration. With this in mind, the teachers and support staff

work hard to develop the pupils' concentration and reward suitable responses with praise. Most pupils have good vocabulary and explain their ideas well. In assembly one boy explained why his attention had improved, *I used to have the wiggliest bottom in the universe, but now I sit still.*

77. By Year 6, pupils speak confidently in many different situations. They present their ideas clearly and listen well to each other, to their teachers and to visitors. They listened with real interest and enthusiasm, for example, to a talk from a visitor about her life during the Second World War. They have very good vocabulary and pose interesting and lively questions. Teachers provide many opportunities to improve pupils' speaking and listening through projects which capture the pupils' enthusiasm, such as the day at Ely Cathedral where some read their prayers to an audience of six hundred other pupils and adults.
78. Progress in reading is good. In Year 2, most pupils read with accuracy and fluency. They use expression well and are particularly good at referring to the text to illustrate their ideas, making suggestions about how the story might end. Almost all pupils are enthusiastic readers and they use a good range of strategies for finding out what unknown words say and mean. The school establishes good homework habits by Year 2, and pupils are eager to discuss their home reading with the teacher and support assistant each morning. The good support provided by the school for pupils with special educational needs enables them to know their letter sounds and key words and use them when they are reading. By Year 6 pupils are fluent and independent readers. They read a wide range of challenging books and discuss their attitudes and preferences in a very mature way. The most able pupils discuss the work of different authors knowledgeably and back up their ideas with reference to the text. They use skimming and scanning techniques very well to find information quickly, and most understand how to select relevant facts and features. In a Year 3/4 reading lesson, pupils made very good progress in developing the skills of reading with expression. They were able to distinguish between different voices and used different clues to help them identify the speaker and the tone of voice to be used. Pupils choose their own reading material from a good range of fiction and non-fiction and give reasonable explanations for their choices. Their understanding increases and develops, so while Year 2 pupils refer to the front cover, the pictures and the size of print as reasons for their choice, Year 6 pupils have made sufficiently good progress to be able to identify preferred authors, styles of writing and genres of book.
79. Many pupils produce writing that is interesting and lively. Their handwriting is well formed and joined, and spelling is good. The school has developed a whole school target setting process, which is focussing on spelling and this is beginning to show an improvement of spelling for all pupils. Most pupils use capital letters, full stops and speech marks correctly. Teachers generally provide good opportunities for writing in subjects other than English and this improves their work in both subjects. For example, in a piece of work in design and technology, a pupil used her improving writing skills very well to evaluate a toy they had made, writing:

*We changed the size of the box, because we could not find a box big enough. We also added more detail to the decoration because the toy looked a bit plain and boring. We are pleased with our toy and satisfied with the way the linear motion and rotary motion works.*

80. Sometimes, however, the over-use of worksheets limits the more able pupils' ability to use their writing skills in subjects such as history and geography. By Year 6 pupils write fluently, with neat, clear handwriting and most spell accurately. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to extend their writing, to develop their thoughts and consider alternatives and this makes their stories all the more interesting. Pupils' good ideas for their writing were illustrated well

when, in a recent study of a novel, they composed very thoughtful questions for an interview with a story's character. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in their writing by teachers and teaching assistants; for example, they help pupils build up the sounds of difficult words and ask searching questions to help pupils consider more adventurous sentences.

81. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. The teacher's knowledge of the National Literacy Strategy is good and the introduction of a new scheme of work throughout the school is beginning to ensure a consistent and structured approach. Opportunities, especially for the most able pupils, to write at length are limited by the use of worksheets and there are too few opportunities for all pupils to write independently.
82. In Years 3 to 6 the quality of teaching is good. Teachers clearly state their expectations and aims for each lesson, and this helps pupils focus on the skills to be learned. Teachers match the work well to the ability of the pupils, and this ensures that pupils with special educational needs understand the task, while more able pupils move on to more challenging work. Teachers use questioning particularly well, with questions matched carefully to individual pupils' knowledge, and this helps all groups learn at their own pace. Lessons flow smoothly with very little disruption as pupils move from one activity to another. The summing up sessions at the end of lessons are effective and pupils are keen to show what they have learned.
83. The comprehensive English policy reflects the emphasis placed on the development of literacy skills by the school, and this has resulted in the good progress that has been made. The co-ordinator has identified clear and important school priorities and has a clear vision for future development. Regular assessments have been introduced and these are providing good evidence and data for tracking pupils' progress. There has been no analysis of National Curriculum tests, however, so teachers are not sufficiently aware of areas where there may be gaps within the pupils' knowledge and skills.
84. The school has a small library area with a good selection of non-fiction books. All classrooms have additional book areas, which are bright and attractive. Books are well displayed throughout the school. ICT is used well to support the teaching of English. Pupils use word processing and research facilities especially when working on an extended study, such as that on Shakespeare that was seen in the work scrutiny of last year's work

## **MATHEMATICS**

85. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 attain above average standards in numeracy and all other areas of the mathematics curriculum. This finding shows an improvement on the standards reported in the previous inspection judgement. Standards are higher than before because of:
  - improvements in the planning of the curriculum;
  - more regular setting of homework to reinforce work done in class; and
  - better use of ICT to consolidate pupils' mathematical skills.
86. Given their skills on entry to the school, pupils' above average attainment represents sound achievement. Pupils with special educational needs are included in all mathematical activities and make good progress towards their targets; this explains why, by Year 6, all are at or close to national standards. This inspection finds that more able pupils are doing reasonably well and most achieve appropriately high standards, but the last two year's national test results show that they have under-performed in the Year 6 tests.

87. By Year 2, most pupils have a good mental recall of addition and subtraction facts to ten and order numbers correctly up to 100 and beyond. They count in multiples of two and ten easily and have a good mental recall of number sums up to 20. For example, when the teacher gives them a number such as 12, nearly all pupils know how many more would add up to 20. Some pupils find difficulty when doing subtraction problems, especially when the missing number is the initial one, such as ' $X - 2 = 5$ '. Pupils know how to double numbers quickly, and many use 'near doubles' effectively as a quick and effective way to add numbers such as 12 and 13 by doubling 12 and adding one. A few select their own methods for working out problems, but many find this hard, and rely on the teacher. They measure accurately using rulers and tape measures, and compile data well using tally tables.
88. By Year 6, pupils have a sound range of strategies to solve problems, to do with ratio or money, and most explain their strategies clearly. This shows good improvement from the last inspection when problem solving was a weak area. They work with number with confidence, and set out their sums neatly to avoid unnecessary errors. Most know their multiplication tables well, and have a quick recall, for example, of all multiples of seven. Nearly all pupils have a sound understanding of how to calculate perimeter by using the correct formulae, and recognise the properties of common shapes. Pupils represent data very well using graphs, and suitable line graphs about accidents involving cyclists are of a high standard.
89. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. In Years 1 and 2, teachers are well organised with resources ready for use and support staff are aware of what they are required to do. The lessons are planned well, with a good balance between the teacher talking, pupils working in groups and time at the end of the lesson to review what has been learned. This gives pupils good basic skills, time to put new learning into practice and an opportunity at the end to iron out any misconceptions. Where the pace of learning slows, it is the size of the class that causes the problem; 35 pupils sitting on the carpet, albeit with a teacher and two teaching assistants, is too big a group to manage for any length of time and the teacher struggles sometimes to teach without constant interruptions.
90. In Years 3 to 6, teachers' planning is good, and provides appropriate challenges for pupils of different abilities. Teachers work hard at making lessons fun, especially in the mental mathematics sessions, and pupils learn quickly almost without realising how hard they are working. The teaching of basic skills is good, and this gives pupils the confidence to attack new work. Teachers are good at including pupils with special educational needs in their questioning, tailoring the level of challenge very carefully to give pupils a good chance of success. Teaching assistants support pupils very well when they prompt pupils at just the right moment to enable them to answer questions. In one lesson, for example, a pupil was being helped quietly by a teaching assistant until he suddenly grasped the concept and shot his hand up. The teacher immediately asked him for the answer and saw him falter; with a smile the teacher said, *Go for it* and he gave the correct answer with wide smile of triumph. Teachers' marking is generally good and gives pupils clear ideas about how to improve. One teacher, for example, wrote on a pupil's book *you did this well, but just be careful to move the digits the correct number of spaces to the left* and in the following lesson he did.
91. Teachers make sound use of mathematics across the curriculum, and link work well with ICT when they create good databases or direct a floor robot. Graphs are used effectively in science and geography, and pupils are encouraged to measure accurately in design and technology.

92. The subject co-ordinator provides sound support to teachers, and ensures that her own training keeps her up to date. The co-ordinator has monitored and evaluated some lessons, but not with sufficient regularity to raise standards of teaching further. The curriculum is planned well, with teachers making good use of the whole school curriculum document as a focus for their lesson planning. This works well and ensures consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. The school has a good system for assessing pupils' progress, but misses a valuable opportunity to analyse pupils' national test results so that teachers can focus on particular weaknesses and ensure that all more able pupils achieve the standards of which they are capable. The school has a good supply of resources for mathematics, and uses the Internet well to enhance pupils' learning of shape, angles and data handling.

## **SCIENCE**

93. Inspection evidence shows that improvement since the last inspection is good. The 2002 National Curriculum Test results show that the attainment of pupils in Year 6 was very high when compared to schools nationally and well above average when compared to similar schools in similar circumstances. Results also show that when compared to schools attaining similar results in the Year 2 national tests in 1998, pupils made excellent progress. The attainment of more able pupils who attained the higher levels in the tests was also very high when compared to schools nationally and well above average compared to similar schools. This level of attainment has been consistent over time, the school's national test results being in the top five per cent nationally for the last three years. Inspection findings show that the current Year 6 is maintaining this very high level with 75 per cent of pupils attaining above the level expected for their age.
94. The 2002 teacher assessments show that the performance of pupils in Year 2 was well below average in comparison with schools nationally and with schools in similar circumstances. While all but one of the pupils attained the national standard, none was assessed by teachers as attaining higher levels; the inspection finds that this was more an issue of under-assessment by the teachers than poor performance by more able pupils. The pupils currently in Year 2 are attaining well above the level expected with over 50 per cent attaining at the higher levels. This represents very good standards of attainment and pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2.
95. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in scientific activities and make good progress. This is achieved through careful planning that meets the specific learning needs of individual pupils and by the very effective support given by classroom support assistants.
96. By Year 2 pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of scientific principles. They are skilled at distinguishing between living things and things that have never been alive, and explain their reasoning well. Pupils describe clearly the changes that take place in animals from birth to adulthood, and have a good awareness that human babies go through a series of changes before they become adults. Pupils have a very good knowledge of how humans maintain a healthy lifestyle. They sort a range of foods into different types and understand that humans need to eat the right proportions of a range of foods to stay healthy. Pupils are clear about how drugs are used as a means of promoting health, and know of the danger of the abuse and misuse of drugs. Teachers make good use of first hand experiences to enable pupils to make sense of their learning. In one lesson for example, pupils investigated the use of materials in relation to their properties by sorting familiar objects into several categories. Pupils make a good start at developing their investigative skills at this stage, and this has a very good impact on their learning as they progress through the school because they have the ability to test out their theories.

97. In Years 3 to 6 pupils make very good progress. The development of pupils' investigational skills is a particularly strong feature of the teaching and learning at this stage, as was seen in a very good lesson when pupils in Years 3 and 4 investigated whether magnets could push and pull objects through air and water. Pupils were given a good challenge to explore and find out answers to a series of searching questions posed by the teacher. As a result, they discovered much about how to conduct a fair test, introduce variables and record their findings. Most pupils are skilled at planning their own experiments, and make very good evaluations to find out whether the outcomes match with their predictions. For example, in an investigation to find out which three-dimensional shape of paper is the strongest, pupils recognised that:
- the paper's size, shape and weight needed to remain the same; and
  - changes in the shape needed to be the only variable.
98. In their study of the properties of materials pupils identified the relationship between the properties of materials and their use in building construction with good understanding. They recorded their ideas making good use of annotated diagrams. Pupils' scientific language is well developed through the use of a useful glossary of scientific terms that they add to regularly.
99. Pupils use skills in literacy and numeracy to good effect in science. In one lesson, for example, a Year 3 pupil explained in detail how magnetism played a part in the working of a roller coaster from information she had read as part of scientific enquiry. Pupils in Year 6 described properties of different rocks and minerals making very good use of adjectives they had worked on in an English lesson. In their investigative work pupils use and apply measuring skills and achieve a high level of accuracy in using a range of equipment. They record their work effectively making good use of data handling programs on computers.
100. All pupils enjoy investigative activities and work with enthusiasm because the teachers provide a good range of exciting activities and challenges. Science lessons make a very good contribution to pupils' personal and social development providing them with many opportunities to work co-operatively.
101. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with some very good teaching of pupils in Years 3 to 6. Teachers have good scientific knowledge, so that pupils develop good basic skills and learn how to ask sensible questions. Teachers plan thoroughly with a very good focus on developing pupils' investigative skills, and this is why they are a strength in pupils' learning. Teachers make good use of learning in other areas of the curriculum, and develop pupils thinking skills through the effective use of probing questions. They have high expectations of pupils and always challenge them to think for themselves about how to solve a problem; this explains why so many attain higher levels in the national tests. In a lesson for the oldest pupils, for example, the teachers gave them the task of investigating the insulation properties of different materials, and while adults worked with some groups to support their learning, the more able pupils worked independently and designed their own experiments. By the end of a very effective lesson all groups of pupils had made very good progress and most were working at levels above those expected nationally.
102. The school has sharpened the accuracy of teachers' assessments, and they now make good evaluations of pupils' skills and progress at the end of each half term's unit of work. Teachers maintain good records of these assessments and use the information well to inform their future planning. The marking of pupils' work is carried out conscientiously. There are some inconsistencies, however, and not all teachers mark in such a way that it informs pupils of how well they have achieved or what they could do to improve further.

103. The co-ordinator manages the subject very well. The co-ordinator's commitment to raising and maintaining high standards across the school is a significant factor in the high level of provision for all pupils. The subject policy reflects the practice across the school and the scheme of work provides a good framework for teachers' lesson plans. The co-ordinator evaluates teachers' planning and pupils' books regularly to check how much progress pupils are making through the school. This works well and enables the school to target areas where pupils are underachieving.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

104. Due to timetabling it was not possible to observe the teaching of art and design during the inspection period. Judgements made are from scrutiny of planning, pupils' work and from displays around the school. From the work seen it is clear that by Year 6 pupils are achieving standards in line with national expectations, and this was also the finding of the last inspection.
105. Throughout the school pupils have a good range of opportunities to use a variety of media in order to develop their artistic skills. Pupils attain average levels in their drawing and painting, but their sculptures are of a good standard. They make good use of the natural environment to create sculptures, and their very good models of animals are displayed attractively in the school grounds. The school has employed a local artist to support pupils' work in sculpture, and this is having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' creations as they learn from his experience. At the time of the inspection the sculptor worked with groups of pupils to carve a wooden sculpture in the school grounds, and they gained a good understanding of the processes that are involved through first hand observation and experience.
106. By Year 2, pupils use pencils well to produce self-portraits, making effective use of shading techniques to give texture to hair and depth to facial features. Throughout the school sketchbooks are used for the development of skills, but there is some inconsistency in the use of these in order to develop skills effectively. When used to best effect, pupils develop good shading techniques because they learn by experimenting with different types of pencils. Elsewhere, sketchbooks are not used well enough to develop pupils' skills, particularly in the use of paint. The paper quality does not support the development of paint mixing and the small size of paper restricts pupils' creativity.
107. Wherever possible teachers relate pupils' art and design to work they are doing in other areas of the curriculum. This works well and adds meaning and relevance to pupils' work. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 used a computer graphics program very effectively to produce interactive slide shows of viewpoints around the school for their geography work, and used pencil and watercolour techniques to illustrate stories in the style of Quentin Blake as an extension of work in literacy. There is a clear framework for planning which has been adapted well from a nationally recognised scheme of work. This ensures a sound progression of knowledge and skills as pupils progress through school.
108. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator evaluates medium and short term planning and samples of work regularly so that teachers are aware of the effectiveness of their teaching. Pupils' work is displayed attractively throughout school to celebrate their achievements. The enthusiastic co-ordinator sets a very good example by her own teaching, and is currently working hard to produce examples of work as a guide to assessment for colleagues across school.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

109. Pupils' work in design and technology is above national expectations by Year 2 and Year 6; this shows an improvement for Year 2 pupils from the last inspection when their standards were as expected for this age group. This represents sound achievement given their average standards on entry, and pupils with special educational needs often do well to produce some of the best work. Years 1 and 2 pupils make a good start in their model-making, getting an early feel for movement in their models, and accuracy in their building. They make good models of houses, and their designs are of high quality, showing the view from different angles. Their evaluations of their models are honest and include such comments as: *the sewing was OK but a bit hard to get right*.
110. By Year 6, pupils work methodically to gather information about a project, and generate a good number of ideas. Their designs are labelled clearly, and include useful step-by-step diagrams of how they will make a torch, for example, and clear explanations of how it will work. Pupils show good progress in their evaluations of their projects, with one in Year 6 writing, *we had some problems in who did what, but then we started to work as a team*. Pupils' making skills are good and they take care with the finish of their projects. Their sculptures out of soap are particularly effective, and show patience as well as skill. Pupils measure accurately and use tools well to make wooden frames covered with fabric. Pupils are adept at solving problems, as was seen when they had to stop a rod from swaying, and designed and made a 'collar' to keep it in place.
111. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall; it is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. The lessons seen, the analysis of pupils' work and photographic evidence show that teachers provide a sound range of work to address all areas of the curriculum. Teachers have a good regard for safety when, for example, pupils use sharp tools. They demonstrate skills well, and this gives pupils the basic skills to cut, drill and join accurately. Teachers' planning is satisfactory and gives appropriate attention to the development of pupils' skills. In Years 3 to 6 teachers make good links with other subjects, such as art, history, geography, music and science; this works well, giving an added purpose to pupils' work when they, for example, construct pyramids following work about the Ancient Egyptians. In the best lesson, the teacher gave Year 6 pupils the task of investigating how funfair rides work. After talking with pupils about movement and drive belts the teacher presented them with a wide range of domestic appliances and gave them the challenge of taking them apart to see how they worked. Pupils could barely wait to get started and all worked feverishly as they unscrewed the machines to discover what was hidden inside. Gasps of astonishment came from groups as they unearthed complex electronic boards and tiny motors. There was a quiet buzz of activity as pupils delved even deeper into vacuum cleaners and irons and by the end all had learned much about how things work without even realising they had been working.
112. Where the quality of teaching has shortcomings, the teacher struggles to control pupils' enthusiasm, especially in the introductory session, and they miss valuable information about what they should do. In a Year 1/2 lesson, for example, pupils kept calling out when the teacher asked them to raise their hands to answer a question, and no one could hear what anyone else was saying. It was not surprising that when the pupils started their practical work, many were unsure about what to do.
113. The co-ordinator leads the subject well, supporting teachers with good advice, and evaluating pupils' standards regularly. A good scheme of work provides useful guidance to teachers; it

states clearly how pupils' skills should progress through the school, and how this progress should be assessed. There is a good range of interesting resources to help pupils enjoy design and technology and make models of good quality. Assessment procedures are sound, and provide useful evaluations of pupils' work at the end of each topic.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

114. Standards in geography throughout the school are in line with national expectations, and broadly similar to those found in the last inspection. Because of the way in which the school plans its history and geography curriculum, it was not possible to observe any geography lessons. Judgements are based on a scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with teachers and the co-ordinator, and on lesson plans and records.
115. The analysis of work shows that by Year 2, pupils have a sound grasp of how the life of a character living in an island community is different from theirs. They know some of the physical features of this other locality and the different lifestyles of its inhabitants. Pupils understand the idea of a map and how to locate places. They name many of the features of their own locality, and compare and make sensible contrasts with their own homes with those in a different locality. By Year 6, pupils make good use of literacy skills to compare and contrast conditions in different parts of the world. They have studied areas in Africa and India, developing a sound understanding of how settlements have evolved and the way in which people and places are dependent upon each other. They make thoughtful comparisons between our use of water and that in countries with little or no rainfall. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social education as they become aware of environmental issues and begin to appreciate the hardship faced by people in some other countries.
116. Most groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in geography. However, the use of worksheets and the limited resources available, indicate that geography has been a low priority in the school. The course covers the National Curriculum requirements, but the limited time allocated prevents pupils developing a deep understanding of geographical issues, and explains why the more able pupils only reach average standards. The geography co-ordinator, who also manages history, plans to identify the key skills that pupils need to learn, and integrate history and geography more into other subjects to increase the amount of time available.

## **HISTORY**

117. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards in history are in line with national expectations, but are below those found in the last inspection. It was only possible during this inspection to observe history being taught in Years 3 to 6. Judgements made for Years 1 and 2 are based on evidence seen in pupils' work from this term and last year.
118. By Year 2, pupils have a sound knowledge of the past, and a basic understanding of how lifestyles have changed over a period of time. They make good comparisons between homes in the past with those today. A good number of visits to places within the local area and further afield enrich the history curriculum and make the subject come to life by showing pupils, for example, real examples of houses from the past and how people dressed and cooked food in those times. In Years 3 and 4, for example, pupils visited an outdoor museum and this taught them much about life in Anglo Saxon times. Visitors to school extend the range of opportunities for pupils to have 'hands on' experience. In Years 5 and 6, a visitor explained her experiences

during the Second World War, and brought a range of objects from the past for the pupils to use and examine. This fascinated pupils and enabled them to demonstrate their use of questioning and discussion skills. Pupils' questions clearly showed a good understanding of events and problems that occurred during the war.

119. In the scrutiny of work from last year, it was seen that Year 6 pupils used different sources of evidence competently to identify features of the Egyptian period. They were able to identify change and understand that the past can be interpreted in different ways. This year's pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of archaeological evidence and know how to formulate questions to find out information. They use a wide range of well-prepared resources, including the Internet, to research homes in Ancient Greece. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in history, but sometimes their written work is sketchy, or relies too heavily on the support from other pupils.
120. The quality of teaching and learning in history is satisfactory and some good teaching was seen. As in geography, there is a dependence on the use of worksheets that limits the opportunities for pupils to explore their own way of presenting ideas and information. In Years 1 and 2, this use of a framework helps pupils to structure their work, but opportunities to use books and a range of other materials are missed, and this continues from Years 3 to 6. Consequently more able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. They do not begin, for example, to question historical evidence or understand why some accounts differ from others. Teachers use questions well to involve pupils in their own learning, and this helps them enjoy history lessons.
121. History resources, in the form of books and ICT software are satisfactory and the school has a small number of historical materials to give pupils a 'feel' for the past. Little time is devoted to the teaching and learning of history compared with most other schools, and there are few links with other subjects to make up this shortfall. This is why standards have declined since the last inspection. The management of the subject is sound. The co-ordinator is aware of shortcomings in history and the school is planning to integrate history more into other subjects. The curriculum is sound, and based on national guidelines. This provides a secure basis for teachers' planning, although they do not use it well enough to pick out the tasks that would extend the more able pupils.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

122. Standards have improved significantly since the previous inspection when they were average by Year 2 but below average by Year 6. They are now in line with national expectations for pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6 and National Curriculum requirements are now met. This represents sound levels of achievement by all groups of pupils including those with special educational needs who gain much from the way word-processing programs improve their written work. The school has brought about this improvement by:
- increasing the number of computers;
  - developing a good range of software;
  - linking pupils' learning in ICT more closely to other subjects; and
  - raising the quality of teaching by deploying a member of staff with good skills to teach most of the lessons.
123. By Year 2, pupils are confident producing and amending text, and handle and display simple data accurately. They are good at programming a robot to take 'patients' to a hospital drawn

on the floor, and show great delight when their 'ambulance' arrives at the correct spot. Year 2 pupils use a graphics program capably to make a picture out of mathematical shapes, and 'fill' the shapes with colour.

124. By Year 6, pupils control events with sound skills, although some struggle to work out how to alter computer-simulated traffic lights so that cars pass safely. Pupils have refined their use of databases by Year 6, and use the information well to produce graphs, for example, of the characteristics of dinosaurs. Pupils make good use of the Internet to research their topics, and have a good understanding of how to copy pictures from web pages and 'paste' them into their own text. In some of their best work, pupils acted as 'Net Detectives' and researched a wide range of records and emails to solve a mystery.
125. Pupils make good use of computers in other subjects, as was seen when pupils in Years 3 and 4 followed up work in a literacy lesson by highlighting spoken text in a passage on the computer screen and adding speech marks. Year 6 pupils made good use of the spelling check on a word processing program to correct their work, and moved on to consider some of the disadvantages of spelling checks.
126. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The school made the decision to appoint a teaching assistant with good skills to be the 'ICT Manager' and be responsible for much of the teaching, and this works well. When she came it was clear that there was much to do because Year 6 pupils were working at levels expected of those in Year 2. The Manager's systematic planning of tasks to develop pupils' basic skills and regular practice to use this new learning have led to a rapid improvement in standards across the school. The computer area is not ideal, being one of the main thoroughfares in the school, but it does enable a group of pupils to be taught successfully together and then use their new skills immediately. As an example, Year 6 pupils were taught well how to compile data of the number of swimmers using a pool at certain times, and then given the task of producing a line graph of their results. They found this hard at first, but because of good teaching they quickly grasped a difficult concept and started creating their database. Before long they were growing in confidence and one pupil exclaimed, *it's great – I'm getting the hang of it now!*
127. The subject co-ordinator works closely with the ICT Manager so that teachers are supported well. They have organized good training sessions for teachers and teaching assistants so that the expertise of the whole staff is improving. They evaluate teachers' planning systematically and make useful checks on how well the curriculum is covered. The school uses a sound system for assessing pupils' achievements that includes useful comments on the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils. A policy for the safe use of the Internet is in place.

## MUSIC

128. It was only possible to observe two lessons during the inspection, and judgements are made on these lessons, discussions with pupils and observation of pupils playing instruments in assemblies. This evidence shows that standards in music at the end of Years 2 and 6 are above average, and pupils achieve well. This is an improvement since the last inspection, and demonstrates the benefit of specialist music teaching and better curriculum planning. By Year 2, pupils listen carefully to music and many are good at naming instruments when they are played behind a screen. They have a reasonable knowledge of different musical elements such as rhythm and pitch, and play long and short, high and low notes, keeping in time. They sing well, keeping to the tune and putting a good deal of expression into their songs. Their memory of songs they have learned previously is good. This work is built on well through Years 3 to 6 and the oldest pupils enjoy singing songs with complex structures. They have a good memory

of when a verse starts earlier than others, and this helps them maintain the pace of a song. Pupils practice hard, and this enables them to improve their singing in a short time. Boys' singing is not as good as that of girls, and a few appear embarrassed, even when performing in a large group. Many pupils play musical instruments well, especially the recorder and flute, and they make a very good contribution to the music in assemblies. Pupils' composing skills are average, but not as good as other elements of music because the school has not focused on these skills. Pupils with special educational needs do well in music and their singing is sometimes among the best in the class.

129. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The school employs a specialist musician whose good knowledge accounts for pupils' good singing techniques. This teacher, who is also the music co-ordinator, teaches a class for half a term, and then the class teacher takes over. This works well, and makes the best of specialist support while helping to develop the knowledge of all teachers. Lessons are planned well, with a good focus on ensuring that pupils stand and breathe correctly. This is good practice, and shows pupils that the teacher has high expectations of them as musicians. The teacher explains techniques well so that pupils learn quickly how to sing with good rhythm and clarity. The teachers generally manage classes well, although some time is lost with the youngest pupils who take a while to settle and find concentration difficult. The school has a good emphasis on pupils learning to play instruments, and this accounts for their good performing skills. Pupils' learning is enhanced further by extracurricular music sessions, and benefits from the skills and enthusiasm of the school secretary who takes these classes.
130. Pupils' standards benefit from the school's very good involvement in a musical 'workshop' at Ely cathedral each year, when pupils practice songs and instrumental pieces and perform afterwards in the cathedral. In addition, the school holds very popular musical evenings when pupils play to parents and other pupils. These events do much to boost pupils' skills and confidence, and are a valuable way for talented musicians to develop their skills to the full.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

131. There has been satisfactory improvement in physical education since the time of the last inspection. New large apparatus, gymnastic equipment and good staff training have improved the provision for gymnastics across the school. Only one dance lesson was observed during the inspection therefore it is not possible to judge the quality of teaching. Evidence from the school's curriculum framework, teacher's planning, discussion with pupils and with the subject co-ordinator indicate that provision for physical education is good. In Years 3 to 6 all pupils have the opportunity to take part in swimming, and nearly all meet the nationally expected standard of swimming 25 metres unaided.
132. During a very good dance lesson, pupils in Years 3 and 4 developed a good awareness of the effect of exercise on the body. The teacher achieved this by her good questioning about how pupils were feeling, and how their hearts were beating faster with different levels of exercise. The lesson worked well because there was a good balance between vigorous exercise and the improvement of pupils' skills. Pupils worked effectively in pairs to develop dance sequences in response to well known scenes from the story of Prometheus. This made good links with pupils' learning in history and literacy, and enhanced their knowledge of all three subjects. Teachers' planning is effective and ensures that pupils develop a broad range of skills.
133. The school has a good supply of equipment and of resources to develop pupils' skills in physical education. A range of climbing and swinging equipment effectively supports the development

of pupils' gymnastic skills, and their games skills profit from a good supply of bats and balls. These resources include good provision for pupils with special educational needs, some of whom struggle with throwing and catching but find 'pom-poms' and quoits easier to handle than balls. The space available indoors in the school hall is a limiting factor in the development of games skills for older pupils. The excellent outdoor environment, however, is used whenever possible. The good quality resources available extend to the deployment of skilled coaches in a variety of games. For example, players from Cambridge City Football Club support the development of football skills. County cricket coaches work with pupils to develop skills in 'quick cricket' and a qualified swimming coach is employed to teach swimming.

134. A good range of extracurricular activities enhances pupils' progress, especially those with significant talents. Pupils attend clubs for football, netball and athletics after school and they have frequent opportunities to represent the school in inter-school tournaments. Two pupils represent the county in cricket. All pupils aged between the age of seven and eleven have opportunities to take part in residential visits. These are planned to give pupils a broad range of experiences in outdoor education. All visits are organised to ensure that all pupils have equal access to them.
  
135. The co-ordinator manages the subject well. The quality of provision in the subject is evaluated through regular scrutiny of planning each half term and subsequent discussions with staff, observation of pupils working and an annual audit of resources. In order to gain a good overview of development of games skills the co-ordinator teaches games to pupils in Years 1 and 2 during the summer term. The enthusiastic co-ordinator has coaching qualifications in a number of games that enables her to support the professional development of colleagues very well.