

INSPECTION REPORT

BRIMSCOMBE VA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Brimscombe

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115690

Headteacher: Mr David Shears

Reporting inspector: Mrs Christine Nuttall
31046

Dates of inspection: 27 – 29 January 2003

Inspection number: 247582
Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Brimscombe Hill Brimscombe Stroud Gloucestershire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Theresa Yates-Round
Date of previous inspection:	12 th January 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
31046	Christine Nuttall	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage, Mathematics, Information and Communication Technology, Art, Geography and History	The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? Leadership and management
9528	Derek Bowers	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
21090	David Manuel	Team inspector	English, Science, Design and Technology, Music, Physical Education, special educational needs and inclusion	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development 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

Brimscombe is a small village Church of England School. It is smaller than average with 88 pupils aged between four and eleven. There are 16 more boys than girls. There are 11 children in the reception year, working in a class with all Year 1 and some Year 2 pupils. Two further classes comprise pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4, and Years 4, 5 and 6 respectively. Pupils come from Brimscombe and surrounding areas. Housing locally is mixed, and most pupils live in owner-occupied homes with a minority living in housing authority homes. Over eight per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is well below the national average. All families have their cultural roots in the British Isles. Children's attainment on entry to the reception year is wide-ranging, but below average overall. Twenty per cent of the pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, which is above average. Four pupils have statements of special educational need.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Brimscombe is a very good school where pupils of all abilities make good progress. Standards vary from year to year because of the small numbers and the make-up of these groups. The teaching is good, with some very good features, the school is organised efficiently and the headteacher provides clear and purposeful leadership. Pupils are well cared for, they behave very well and develop very good attitudes to their learning. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Parents are very supportive of all that is being done for their children. The school is expensive to run, but nonetheless provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average in mathematics, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), music, art, physical education and design and technology by the time pupils leave the school.
- Children are taught well and there is a high percentage of very good teaching. As a consequence, all pupils achieve well.
- Very good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs and these pupils make very good progress.
- The school cares very well for pupils. The provision for the pupils' personal development results in very good attitudes and excellent relationships.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership and is supported by the committed and highly effective governing body.
- There is a strong partnership with parents and they give very good support to the school.

What could be improved

- The role of subject co-ordinators in monitoring teaching and learning in their subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since its last inspection in January 1998. Many areas have improved significantly, in particular, provision and standards in information and communication technology, art and history. Both the curriculum and teaching have improved, the latter especially well. The school has also maintained the good features seen then, for example, the positive attitudes, behaviour and relationships of pupils. All the weaknesses identified when the school was last inspected have been addressed effectively. The school is in a strong position to move forward.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Similar schools are those with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals

The table shows that standards fluctuate from year to year. This is quite usual in small schools, where the performance of one or two pupils can have a substantial impact on statistical data. At Brimscombe in 2002, for example, there were 15 pupils in the year group with each pupil representing nearly seven per cent. Considering the year group had a large proportion of pupils with special educational needs, the school did very well in achieving above average results in English and mathematics and average results in science. The school also did very well in comparison with similar schools.

From a below average start, children make satisfactory progress in the reception class and are working towards the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make at least satisfactory progress and standards are currently average overall in reading, writing and mathematics. Staff have worked hard and successfully to raise standards in writing and mathematics particularly. In Years 3 to 6, pupils make good progress overall. The improvement in English and mathematics last year has been sustained and more pupils are attaining higher levels in these two subjects than in previous years. By Year 6 pupils attain above average standards in mathematics, information and communication technology, music, art, design technology and physical education. They reach average standards in other subjects. Standards in ICT, art and history have improved considerably since the last inspection when they were judged to be below average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very positive about school. They work hard and enjoy their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. All pupils listen carefully to their teachers and behave very well in classrooms and in the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils settle quickly into school. They are confident and friendly. They develop excellent relationships with each other and the staff.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average, with no unauthorised absence. Most pupils are very punctual.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

A large proportion of the teaching is either good or very good and some of it is excellent. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. This is an extremely positive picture. The good quality of the teaching ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught very well and teachers are using effective strategies to raise standards in writing. Particular strengths in the teaching include very good pupil management, planning of imaginative and interesting activities and very effective use of time, resources and learning support assistants. The specialist teaching of music in the school and the headteacher's contribution to this subject are especially good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. Broad, rich and relevant to pupils' interests and needs. There is a very good variety of interesting activities outside lessons.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. These pupils are well supported. Their needs are identified early and they are given appropriate help. Learning support assistants work closely with teachers to plan and provide sensitive support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. This is a strong area with a commitment to supporting the personal development of every pupil. Very good provision is made for pupils' spiritual, social and moral development and there are good arrangements for pupils' cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has very good arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of pupils, with excellent child protection procedures. Assessment systems are good.

The school provides parents, with good information about its work and their children's progress. Parents regard the school highly and support it very well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is a very good leader, with a clear educational vision. He is well supported by the senior teacher. Together, with staff, they have established a very calm and positive ethos, ensuring that everyone is valued. Weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation procedures limit the overall effectiveness of subject co-ordinators.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors work very effectively in the best interests of the school. They use their many talents very well to best advantage. Many visit the school during the working day and all are fully involved in meetings. The chair is especially effective in her role. All statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has good procedures to evaluate how well it is doing. It uses its analysis of strengths and weaknesses effectively to move forward.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of all available resources, to bring about improvements in provision. The principles of best value are applied well.

The school is well staffed by appropriately qualified teachers and support assistants. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. An extension which is about to be built should enhance many aspects of provision further, particularly in the Foundation Stage. The good quality and range of learning resources help support teaching and learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • The curriculum offered to their children, including that for personal development, is wide-ranging • Teaching is good • The school welcomes and values their support • Staff are approachable and parents' concerns are responded to well • Leadership and management are good • New children are helped to settle into school well • Behaviour in the school is good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework • Information about their children's progress

The partnership with parents is very strong. Inspectors agree whole-heartedly with the positive views listed above. However, inspectors did not find any evidence to substantiate parents' concerns about homework or information about progress. Homework set is linked well to lessons and is appropriate for the age of the pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

Starting school

1. When children start school at Brimscombe, their skills, knowledge and understanding are wide ranging, but below average for Gloucestershire schools. The proportion of children who are doing better than average and the proportion that are behind their peers varies from year to year.

Results in national tests and assessments

2. Standards in Year 2 national tests last year were below average in reading, writing and mathematics, with a slightly stronger profile in mathematics. Writing was the weaker area. Standards had dropped from the previous year, when they were average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. In the teacher assessments in science, the school's results were well above the national average. The results in science were the same as the previous year. There was no significant difference in the relative performance of boys and girls and this has been a similar picture in the past.
3. Standards judged against the national picture fluctuate from year to year. This is quite usual in small schools, where the performance of one or two pupils, can have a tremendous impact on statistical data. In 2002 in Year 2 at Brimscombe, for example, each pupil represented 9.1 per cent. In addition, almost half the pupils were identified as having special educational needs. Comparative data indicated that the school was below average in reading, writing and mathematics in relation to similar schools. However the fine margins and relatively small numbers distorted the results. The vast majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, continued to reach expected levels in all three areas. Whilst the statistical information is useful it does not represent a full enough picture of attainment in the school.
4. In English and mathematics standards in Year 6 national tests rose in 2002. In both subjects standards were above average. More pupils achieved the higher levels in English and mathematics, a significant improvement in mathematics. In science, standards were broadly average overall with fewer pupils achieving the higher levels than the previous year. In comparison to similar schools, pupils at Brimscombe reached higher standards than their peers in mathematics and science and significantly higher in English.

Inspection findings – the Foundation Stage

5. The inspection found that this year, although children came into school with wide ranging skills, knowledge and understanding, the profile for the group is below average. There are only eleven children in the reception year and two of these have significant special needs. All the children have settled in school life well and are making satisfactory progress in language, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world and in their physical and creative development. They are making good progress in their personal and social development. Many are on target to meet the goals for the Foundation Stage by the end of their reception year in all areas, but overall their attainment remains below average.

Inspection findings – Years 1 and 2

6. The inspection found that pupils are making sound progress in English, mathematics and science and that standards are broadly average. In English, standards are higher in speaking and listening than they are in reading and writing. In mathematics, standards are highest in number work, but lower in using and applying mathematics to solve

problems. Standards in science are strong in scientific knowledge and understanding. In all three core subjects, there has been considerable improvement as a result of focused work by the school.

7. By the end of Year 2, pupils attain average standards in ICT, history, geography and design and technology. In music, art and physical education, pupils do well and attain above expectations for their age. At the time of the last inspection, standards in ICT and art fell below the expected levels. Improvement in these two subjects is good with a significant improvement in art.

Inspection findings – Years 3 to 6

8. Speaking and listening standards are higher than those in reading and writing. The current Year 6 has a larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs than last year's cohort. This is why standards in reading and writing are average compared with above average standards then. Across Key Stage 2, 28 per cent of the pupils are identified as having special educational needs. Standards this year are better than at the time of the last inspection and, overall, are above average. In English, standards are in line with expected levels. In mathematics, standards are above average and this represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. As with Year 2, number work is the strongest area with problem-solving and investigative work requiring further development. In science standards are in line with expected levels. Pupils achieve good standards in investigative and experimental work in science as a result of the good teaching.
9. In art, ICT, music, design and technology and physical education, standards are above expected levels. Standards in history and geography are in line with expected levels. This shows considerable improvement since the last inspection when standards in history, ICT and art were below average.

Target setting

10. The school, working with the local education authority, has set suitably challenging targets for pupils' performance in Year 6 tests in English and mathematics this year, which it is likely to meet.

Achievements of pupils with special educational needs

11. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress throughout the school as a result of careful planning and the sensitive support of teachers and teaching assistants. Some pupils have more significant learning needs and a few have a statement of special educational need. These pupils also make good progress because of the extra support that they are given. Although a small minority with particular problems remains some way behind their classmates, they achieve well in relation to their targets.

Boys and girls

12. Overall there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls and all are challenged well.

Educational inclusion

13. Teachers value all pupils equally and carefully identify those who are disadvantaged or need additional challenge in order to achieve their potential. In all classes and in subjects across the curriculum good examples were seen of all pupils being provided with appropriate work and therefore being suitably challenged. Despite the small numbers in each year group, higher attaining pupils achieve well and this is reflected in the proportions that achieve above average levels in national tests at the end of each year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and behave very well. Relationships between pupils and teachers and amongst pupils themselves are excellent. This represents an improvement on the good and sometimes very good standards reported at the time of the previous inspection. All the teaching and non-teaching staff are consistent in the respectful way that they treat pupils and this is a key factor in the high standards of pupils' personal development.

A good beginning

15. Children settle quickly into school in the reception class. By the time of the inspection, school routines were well established. Children listen carefully to their teacher and each other. They follow instructions carefully. They put up their hands to ask questions and line up sensibly to leave the classroom for assemblies and hall lessons. They are gaining independence, changing independently for physical education, for example. They are kind to each other and most share and take turns well. Most are clearly aware of the difference between right and wrong.

Attitudes

16. Pupils' very good attitudes to their work make a significant contribution to the calm working atmosphere that prevails. Pupils are very keen to come to school. They show evident enjoyment of the many interesting activities provided for them in lessons and out of school. For example, in discussions pupils show high levels of enthusiasm for class lessons, concerts, sporting activities and other aspects of school life. Pupils show high levels of respect for each other and all adults working in the school. In lessons, pupils work hard and try to achieve the high standards set by their teachers. Teachers manage pupils with special educational needs with great sensitivity and as a result, these pupils also have very good attitudes to their work and are keen to improve.

Behaviour

17. Pupils' behaviour is very good in all classes. Pupils of all ages conduct themselves very well and are polite and courteous to staff and to visitors to the school. In all the lessons observed, pupils' behaviour made a significant contribution to their achievements and the good progress they made. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the school's code of conduct. Older pupils present good role models to younger pupils in their mature conduct and sense of responsibility. A significant aspect of pupils' personal development is the emphasis the school places on the care and respect for all individuals. This is promoted very well by all staff and is a strong feature of pupils' achievements in collective worship and religious education lessons, where respect for the feelings and beliefs of others is evident in pupils' written and oral work. As a consequence, relationships are excellent between pupils and between pupils and adults. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others. They are keen to accept responsibilities and pupils of all ages contribute to the smooth running of the school in the tasks that they undertake. There were no exclusions over the last year.

Attendance

18. Attendance is very good and has been well above the national average for the past three years. There are no unauthorised absences. The children are keen to come to school and their parents accept the importance of good attendance. Punctuality is also very good for most pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. The overall quality of teaching is good, with either good or better teaching occurring in over four fifths of the lessons seen. In almost two fifths of the lessons teaching is at least very good. In one lesson it was excellent. No teaching was unsatisfactory. This is very good improvement since the last inspection where almost all teaching was at least satisfactory, with a very small percentage judged as very good and one lesson was unsatisfactory. Parents also agree that teaching is good. This is an extremely positive picture.

Teaching of children in the Foundation Stage

20. The quality of teaching and classroom support are good. The teacher has a good understanding of the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum and she uses this expertise well in planning effective learning opportunities. Very good relationships have been established with the children and they feel secure and happy in their teacher's company. Planning is initially developed for the Year 1 and 2 pupils in the class. The teacher then plans the Foundation Stage sessions in order to ensure that reception children participate in the introductions to each lesson before engaging in group activities that are appropriate for their age and stage of learning. In some sessions the teacher gives priority to working with older pupils during group activity times but the play activities provided for the younger ones are well structured and other adult involvement is planned for them to enable progress during the session. The teacher is able to check how all groups are progressing and the well-trained support assistants are effective in supporting the children's learning. A good range of resources is provided and the teacher gives clear explanations so that children understand what they have to do. The teacher and support staff engage closely with individual children and help them to move forward in their learning.
21. Opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills are given a high priority and are part of every activity. For example, whilst children act out the story of 'The Secret Path' in 'Percy's Hut', the support assistant dresses up as the squirrel and engages in the role play by encouraging the children to ask questions and talk with the animal. Staff have also worked hard to provide opportunities for children to make decisions for themselves and, regularly, children are required to choose a task from a range of activities. Children with special educational needs are identified early and are supported very well. All staff are sensitive and flexible in their attitudes.

Teaching in Years 1 and 2

22. Teaching is good overall, with some very good features. This ensures that pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Common strengths in the teaching include good attention to planning and preparation. In both classes, teachers plan carefully, noting clear learning objectives for each lesson. Resources are also very well prepared. In a geography lesson, for example, the teacher had spent some time collecting spices, drawings and text for pupils to use in their investigations about India. She had also planned a cooking opportunity and provided a wide range of ingredients. As a result, pupils made great strides forward in their knowledge and understanding of the country. Similarly in an art lesson, the teacher linked the work in geography by providing fabric 'Torans' and other Indian artefacts, so that the pupils could begin to develop their own version of a Toran.

Teaching in Years 3 to 6

23. The quality of teaching is also good in Years 3 to 6. There are two classes in this part of the school with pupils from three different year groups in each. Both classes have two teachers who share the working week between them. The headteacher also takes Year 6 pupils daily for mathematics. This arrangement works particularly well with

individual teachers planning and teaching subjects where they have particular strengths. As a result, pupils benefit from the expertise of their teachers and make good progress in their learning. Again, as in Key Stage 1, common strengths include the planning and preparation. Teachers also make very good use of homework to support and enhance learning. For example, pupils collected data at home in preparation for a mathematics lesson on creating pie charts. Their teacher then showed them how to illustrate their findings on a pie chart. In a history lesson, the teacher extended the pupils' learning about Ancient Greece by asking them to research facts at home.

Teaching of literacy

24. Literacy sessions are taught well and this ensures that pupils meet the learning targets set for lessons. Planning is detailed, with work carefully prepared for both whole class sessions and group work. Learning support assistants are deployed well to provide focused support for groups, especially those with special educational needs. Particular strengths in these lessons include the respect for pupils' responses and the encouragement given to them to think for themselves, especially in Year 6. One of the major priorities on the school's improvement plan is that of writing. Teachers have resolutely addressed this issue to improve standards. In one excellent lesson, the outstanding quality of the teacher's input on setting and creating atmosphere in writing, resulted in equally outstanding achievement. The pace in this lesson was very good and the teachers maintained an effective pace in their literacy teaching resulting in good use of the time available. Phonic skills are taught well and pupils are using these to help them with reading and spelling. Teachers are using appropriate strategies to improve writing skills through the school.

Teaching of numeracy

25. Teaching of numeracy is good overall. Consequently pupils make good progress. The quality of teaching in lessons ranges between satisfactory and very good. Teachers' planning is thorough and based on the national framework for numeracy. Activities are carefully planned to encourage group and individual work, and usually include some homework connected to the lesson. Teachers make good use of the mental and oral starter to improve pupils' abilities to employ strategies for handling numbers. Lessons are interesting and practical. As a result, pupils enjoy their work, behave extremely well and concentrate on what teachers explain. Work is appropriately challenging for older pupils and higher attaining pupils do well as a result. However, this is not always the case with younger pupils and more work needs to be undertaken to develop suitable challenges for higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 1.

Teaching and learning in other subjects

26. Lessons were seen in all subjects. Generally the quality of teaching in science and the foundation subjects is good, with some examples of very good teaching. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection in ICT, history, geography, art and physical education. Subject knowledge and confidence in ICT has increased and this has had a direct impact on raising standards. Personal, social and health education is taught effectively and this has had a very positive impact on pupils' very good personal development. Individual teachers have particular strengths and in some subjects, such as music and art, teacher expertise lifts the lesson.

Particular strengths

27. There are particular strengths that thread through all of the teaching. One is the very good management of pupils' behaviour. This is underpinned by extremely good relationships between staff and pupils, which set a firm basis for teaching and learning. Teachers have a very positive approach. They praise good behaviour and are very good role models for pupils. They use appropriate strategies to help pupils to behave sensibly and responsibly. Consequently, pupils behave very well and very little time is

wasted in lessons in managing difficult behaviour. In one particularly good lesson, for example, the pupils' behaviour was very good because the teacher was calm and explained clearly what he wanted the pupils to do.

28. Another significant strength is the good planning of interesting and imaginative activities, which capture pupils' interest and fire their love of learning. In a Year 4, 5 and 6 history session, for example, pupils debated the merits of living in Athens and Sparta by discovering facts and justifying their strengths and weaknesses. The pupils were enthusiastic about their learning, concentrated well and made good progress in their skills, knowledge and understanding of Ancient Greece.
29. Teachers also use the resources available to them very well and this again makes the learning experiences for pupils very positive. Resources are prepared well and ready before lessons begin, so that no time is wasted. Equipment, like pencils and dictionaries for example, are readily available on pupils' work tables. In most sessions, time is used very effectively. There is a good pace to lessons, so that much is achieved and good use is made of the time in the plenary session at the end of the lesson to draw the main points together. Learning support assistants are deployed very well. They work closely with teachers in supporting small groups or individuals and this helps pupils to make good progress.

Teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs

30. Overall, the quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good because teachers focus on their particular learning needs to help pupils meet their individual targets. Teachers and assistants are patient and are clearly aware of pupils' emotional needs while supporting them academically. As a result, the pupils grow in confidence when tackling new learning and are willing to try new tasks. When pupils are in small groups for extra help teaching is sometimes very good, as observed when Year 6 pupils wrote the start of a suspense story. In each of the sessions seen, younger pupils made clear gains in basic reading skills and in their personal development as a result of focused teaching. This makes a significant contribution to the standards achieved by the school in the national test results.

Equal opportunities

31. Teachers plan carefully to cater for the needs of all pupils. All groups of pupils, including those with SEN, and boys and girls, are equally motivated by teachers' strategies. Teaching assistants make particularly important contributions to the teaching and learning process. They are highly motivated and work closely with teachers to provide sensitive and caring support that not only promotes pupils' learning but also their integration into whole-class activities. They are briefed well by the class teacher to ensure effective teamwork.

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

32. The previous report highlighted the need to develop whole school schemes of work to ensure that pupils' skills are developed progressively throughout the school. Since that time, the school has worked hard to accomplish this. The result is a broad, balanced and varied curriculum based on national guidance. It is enriched by the good provision for extra-curricular activities and the school's success in including all pupils in activities in and out of school, including music, drama and sport.

Development of the curriculum

33. Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from a good curriculum that is planned to meet individual needs within the six recommended areas of learning. Wherever

possible, children's activities are linked effectively to lessons taught to Year 1 and 2 pupils in the same class, so that the youngest children benefit from shared experiences. The activities are adapted to suit their age, levels of maturity and capabilities and closely related to their previous experiences. The opportunities provided for outdoor activities have improved since the previous inspection and are satisfactory. Classroom support, provided by a teaching assistant and several helpers, is very effective.

34. The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, which is enhanced by a very good range of learning opportunities. These include a good range of extra-curricular activities and good links with the local community. The curriculum is broadly based on national guidance and includes provision for sex and relationships, hygiene and the use and misuse of drugs. It also meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Long- and medium-term subject planning is good and monitored effectively in all subjects. It is based on relevant policies and schemes of work. Whole school planning is in the form of a two-year rolling programme. This ensures that all the required elements are taught, that they are relevant to the learning needs of pupils within the mixed-age groups found in all three classes and that unnecessary repetition of learning is avoided.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs

35. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils' needs are identified early and support is monitored regularly. Teachers and teaching assistants have good knowledge of the individual education plans and the targets contained in them. These are shared with pupils in order to help them understand what they need to do to improve. There are good levels of general support, including focused tasks aimed at improving specific areas of need. The school has not identified gifted and talented pupils. Provision for higher attaining or more able pupils is mainly good. These pupils are often challenged by their work but there are times when they could be provided with special challenges to extend their skills, particularly in mathematics and science.

Equality of opportunity

36. One of the major strengths of the school is its friendly and caring community atmosphere. This is based firmly on the commitment of all staff to the principles of equality that are strongly evident in the school's statement of aims and values. Through its well-planned curriculum, the school responds successfully to the diverse learning needs of all its pupils. When pupils are withdrawn in small groups for extra help in reading and writing, good learning gains in the long term enhance their access to the full curriculum. Teachers' planning has been effective in helping higher, lower and average attaining pupils to move forward.

Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy

37. The school's strategy for teaching literacy is good and for numeracy is very good. The success of provision is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis and is effective in developing new priorities for improvement and whole school targets for raising standards. The school correctly identified that writing skills were not always promoted as well as they could be across the curriculum and that skills learned in literacy lessons were not always transferred to written work in other subjects. These weaknesses have now been improved with the wider range of opportunities provided in planning. Pupils' numeracy skills are taught very well in links with subjects such as science and design and technology. ICT provision has been improved since the previous inspection. Specific funding has been used to purchase new computers and software.

38. Arrangements for pupils with SEN are very good. They learn alongside their classmates and therefore are involved in learning about the same subjects and topics. Their individual learning plans are of very good quality and are drawn up by the SENCO in consultation with class teachers and teaching assistants. They include targets that are relevant to pupils' needs and are achievable. They help, therefore, to motivate pupils to succeed. In most lessons, and especially in literacy and numeracy, activities are planned carefully to match pupils' learning needs and to enable them to meet these targets. On occasions, individuals and small groups are taught separately to work on particular tasks. These arrangements contribute strongly to the good progress pupils make in reading and writing.

Activities outside lessons

39. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good. There are numerous clubs which take place at lunchtimes and after school, and these are well attended by pupils. The range includes recorder groups, dancing, French, computers and sporting activities such as football, netball and cross-country. The school also makes very good provision to support the teaching and learning of individual musical instruments such as the flute, clarinet, violin, drums, recorders and guitar. The activities make a significant contribution to the development of pupils' creative, physical and social skills. Pupils also make visits to local exhibitions and theatres and the teaching staff enhance their knowledge and expertise in a range of subjects.
40. High value is placed on personal, social and health education. Within this aspect of work, pupils receive effective teaching and support related to assist them with their development as healthy and sensitive young people and good citizens of the future. Sensitive and sometimes stimulating support in this area is also provided in assemblies, some of which are taken by visitors. Citizenship is promoted successfully and incorporated naturally into the curriculum.

Community links and links with partner institutions

41. The school has good links within the local community and the parish church and these make significant contributions to pupils' learning. The local area is used to support pupils' work in English, mathematics, science, geography and history through trips, visits and fieldwork. A local poet and artists visit the school to extend pupils' learning in English and art and pupils visit local places of historical interest. An annual residential visit provides a good range of experiences to develop the pupils' academic, creative, physical and social skills. Pupils take part in several public performances each year at Christmas and in the Summer and make visits to old people's homes and the local hospice. Pupils suggest their own ideas for charities to support and raise money to help these. Occasional sporting links with other schools further extend these skills. The school has maintained good links with a group of local small schools, and these extend and improve the curriculum. Pupils' learning benefits considerably from these successful liaisons.

Provision for pupils' personal development

42. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good and is an improvement on the good standards reported at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' spiritual development is very good. It is promoted very effectively through religious education and assemblies, some of which are taken by visiting clergy. In assemblies, pupils learn to reflect on their own feelings and behaviour, and this encourages them to think about the effect of their actions on others and how they might help them. Opportunities are also taken for pupils to share in the wonder of nature and the world we live in during trips within the local area and a study in the school grounds. For example, they develop views about the beauty of flowers and trees and interest in birds and insects. Opportunities provided in art and music encourage the appreciation of colour form and

ways to express their own feelings and emotions, particularly demonstrated when looking at the fabrics in the Indian Toran. Pupils are strongly encouraged to reflect on the purpose of life and helping others.

Moral development

43. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. A strong moral code is taught through a whole school culture which incorporates all aspects of school life and forms the basis of the excellent relationships observed during the inspection. Teachers and teaching assistants provide very good role models by dealing with pupils in a calm and confident manner. Pupils learn right from wrong and sensitively point out to others where they might have been wrong and might improve. The school's values are strongly reflected in the school code that is clearly displayed. Pupils know and understand the school rules and show high levels of respect for each other and all adults in the school.

Social development

44. The school makes very good provision for the pupils' social development. The school fosters a strong sense of community within its teaching day and this approach is firmly rooted in the school's position as an integral part of the local community. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to share and to co-operate and this is clearly evident throughout the school. Pupils understand that there are people less fortunate than themselves and enthusiastically raise money for charities. They have regular opportunities to meet with senior citizens and other adults to provide sensitive and much appreciated help for people in the community. This caring attitude supports their social development very well. In the playground, they share their games together in small groups, both boys and girls, and in mixed ages. Well-organised residential visits provide very good opportunities for pupils to develop independence and extend their social interaction, while at the same time extending their learning in a range of subjects.

Cultural development

45. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Examples include a range of music from different cultures, for instance African drumming and Indian dance music. Pupils also appreciate and learn about other faiths, such as Hinduism and their significant festivals. Pupils are provided with opportunities to learn about Aboriginal art and Indian art and fabric designs and they learn English and Indian dances. Pupils learn about their own culture through local visits, including theatre visits to Cheltenham and to the local church for special occasions. The good provision is effective in helping pupils develop an awareness of the multicultural society in which they live and good levels of citizenship.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Health, Safety and Care of all pupils

46. The procedures and practices to ensure the health, safety and care of all of the pupils are excellent. All of the children are known by every member of staff and there is a tangible family atmosphere within the school which enables them to feel secure. Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with any problems and are confident that these will be tackled quickly and successfully. Staff pick up problems early, including those related to personal development and lack of confidence and put considerable effort into building self-esteem and confidence. Children maintain confidential 'thinking' books in which they can write about any concerns and these are monitored discreetly by the staff.
47. The headteacher and the health and safety governors carry out complete inspections of the school each term. The findings and actions taken are reported regularly to governors. All equipment is checked regularly under service contracts. Additional

support is provided by the local authority property care support officer and a Diocesan specialist. The caretaker does regular checks on the water supply, fire alarm and fire sensors. Risk assessments are carried out on all school trips, including the residential trip for Year 6 pupils.

48. There are very good procedures at lunchtime. Through the staff information book the mid-day supervisors pick up on any significant issues when they arrive at the school. Any member of staff may write notes in the book if they know of a particular problem. All members of staff read the book regularly and sign it to show that they have received the information. This is a very positive feature of the care for pupils. For example, it can help to avoid a child having to repeat sad news and can alert staff to keep an eye on a child. The nursery nurse deals with any major accidents or illnesses. She is a fully trained first aider and the rest of the staff also hold current first aid certificates.
49. Child protection procedures are in place and these take full account of the local authority guidelines. The headteacher is the child protection officer and he keeps confidential notes on any concerns expressed by staff. All staff are aware of the procedures and these have been used properly in the past.

Measures to promote good behaviour and personal development

50. There are very good measures in place to promote good behaviour and personal development. The school monitors behaviour standards to ensure that these are high and that its policy on behaviour and discipline is put into practice consistently by all staff. Any reports of harassment, which are rare, are always followed up vigorously and full records kept of incidents and any actions taken. Time is allocated at the beginning of the day and at the ends of the sessions for the class teachers and the support staff to discuss the morning or afternoon events, including any pastoral issues.
51. There are many opportunities for the pupils to take responsibility and this starts with children in the reception class. The effective, progressive reward systems are much appreciated by the pupils. These are balanced by an appropriate range of sanctions. Personal, social and health education appears on every timetable in order to give pupils the opportunity to talk through any worries. External visitors, including the police, fire officers and road safety officers, talk about stranger danger and other aspects of personal safety. Leaflets are distributed on bullying issues and rail safety. The Year 6 pupils also have the opportunity to attend a citizenship day, which consists of practical tasks covering the areas of how to contact the emergency services, dealing with bullying, safety issues and caring for others.

Measures to promote good attendance

52. There are very good procedures in place to monitor and encourage good attendance. The support staff mark the registers and follow up any absences very promptly each day. The school maintains a book to record telephoned reasons for absences. The importance of good attendance is stressed to parents and they are discouraged from taking holidays in term-time. The very occasional late arrivals are monitored and recorded after 9.00 a.m. each morning.

Assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress

53. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic achievement are good, as was the case at the time of the previous inspection. The regular assessments made by teachers in English, mathematics and science help them to identify pupils who either need more challenge in their work, or have not yet reached the required standard. An effective aspect of the procedures is the way teachers encourage pupils of all ages to talk about what they are doing and why and how successfully they have completed tasks. Teachers make good use of this information to set targets with the pupils and plan their work. This is reflected in the good quality of teaching across the school. Assessment

procedures in other subjects involve staff meeting together to evaluate coverage and identify areas which need improvement.

54. Results of national and school tests are analysed by staff effectively to measure the school's performance. Care is taken to examine how all groups of pupils are getting on. For example, teachers evaluate the respective achievements of boys and girls and those with special educational needs. The information is used well to identify those areas of the curriculum where improvement is needed. Recent examples are standards in writing and opportunities for pupils' practical work in science, where planning and resources have been successfully focused on these areas, resulting in measurable improvements in pupils' achievements.
55. In English, mathematics and science targets are set for pupils to reach at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and are shared with them. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give praise and encouragement. Written comments inform pupils how well they are doing in achieving the targets they have been set, or how they could improve. The arrangements are successful in helping teachers and pupils to work together in raising standards. Annual written reports meet national requirements. They contain targets for each subject which are shared and discussed with pupils and parents.

Assessment and monitoring of pupils with special educational needs

56. Procedures for assessing pupils' SEN are very good and ensure that they receive correct levels of support. All teachers and support staff are alert to the needs of individuals and this helps them to identify difficulties at an early stage. Individual learning plans are reviewed and updated regularly and the SENCO keeps a close eye on the pupils' progress. As a result, she and the class teachers know these pupils very well and have a clear awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. The school provides very useful information for parents to enable them to contribute to their children's development. Regular meetings review progress and successes. The school actively seeks the involvement of outside agencies in assessing and supporting the needs of pupils with more significant difficulties.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57. The school's partnership with parents is a significant strength. The very good partnership identified at the time of the last inspection has been successfully maintained and improved.

Parents' views of the school

58. Almost three-quarters of the questionnaires were returned prior to the inspection and this is a good indication of the active support of parents for everything the school does. Parents are very positive about most areas of school life and this was confirmed during the parents' meeting. They feel that their children like school, behaviour is good, their children are making good progress, they are comfortable approaching the school, the school is helping their children to become mature, the school expects their children to work hard, the school is well led and managed, the teaching is good and the school works closely with parents.
59. There are some concerns on the questionnaires about the amount of work at home but from the meeting and during the inspection it was clear that homework is set regularly according to the schedule, explained to both parents and children and it is checked regularly. Most parents feel that there is an appropriate, steady increase in homework as the children get older and that the amount is about right. The role of parents in helping their children at home is encouraged and the school has recently introduced a list of hints and tips for them when they are hearing their children read.

The information provided by the school

60. Parents are pleased with the quantity and content of the very regular letters and newsletters which provide information on a wide variety of topics. The school is thinking of extending the use of its web-site for information for parents. The prospectus is of very good quality and covers all key aspects of school life. The annual governors' report to parents is informative and covers all key areas in good detail. These include test results, finance, actions taken by governors, staffing, community initiatives, visits, sports events and competitions. Class letters each term give details of the curriculum coverage. A few parents would like more information on how their children are getting on but the inspectors conclude that the staff provide every opportunity for parents to be able to get the information they want. There is an open invitation to pop into the school to look at the children's work and parents find the consultation evenings very productive.
61. The annual reports are of good quality. The school uses computerised forms but the text relates to individuals. All subjects, attendance and personal development are covered. Areas for improvement are indicated in the core subjects and when appropriate in other subjects. Foundation subjects are covered in good detail. There are useful comments on what children can do and how well, though not always in terms of national standards. Children write comments on their reports.

Parents' support

62. The vast majority of parents give very good support to their children at home and make very good use of the reading records for communication. The consultation evenings are attended by all parents and substantial time is set aside for special educational needs reviews with parents. The home-school agreement is a well produced document which was drawn up after consultation with parents. All parents sign and return the agreements to the school.
63. The Parents' Association is very active and raises a lot of money in close collaboration with the staff and governors. For example, it is currently raising substantial money towards the cost of a proposed extension of the building.
64. Parents, governors and other members of the community regularly come into school to help. This includes listening to pupils reading, accompanying pupils to swimming, helping to set up and run clubs, transporting pupils and helping at school events. Many attend worship on a Friday. There is good liaison with the local playgroup to ensure good continuity through the Foundation Stage. Induction arrangements and pre-school contacts include meetings for children entering school in the following September. An early involvement of parents with the school is facilitated by a play pack scheme where pre-school children and parents take the opportunity to borrow play packs and talk to the reception teacher. The headteacher is always very happy to meet parents and try to help them in many different ways. He also helps parents with personal issues such as how to claim money that they are entitled to. The school makes every effort to accommodate parents' suggestions and concerns such as the timing of assemblies. The headteacher is also pro-active in seeking parents' views such as the continuation of the annual theatre trip and the costs of swimming.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

65. A major part of the school's main aim, as quoted in its mission statement, is to '*develop the self-esteem, dignity and respect for all*'. There is a very positive ethos in the school that reflects this statement well. The shared commitment to learning is widespread and the calm, positive atmosphere percolates throughout. All adults and children seem to enjoy being there and are proud to be involved with the school. There is a very clear commitment to providing equality of opportunity.

Very good leadership of the headteacher

66. The very good leadership of the headteacher is the key to this success. He has a clear vision for the school and his pastoral care for children and staff is exemplary. The constructive climate for learning he has established ensures that the school is a very happy place in which the attitudes of the pupils are very good. Relationships are excellent and this is a major reason why most pupils are making good progress and achieving well. The staff team work particularly well together and they provide very good role models for the pupils. Recently, the headteacher has introduced systems that reduce some of the daily workload carried by teachers and these initiatives demonstrate the care he shows for everyone. He chooses to support the teaching and learning by taking all the Year 6 pupils for their mathematics lessons each day both to boost their learning whilst also reducing the size of group the class teacher has to teach. The headteacher has continued to work hard since the last inspection and all the issues noted at that time have been addressed.

Management structure

67. There is no deputy at the school, however, one teacher holds the post of senior teacher and has specific management responsibilities. She teaches full time and has responsibility for four subjects as well as early years. In the headteacher's absence, she takes responsibility for running the school and is effective in fulfilling this aspect of her management responsibilities. All staff have subject responsibilities, including the headteacher, and much work has been done to improve their management roles since the last inspection. However, the headteacher takes responsibility for the curriculum as a whole and, at present, is the only member of staff who monitors teaching and learning through classroom observations.

Role of subject co-ordinators

68. All subject co-ordinators are committed and hard working. They now have a clearer picture of planning within their subjects and they ensure, through regular staff meetings, that all aspects of their subjects are covered. They also use these meetings successfully to establish which areas of the subject need further attention and how these will be addressed. They keep portfolios of pupils' work to show progression and quality of learning and they regularly audit resources and ensure that quality and quantity are maintained. With the headteacher, staff analyse available data to assess strengths and weaknesses in particular subjects. However, the role of the majority of subject co-ordinators is not as effective as it could be. The headteacher has a structured programme for monitoring the teaching and learning and he observes each teacher at least once a year. He gives feedback to individuals, ensuring that strengths and areas for improvement are recognised. As a result, the overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. However, subject co-ordinators do not themselves undertake observations of teaching and play a limited role in identifying and sharing good practice. Most subject co-ordinators are insecure about the standards being achieved in their subjects and how teaching has an impact on this. Very little training in monitoring and evaluation has taken place and this is an area that would improve the effectiveness of subject co-ordinators.

Strategic planning

69. Weaknesses in the quality of the school improvement plan, identified at the last inspection, have been addressed fully. The school improvement plan is based upon analysis of strengths and weaknesses. There is a useful overview of developments in addition to more precise information in action plans. These indicate details of costings and clear success criteria. As a consequence, the school improvement plan is a useful tool for improvement and for evaluating the school's effectiveness.

Leadership and management of work in the area of special educational needs

70. The SENCO is well qualified and experienced in working with pupils with learning and emotional difficulties. She provides very good leadership. As a result, the positive picture outlined at the time of the previous inspection has been strengthened. She has a clear view of what needs to be done to improve further the very good provision. These include continuing to refine teachers' expertise, particularly in connection with the involvement of pupils in target setting and to respond to national initiatives concerned with disability. The school's provision is strongly supported and monitored closely by the designated governor who has a very clear view of the school's work in this area. All statutory requirements in relation to SEN are met.

Educational inclusion

71. The school is strongly committed to providing equality for its pupils and this is clear in the very positive learning environment that has been created. It is based on the caring and sensitive attitudes of all staff and is evident in the highly inclusive approach seen in all classrooms. It reflects the school's determination to ensure the all-round development of all its pupils. The headteacher through his visible presence around the school and his formal and informal involvement with pupils sets a very strong lead for his colleagues.

Very effective governing body

72. The governing body undertakes its work particularly well and this represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. They have a wide range of talents and expertise, which they use very well in the best interests of the school. All are frequent visitors to the school and some are also parents. Several of the governors have been involved with the school for many years and they update their skills regularly by attending training provided by the local education authority. The chair is particularly effective in her role. She has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is perceptive in evaluating the usefulness and cost-effectiveness of what is undertaken. A range of committees has been established and much of the work is undertaken in these and then reported to the full governing body. This excellent, and rigorous, system ensures that time is used effectively and that full meetings are particularly well used. All the necessary policies and procedures are in place and the governors account well to parents through their annual report. All statutory requirements related to the work of the governors are met.

Efficiency

73. There are very good procedures and practices in place to ensure effective financial management and control.

Financial planning

74. The school improvement plan is the result of wide consultation with staff and governors. It is comprehensive and includes clear resource implications, including detailed cost estimates. The plan provides a very good framework to ensure that the annual budgets reflect the school's priorities. The finance committee is active and considers in detail a number of different scenarios presented by the headteacher. Planning is informed by reviews by the co-ordinators of outcomes in their subjects during the previous year and the presentation of bids for resources for the next year. The school's own estimates of likely pupil numbers over the next few years are generally accurate. Based on these predictions it will be possible to maintain the current provision for the foreseeable future. The carry-forward at the end of the previous financial year was much higher than the recommended level of 5 per cent of income and it will increase further this year. However, this is clearly earmarked in the longer-term planning to contribute to the building expansion plans.

Principles of best value

75. The school applies the principles of best value very well in its financial management and decision-making. All contracts are reviewed regularly to ensure value for money. For example, the governors decided to maintain the payroll and financial service contracts but to cease the library contract. Good use is made of comparative data from the local education authority to help with decisions on expenditure. The headteacher reports to governing body meetings on the effectiveness of expenditure on the improvement plan priorities. The governing body includes a good variety of people with a wide range of interests and skills that they use for the benefit of the school. The headteacher monitors the deployment of staff and uses this assessment to inform future staff planning. Four teachers job share and manage most of the supply work. The impact in the classroom is that they already know the children and are much more informed of their needs than other supply teachers might be. It is also a very efficient way of cutting out the administrative time it takes to find a supply teacher. Developments in ICT and the Foundation Stage initiative are examples of the degree of consultation and the search for value for money.
76. After a relatively short period on the governing body, the chair of finance is making a very good contribution to school planning and financial management and is supported well by other governors. They have made a perceptive assessment of the desirability of releasing the headteacher from class duties and the subsequent change has enabled him to manage developments well, including the recent new building and the deployment of support staff. The headteacher is also able to provide support to the pupils' learning through booster groups which is having a positive effect on standards.
77. The school is setting up a working party of governors and parents, who would be able to research any proposed bids in order to put together more persuasive and coherent applications. The school actively seeks support from trusts and companies. For example, local companies donate card and paper, which would have otherwise been thrown away. The school participates in recycling schemes and has adopted a recycling site, which generates income, while teaching the children about its importance to the environment.

Financial control

78. The two part-time administrative staff give very good support, enabling the teachers and headteacher to concentrate on teaching and learning. The finance administrator joined the school in October 2002 but the financial systems were well established and she has received very good training and support from the local authority finance office. She works closely with the headteacher to manage the budgets and accounts effectively. The very recent auditor's report in January 2003 confirmed the good procedures and records. No significant issues were raised and the few minor changes suggested have already been addressed. Very good use is made of computing facilities. For example, the unofficial school fund accounts are managed on the computer. The records are in very good order and the account is audited properly each year. The general administration, including the production of letters and newsletters and maintenance of pupil and staff records provides very good support for the school. Staff and governors make sure that all specific grants are used fully for their intended purposes.

Value for money

79. The unit cost is above average for primary schools but given the quality of education provided and the standards achieved, the school provides good value for money.

Staffing

80. The school is well staffed with teachers suitably qualified for the age range of pupils. Two of the three classes are staffed by teachers operating job shares and this works particularly well and enables additional support for booster sessions to be provided.

There is a generous number of experienced learning support assistants to provide appropriate help for individuals and small groups in all classes. The provision is high compared to the national average but the staff provide very good support and contribute well to the effectiveness of the pupils' learning. The school participates in the training of teachers and regularly offers placements for students. At the time of the inspection, two returners to teaching were in school and they benefited from effective support and good role models. Several visiting teachers give instrumental lessons each week and their input is highly valued. There are good procedures for the induction of new staff, who feel welcomed and well supported. Performance management is in place for all staff and the governing body takes responsibility for the performance management of the headteacher. The caretaker takes a pride in his work and keeps the school extremely clean and well maintained. Midday supervisors are also valued members of the school community and, as such, contribute well to the smooth running of the school.

Accommodation

81. The school is attractively planned and designed with an octagonal hall that provides a very good environment for worship, lunch and lessons. There are three classrooms, a shared practical area, small library and staffroom. Staff work hard to make rooms as attractive as possible by displaying pupils' work well. Office accommodation is limited and the headteacher and two administrative staff all share the same room. The classroom occupied by reception children and Years 1 and 2 is too small to accommodate the additional resources needed to implement the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, the school uses its accommodation efficiently and has already recognised the need for additional space. Work is due to start very soon to provide a larger activity room for reception children, an office for the headteacher and a larger staffroom. This extension will address the limitations of the present building and enhance pupils' learning.
82. The grounds are spacious and offer good views over the surrounding countryside. There is a large playground, a good sized playing field and a circular raised decking area with seating for quieter play. Good use is made of the adventure playground provided by the parents. Reception children use this as climbing equipment and have sole access to the grounds during certain times of the day to enable outdoor play with large apparatus to take place.

Learning resources

83. Resources for the delivery of the curriculum are good in all subjects. The shortages and weaknesses noted in the last inspection report in art, history and the library have been rectified. Resources are well organised and stored.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

84. In order to build on the strengths of the school the headteacher, staff and governors need to:

Extend the role of subject co-ordinators to encompass the monitoring of teaching and learning across the school by:

- providing training in monitoring and evaluation;
- enabling all teachers to observe each other and share elements of effective teaching, and
- ensure that feedback to teachers clearly identifies strengths and areas for development (Paragraph references: 67, 68, 100, 124, 129, 134, 139, 150)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

22

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

27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	6	12	3	0	0	0
Percentage	5	27	54	14	0	0	0

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

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)	0	88
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR–Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	18

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	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	4.0
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	6	5	11

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	5	5	6
	Girls	5	5	5
	Total	10	10	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (100)	91 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	5	6	6
	Girls	5	5	5
	Total	10	11	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	11	4	15

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	9	10
	Girls	4	2	4
	Total	13	11	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	87 (85)	73 (85)	93 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	10	9
	Girls	3	2	3
	Total	12	12	12
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (69)	80 (85)	80 (77)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	87
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	29.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	76

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	235885
Total expenditure	223960
Expenditure per pupil	2545
Balance brought forward from previous year	32197
Balance carried forward to next year	44122

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	1.1
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Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.4
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

84

Number of questionnaires returned

61

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	34	2	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	61	33	7	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	49	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	39	16	3	0
The teaching is good.	61	38	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	48	13	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	33	0	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	36	3	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	41	52	3	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	66	31	2	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	46	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	43	8	0	7

Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number and may therefore not total exactly 100.

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

85. The previous inspection found that there were weaknesses in the provision for children under five. Learning intentions were not securely based on the desirable outcomes for under fives education at the time. There has been good improvement since then. The school has successfully developed an appropriate course for the Foundation Stage curriculum and provision in all areas of learning is now good.
86. When children begin school, their skills, knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning are wide ranging but overall below those expected for their age. The balance between those achieving average levels and those who are behind their peers varies from year to year. When children enter the reception class, assessments are undertaken and these confirm that current reception children were below average on entry. By the time they reach the end of their reception year, some children reach the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative and physical development. The majority of children make satisfactory progress and reach standards just below those expected at the end of their reception year. During the inspection the overall good quality of the teaching in all areas of learning helped children to move forward in their learning. The class teacher's own planning and the progress made by children so far this year indicates that quality of teaching and learning is good in all areas of learning.
87. Most children have experienced some form of pre-school provision. The local playgroup uses the school hall for several mornings each week and the majority of children attending the playgroup will attend Brimscombe on reaching school age. The teacher of the Foundation Stage works closely with the playgroup and she knows the children well before they start school.

Personal, social and emotional development

88. Children make good progress in this area. Children have settled well into school and are confident and happy in their surroundings. Staff have formed very good relationships with children and this has helped them to feel secure. The very good relationships that exist amongst staff have laid a secure foundation for learning. A measure of the good work in this area is the ease with which children adapted to new adults this term. Children respond well to the staff's requests and instructions and are well behaved in the classroom and playground. They know the difference between right and wrong. They work well together, when asked to do so. They take turns on the computer, for example, and play sensibly together in 'Percy's Hut'. Children are taught to be independent. At lunchtimes, for example, they select books from the library and take them back to their classroom. In the classroom, they are given opportunities to work independently and 'plan' their work by selecting tasks available. Staff encourage them to tidy up at the end of sessions and most manage this well.

Communication, language and literacy

89. Children are prepared well for the early stages of reading and writing when stories are read to them. They enjoy stories and concentrate well at such times. Several children have shown an interest in reading and a high priority is given to teaching the sounds of alphabet letters and how this knowledge can be used to read unfamiliar words. Good attention is paid to the introduction of phonic skills and this is made enjoyable for the

children by the use of games. Children are also learning the critical features of words such as shape and length. All children understand that written words have meaning and many recognise some familiar words. Children have good opportunities to communicate with each other and their teacher in class discussions. Most children are very confident and enjoy negotiating with their friends. In one session in 'Percy's Hut', for example, the children warmly welcomed the 'squirrel' into their play and made him part of their story. In addition to this imaginative play area, there are other well-planned areas to promote speaking and listening skills. Support staff make good contributions to children's progress by listening carefully, encouraging the use of interesting words and showing that they value the efforts that children make, which raises their self-esteem and encourages better efforts.

Mathematical development

90. In the session seen, children made good progress in developing their understanding of number. The teacher led a session on sorting and matching objects, showing children how to find the total number of bears and write the numbers. The children undertook a range of practical activities and were able to combine objects together as they explored the early stages of addition. As well as these formal and group activities, children are involved in effective mathematical learning through independent play. For example, one child had produced a birthday cake for his teacher from play dough. He began to count the candles he had placed on the cake thus extending his mathematical development in number. Counting rhymes are a regular feature of whole class activities. The reception children participate actively with the Year 1 and 2 pupils in their class as they practise counting to 20, forwards and backwards, and in two's. Children are encouraged to talk about their work, using appropriate mathematical terms. The teacher also uses a variety of methods such as finger games, registration activities, pictures and attractive equipment to reinforce understanding.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

91. Children are developing an understanding of the world about them. They have looked at sources of light and examined objects to find out more about them. Their understanding of chronology is established as they talk about the 'Great Fire of London' and look at paintings of that time. Effective use has been made of the imaginative role play area to extend their understanding of the work of a park keeper. Children are familiar with computers and are learning the correct terms such as *monitor* and *printer*. They understand why a mouse is used and are acquiring increasing dexterity in its use. They have many opportunities for exploring and investigating as they take part in scientific activities. For example, they look at objects that glow in the dark and a variety of torches to extend their knowledge and understanding of light. Children work well together on these tasks and persevere for extended periods. The teacher makes effective use of her good knowledge in the way she presents activities, explains tasks and comments to enable children to make gains in learning.

Physical development

92. There are many opportunities for children to develop their finer physical skills as they use a range of small and large equipment both inside and outside the classroom. They are aware of the constraints on their movement within the building and save their running and jumping for the outside area. Children have sessions in the school hall to develop their movement skills, but none were seen during the inspection. One outside play session was seen in which children used a variety of equipment confidently and safely. The outdoor area for physical development can only be used at set times. It is not a separate, fenced area as it is in many schools. However, the new extension planned to extend space for reception children includes a separate area and this will

improve the use of outdoor space. Staff provide children with a range of opportunities to develop their fine motor control, such as play using construction toys, drawing and writing activities and work involving the use of scissors. These are available most days when children select activities independently.

Creative development

93. Children are provided with good and regular opportunities to engage in imaginative play in the role play area, which is currently 'Percy's Hut'. They sustain good levels of co-operative, creative play on this theme over long periods with a minimum of props. During the inspection there was great excitement as the teacher revealed an addition to Percy's Hut in the form of a wheelbarrow! The children immediately created a scenario of collecting wood and moving it from one place to another. Drawing, painting and making things are regular experiences for the children. They enjoy developing their ideas and their work is valued through good displays. In one session, for example, children used colour and texture to create a fiery scene following the story of the Great Fire of London. Their teacher praised their efforts and immediately made plans to display their pictures on the classroom wall. In music sessions, children listen well, know the names of some instruments and can discriminate and compare sounds which are high or low, and short or long.

Strengths in the Foundation Stage:

- *effective planning;*
- *very good support staff;*
- *relationships are very good and children settle very quickly;*
- *social and emotional development.*

Areas for development:

- *provision for a secure outdoor space.*

ENGLISH

94. By Year 2 and Year 6, standards in English are average. Standards in speaking, listening and reading having been maintained successfully since the previous inspection and levels in writing having been improved from below average. Improvement is largely due to the effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and the focus on providing pupils with more opportunities to develop their skills in a wider range of contexts. Only small numbers of pupils take the end of key stage national tests each year and so caution should be used when comparing results with those of other schools from year-to-year. Although the national test results indicate that standards have fluctuated significantly since the previous inspection, variations reflect the below average levels of attainment on entry to the school of various year group of pupils. School data indicate that pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make very good progress during their time at the school.

Speaking and listening

95. Most pupils enter the school with speaking and listening skills that are below expected levels. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to develop these skills and good progress is maintained throughout the school. A significant strength in teaching and learning is the quality of discussions in class lessons and assemblies and the confident way pupils express their views and opinions and listen considerately to others. These good achievements are the result of well-planned activities that promote speaking and listening in most areas of the curriculum, such as the enthusiastic discussions in Years 2, 3 and 4 about Indian fabrics designs. Whole class sessions at the beginning of literacy lessons are an important contribution

to the development of speaking and listening skills. Teachers use questions and prompts well to involve pupils of all capabilities at these times. For example, Year 6 pupils were observed starting work on a series of lessons about writing a suspense story. The teacher asked pupils to prepare an opening paragraph. The ensuing discussion was of a good standard as pupils of all capabilities responded well to the teacher's questions about important and unusual vocabulary, the characters and the setting of the scene.

96. Teachers invariably plan discussion time effectively into other lessons, where pupils are encouraged to express their views, evaluate their own achievements and those of others or present their work to the class. As a result, by Year 6, pupils are confident speakers and enthusiastically respond to questions. They debate and enjoy discussions on local and current issues, such as conservation. They share ideas and present their work to the class and participate in poetry, role-play and drama activities.

Reading

97. Reading is taught effectively throughout the school and, as a result, pupils make good progress from Years 1 to 6 to improve their standards from below average to above average. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 respond well to the teacher who successfully engenders an interest in books and reading by sharing stories with them on a regular basis. Pupils gain in confidence to recognise familiar words and build up sounds associated with the letters. This helps them develop strategies for working out unfamiliar or difficult words. They are keen to express opinions about the stories. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 read a wider variety of texts and develop an interest in reference books, related to such topics as their favourite animals. Links such as this maintain pupils' interest and enjoyment of books and reading and help them gather information to make their own books. Group reading sessions in literacy lessons are eagerly anticipated by pupils and the teacher and teaching assistants take full advantage of their enthusiasm to develop key reading skills.
98. In the top class of Years 4, 5 and 6, pupils' good progress is successfully maintained. Pupils read a wide range of challenging fiction and non-fiction books from the school library and stocks in classrooms. Teachers make effective use of pupils' reading record books. These contain guidance for parents in how they can help their children and this positive involvement of parents in their children's learning, begun in the youngest class, makes a significant contribution to the good progress made by Year 6. Higher attaining pupils use inference and deduction well to justify their own opinions when discussing their reading experiences. Teachers plan adequate links with ICT using literacy programmes for guided reading. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the enjoyment of books that permeates lessons and are keen to improve their reading skills. As a result, they make good progress and very few pupils move on to secondary education with significant weaknesses in their reading.

Writing

99. Pupils make good progress in writing throughout the school. Work is characterised by neat, legible handwriting, satisfactory spelling and an interesting use of words and phrases. Improvements are due to the good range of contexts planned by teachers to initiate interest. Teachers have clear expectations of what pupils should achieve in their knowledge and understanding of grammar, punctuation and the way written work is structured. This is demonstrated well with younger pupils when they use alliteration. One Year 2 pupil wrote, '*One old orange octopus offering onions in October*'. Older pupils in Years 3 and 4 present their written work carefully using a well-formed legible script. When learning about the main features of instructional writing, they build up a series of instructions, for example, about how to make 'Scrummy Super Sandwiches'. Pupils' spelling is mostly accurate and emphasis is placed on the use of verbs to make the instructions clear. In Years 5 and 6 pupils have more opportunities to write in

different styles and for different purposes, which are helpful in extending their skills. Year 6 pupils achieved particularly interesting results when writing opening paragraphs to a suspense story. One example began, *'The tavern door slammed shut. Victoria jumped. What was that?'* This and other examples, show lively and thoughtful writing, good use of adventurous words and a mixture of long and short sentences to increase suspense. Pupils with special educational needs worked together well and were supported by a teaching assistant who helped them present their ideas to the rest of the group, who appreciated their efforts.

100. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. Despite the improvements in standards of writing, teachers have identified it as an area for further improvement in the school improvement plan. The subject co-ordinators have led staff very effectively in a close analysis of national test results and assessments of samples of pupils' work from all year groups. Co-ordinators have not, as yet, had time to observe teaching in classes to identify strengths and areas for development. Teachers have implemented and reviewed the National Literacy Strategy guidelines well, making adaptations to suit the needs of their pupils. Strengths in teaching include very detailed, shared planning and regular discussions amongst staff, both formally and informally, to evaluate the success of lessons. The relationships that exist amongst teachers, teaching assistants and pupils in all classrooms are excellent and these lead to a relaxed working atmosphere which pervades all lessons. This is conducive to a good quality of learning as pupils work hard to achieve the standards set by their teachers. The management of pupils is very good and pupils move from one activity to the next smoothly and without fuss, which maintains the momentum to learning. Extra support is planned for small groups of pupils in literacy lessons and booster groups.
101. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the work of teaching assistants. In conjunction with the special needs co-ordinator and class teachers, teaching assistants regularly work with pupils on identified weaknesses in reading and writing. Although the school has not formally identified gifted and talented pupils, its targeting procedures make sure that every pupil's capabilities are recognised and developed. Assessment procedures are good and the information is used well by class teachers to match work closely to pupils' needs. Resources are of good quality and quantity. National funding and school finances have been spent efficiently and effectively in making sure that pupils have access to quality reading materials. As a result, the library is well stocked and used regularly and contributes significantly to pupils' achievements.

Strengths in English:

- *improvements in writing;*
- *literacy links with other subjects;*
- *support for SEN pupils;*
- *planning and teaching;*
- *relationships between teachers, assistants and pupils.*

Areas for development:

- *opportunities to extend the monitoring role of co-ordinators.*

MATHEMATICS

102. Evidence from lessons and the scrutiny of written work shows that the attainment at Year 2 is broadly average, which is similar to the standards reported at the last inspection. The attainment of Year 6 pupils has improved considerably and is now above average, and for a number of children, well above average. This compares favourably with National Curriculum test results in 2002. When compared to similar

schools in 2002, Year 6 pupils at Brimscombe achieved above their peers. Year 2 pupils were below the achievement of their peers in similar schools, however, the cohort in Year 2 in 2002 had a very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and this distorted the figure. Inspection findings confirm improving standards although pupils' skills in using and applying their mathematical knowledge in solving problems are not as good as in other aspects of the subject.

103. The numeracy hour has had a distinct impact on raising standards and the school identifies the improvement in oral and mental mathematics as its greatest success of recent times. It has also awakened the pupils' interest and enthusiasm for number work, especially when they are challenged to find alternative ways of finding answers and are given the opportunity to share them with others.
104. In Years 1 and 2 the pupils' knowledge and understanding are wide-ranging and the quality of their learning is at least satisfactory overall. Most achieve well but higher attainers could do better. Pupils with special educational needs, low attainers and those of average ability make good progress. There is still room for higher attainers to be challenged further in Years 1 and 2. Teaching correctly ensures good coverage of the numeracy strategy for Key Stage 1 and planning includes differentiated activities.
105. By Year 2, pupils know by heart all addition and subtraction facts to 20; many go beyond this. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher used a large abacus to demonstrate multiples of 10 to 100. She moved 20 beads across and then asked the pupils to work out how many more would be needed to make 100. Back came the answer 80, much to the delight of the teacher and everyone in the room! This demonstrated the progress made in acquiring mental strategies to find the difference between two numbers. Pupils' books show that they have sound understanding of the concepts of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Pupils order numbers to one hundred, counting in twos, threes and fives and spotting patterns beginning at a given number. These examples reflect pupils' thorough understanding of number as well as a growing confidence in telling the time, tallying information and drawing simple graphs. They measure and compare lengths using centimetres, have a sound knowledge of halves and quarters and show an early understanding of symmetry. Individual targets are set appropriately for the ability range although higher attainers could be challenged further.
106. By Year 6, many pupils are competent mathematicians. They are confident in working out areas, plotting co-ordinates in four quadrants, drawing pie charts and interpreting timetables. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils consolidate their ability to draw pie charts confidently, using protractors to plot angles and using real data collected as a homework task. Often, pupils use their mathematical skills in other subjects such as ICT, science and geography. In a geography lesson on India, the pupils effectively used co-ordinates to describe the position of towns and other landmarks on a large map of the country. Year 6 pupils are challenged well and higher attaining pupils are well catered for through the booster sessions taken by the headteacher. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well and make good progress. Teachers ensure their planning is matched to these pupils' different needs. When learning support assistants support them, pupils make even greater progress.
107. Teaching and learning are good for infants overall, including one lesson that was very good. Teaching and learning are consistently very good for junior pupils. Teachers have made mathematics interesting and practical for pupils. Teachers' lesson planning is a strength. Lessons are well structured and teachers generally set a brisk pace during the introductory mental session. They identify learning goals for each lesson in their planning and at the outset clarify the main learning points with pupils and also refer to them at the end. As a result, pupils appreciate the concept or skill they have consolidated or acquired. Teachers in all classes make good use of resources

including individual white boards for the pupils and number cards. Support assistants are deployed well to support groups and often have a clearly targeted assessment role. Teachers use time at the end of lessons well to consolidate and reinforce pupils' learning. Lessons are taught in an enthusiastic manner and, as a result, pupils' are very enthusiastic and have positive attitudes to the subject.

108. Teachers use marking and assessment effectively to support pupils' learning. Constructive comments, which are helpful and encouraging, are appended to almost all the work done in books. Homework is set every week to consolidate class work or to collect data for future work. Not all pupils make the progress they should in using and applying their mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding in different situations through problem solving and investigations. The school has already recognised this weakness and has plans to improve it.
109. The co-ordinator for the subject is the headteacher. The subject has been given a high priority over the last few years and there has been considerable success with initiatives. The co-ordinator has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses and can monitor the teaching and learning through his overall work as the headteacher. There are good systems in place to analyse test results and use them to track and support progress and set children individual targets for improvement. The use of funding to provide booster lessons for the Year 6 pupils prior to the National Curriculum tests has also been successful in helping to improve the test results. This strong leadership puts the school in a good position to improve attainment even further.

Strengths in mathematics:

- *strong leadership and subject expertise;*
- *teachers' careful planning;*
- *pupils' enthusiasm and very positive attitudes to mathematics learning;*
- *the good progress made by lower attaining pupils, those with special educational needs and those of average ability;*
- *the effective use of mental and oral sessions at the start of each lesson;*
- *the use of ICT to enhance learning.*

Areas for development:

- *providing appropriate challenge for the higher attaining pupils in key stage one;*
- *opportunities for investigative work to enable pupils to improve their ability to use and apply their number skills.*

SCIENCE

110. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils attain average standards and maintain the satisfactory levels of attainment recorded in the previous report. The main strengths in provision are the practical activities that develop pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding and the strong focus on investigative work. These are planned in a two-year rolling programme to provide sufficient time to study different elements of scientific knowledge and understanding. These are improvements since the previous inspection when these elements were judged to be unsatisfactory.
111. Year 1 pupils are given suitable opportunities to use the school grounds to identify various plants and creatures and do so with good levels of interest. In links with music, they experiment with different musical instruments to discover ways in which sound can be made, for example, by blowing, shaking and hitting. Year 2 pupils extend their enquiry skills by testing a range of common objects found in the classroom made from wood, plastic, metal and glass. They investigate a range of properties, including being smooth, rough, shiny or dull and for their magnetic qualities. Teachers provide

adequate support to enable them to carry out fair tests and make correct judgments. Planning has improved to ensure effective progression through interesting challenges.

112. Year 3 and Year 4 pupils make expected gains in their knowledge and understanding as they investigate simple electrical circuits and solve particular problems caused by a break in the circuit. They also carry out tests to measure the rate of evaporation of a range of liquids. They extend their understanding by carrying out investigations at home with the help of parents to support work in the classroom by the use of homework. They make sure that the tests are fair by using the same amounts of liquid before starting the tests. By Years 5 and 6, pupils learn about liquids, solids and gases and how they change according to being heated or cooled. They understand that some changes are reversible, such as ice to water and others not, such as toasting bread. Good links are made with mathematics and ICT when presenting information in line graphs to show how sunrise and sunset times vary throughout the year according to the motion and positions of the Sun, the Earth and the Moon. Pupils access their own files on the hard drives of the computers and save their information about the planets.
113. The quality of teaching and learning is good and results in pupils' standards improving from below average to average during their time in the school. A significant characteristic is the way teachers motivate pupils through their own evident enjoyment of the activities. As a result, boys and girls of all ages and capabilities show a high level of interest in science activities and make good progress in their investigative and experimental work. Teachers have good knowledge of the two-year programme and ensure the provision of challenging investigations. As a result, pupils show good levels of concentration during activities and carry out their investigations carefully and accurately. However, sometimes opportunities are missed to provide the occasional special challenge for higher attaining pupils. Teachers manage and organise pupils very well and this ensures that a very good working environment is maintained. They make very effective use of questioning and prompts to encourage pupils to describe and explain what they observe, using correct vocabulary and terminology. Resources are good and are used imaginatively to stimulate and support pupils' learning experiences. Great care is taken in all classes to ensure that boys and girls and pupils with special educational needs are totally involved in all aspects of science lessons. Very effective use is made of teaching assistants to help special needs pupils in particular to achieve well in relation to their set targets.
114. The subject is effectively led and managed by the co-ordinator. She works closely with colleagues to improve pupils' scientific skills and monitors the quality of planning and standards effectively. Results of national tests are evaluated and the analysis and the assessment information from informal observations are used well to measure pupils' progress and set new and relevant targets.

Strengths in science:

- *improvements in practical work and investigations;*
- *achievement by pupils over time;*
- *links with mathematics and ICT;*
- *planning and teaching;*
- *pupils' high levels of interest.*

Areas for development:

- *extension opportunities for higher attainers.*

ART AND DESIGN

115. The provision in this area of the curriculum is now a strength of the school. There are several examples of good quality art work produced by pupils and much value is placed upon this aspect of pupils' education. The school has improved the provision significantly since the last inspection when standards throughout the school were below average, the progress pupils made was unsatisfactory and requirements of the National Curriculum were not being met.
116. Only two lessons were observed during the inspection and judgements are therefore mainly based on pupils' work and teachers' planning. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 undertake a range of work with different media, achieve well and reach above average standards by the end of Year 2. Standards in Years 3 to 6 are also above average. Planning shows a wide breadth of study and the work samples seen reflect this breadth. Pupils of all abilities achieve well and are enthusiastic about their work.
117. In the Year 2 lesson observed, pupils successfully explored paintings through viewfinders. They effectively used the part of the picture they could see to create their own interpretation. Different techniques and media, chosen by the pupils, were used to extend the picture. Accurate observational skills were demonstrated using the original starting point, followed by imaginative ways of completing the picture. Pupils in this lesson produced work of a high standard and asked thoughtful questions about the image seen in the viewfinder.
118. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 explore art from other cultures. Having previously studied Aboriginal art, pupils extend their knowledge and understanding by looking carefully at examples of Indian Torans. Very good links with work in geography, on India, and in maths, involving horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines, were developed in the lesson seen. Some of the pupils developed their ideas using sketch books to design Indian style motifs of elephants and trees. Other pupils used more advanced techniques involving pastels and fabrics. In one lesson seen pupils chose a variety of resources including one pupil who placed corrugated card underneath an area to be coloured with pastels in order to produce a textured effect. Again, standards were high and the pupils made good progress in their design skills.
119. Teaching and learning are good overall and the school makes good use of quality resources including clay, paint and a wide range of media. Sketchbooks that provide an opportunity for pupils to develop and explore ideas are used well in junior classes although underused with younger pupils currently. There was little evidence to indicate the use of ICT in art although this is an area the school is hoping to develop. Nevertheless, the range and richness of the learning opportunities mean the curriculum provision is good. The subject also gives good support to pupils' cultural development, by providing many opportunities to investigate the work of famous artists and the traditions from different cultures. Good use is made of visits and visitors to the school including a local potter who worked with the pupils designing sculptures and making pottery.
120. Leadership of the subject changed hands at the beginning of the year. The new co-ordinator is enthusiastic about her role and has recently introduced assessment procedures in order to track progression within the subject. She has had the opportunity to attend training on the role of co-ordinating art although has not had the opportunity to monitor teaching within the subject so that the good practice that occurs can be effectively disseminated.

Strengths in art and design:

- *the introduction and carefully planned use of sketchbooks for junior pupils;*
- *the use of displays to celebrate pupils' work and raise the profile of the subject;*
- *links with other areas of the curriculum;*
- *the support given to pupils' cultural development.*

Areas for development:

- *monitoring of teaching to establish and share good practice;*
- *extend the use of ICT in art by developing suitable software and enabling pupils to research artists' work on the Internet.*

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

121. By Year 2 pupils achieve satisfactorily and attain average standards for their age. Standards are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. By Year 6, pupils achieve well, make good progress and attain levels which are above average. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Recent national guidance has been adopted successfully by the new co-ordinator and better planning and new resources to support the teaching programme provide pupils with a broader range of opportunities than was previously the case. Pupils of all abilities talk eagerly about what they want to make and why, solve problems, record their designs and evaluate finished products.
122. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop their work involving the use of textiles and explain confidently how they have designed a hand puppet of their own choice. They carefully cut out matching halves for the front and back and select contrasting coloured material for features such as the eyes, nose and mouth. Although the stitching skills of pupils are limited, all pupils work carefully and safely and with great concentration. They occasionally check their progress against their original designs. Pupils receive some help with measuring, cutting and stitching techniques, but overall achievement is good. One lesson was well managed and organised by the teacher and good support was provided by an adult helper.
123. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 develop their skills further when making a bag which was completed over several lessons. Planning had involved the drawing of a diagram, with labels and measurements and where folds should be. The finished products had been evaluated carefully and written comments included ways to improve, such as, '*I won't put printing too near the edge next time*', and particular successes included, '*I learnt to measure accurately*'. In discussions it was clear that pupils had enjoyed the work. In the lesson observed involving pupils in Years 5 and 6, very good planning by the teacher provided new challenges to extend their problem solving skills. The teacher, who is the co-ordinator, had in previous lessons, organised the disassembly of powered model cars and pupils had identified key elements in design, such as the chassis, axles, motor and gears. The pupils generated good ideas to plan structures and use a range of materials and components. They faced a range of different problems, such as deciding the best size for a chassis, how to assemble axles and gears and how to fix a motor so that it drove the wheels in the correct direction. They considered their designs and identified what worked well and what needed improving. They checked various stages of the making process and improved their plans as required. By the end of the lesson they had very clear ideas for tackling the main task to come in future lessons, which was to design and assemble a working model, including an electrical circuit with a switch. Pupils with special educational needs were given good support, without over-direction and built progressively and successfully on previous knowledge. Standards of work are above expected levels for this age.

124. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. The new co-ordinator leads the subject very well. In just over one term, he has upgraded all the resources and matched them to the newly planned provision. He has concentrated on the different aspects of design and technology and focused pupils' learning on problem solving before the designing and making processes. This motivates pupils' learning and sustains interest. As a result, pupils enjoy their work and are very keen to get on with tasks. They work very thoughtfully when designing and making, and suitable opportunities are given for pupils to evaluate their own and each other's work and to consider how their objects could be improved. Assessment procedures are largely informal but the co-ordinator collects samples of work from all pupils and evaluates their individual strengths and areas of need to enable them to reach their full potential. The co-ordinator has identified the need to observe and work alongside colleagues as the next stage of his management of the subject, in order to raise standards and quality. further

Strengths in design and technology:

- *standards in Year 6;*
- *new planning and resources;*
- *teaching and challenge for all pupils;*
- *pupils' high levels of interest;*
- *very good start made by the new co-ordinator.*

Areas for development:

- *extend the monitoring role of the co-ordinator.*

GEOGRAPHY

125. Pupils make sound progress and standards are at the expected levels by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, as they were at the time of the last inspection. However, the school has maintained a good profile for the subject despite the national focus on others. This is partly because work is linked well to other subjects and literacy and numeracy are included within the topics that are studied. In addition, computers are used well to enhance learning. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make equal progress with other pupils. Work is blocked into various sessions throughout the year. During the inspection, only one lesson was seen and evidence was also gained through scrutiny of work and discussions with teachers and pupils.
126. In Years 1 and 2, pupils gain good knowledge of the local area and develop simple mapping skills. They show sound understanding of geographical vocabulary from their comments about seasons and how these affect things that grow. Younger pupils understand how different types of weather influence the clothes people wear and the activities they pursue. Pupils in Year 2 understand what a map is and can use a simple atlas to locate the British Isles and other well known places in the world. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their work in geography and this results in very good attitudes to learning. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and often record their ideas and findings in diagrammatic form or on the computer to reduce the application of literacy skills.
127. In the Year 3 and 4 lesson seen, pupils showed similarly high levels of enthusiasm and concentration, as they compared Brimscombe with Chembakoli. The teacher's very good subject knowledge and provision of artefacts such as spices, Torans and photographs, led to a lively session about life in the Indian village. Pupils prepared and cooked Indian food and this was sampled by the whole class at the end of the lesson. Other groups researched the spices used in cooking whilst one group investigated the

use of elephants for various tasks. Some pupils used a CD Rom to further their knowledge of the country and others linked their work in mathematics by finding places on the map of India and describing the position using co-ordinates. All these activities were exciting and demanding and the pupils worked extremely well together in groups.

128. Overall the quality of teaching and learning are good. They were very good in the lesson observed. The main strengths in teaching are teachers' planning, preparation and subject knowledge. This leads to confident explanation and instruction as observed during the inspection. Work samples show an emphasis on learning factual information through a variety of methods and teachers make good links with other subjects.
129. The subject co-ordinator has a sound grasp of the curriculum planning throughout the school, which is very clear. The school appropriately blocks geography lessons into three half terms each year, with a history focus allocated in the remainder. No time is allocated to monitor the teaching and learning classes although the co-ordinator uses staff meetings to check coverage and assess weaknesses. Resources are good although a more up-to-date globe and atlases would improve the study of other countries. A new assessment system was introduced this year and this is helping the co-ordinator to track progress. Good use is made of the local environment with environmental studies being the strongest aspect of the subject. The current priority for further development is to improve knowledge and understanding of patterns and processes.

Strengths in geography:

- *the use of imaginative approaches and helpful artefacts;*
- *links with other areas of the curriculum;*
- *effective use of ICT to enhance learning;*
- *pupils' positive attitudes and enthusiasm for the subject.*

Areas for development:

- *opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching and learning in classes.*

HISTORY

130. The rich and stimulating curriculum, which interests and motivates pupils to work hard, has helped to improve the standards seen at the last inspection. Pupils achieve the expected levels for their age, with older pupils developing their research skills particularly well. All aspects of the National Curriculum are covered, a significant improvement since the last inspection, and pupils now make good progress in their learning.
131. In both the lessons seen during the inspection, pupils were finding out about historical events and the lives of different people in the past. In Years 1 and 2, pupils were studying the Great Fire of London. They listened intently to a story about the event and then looked for clues in a vivid painting of the fire. Pupils demonstrated their good skills of historical investigation as they discovered many features from the painting. They were able to recall previous learning about Samuel Pepys and use extracts from his diary to further improve their study. Previous work includes a detailed study of Invaders and Settlers including the people, journeys, artefacts and buildings. A good use of artefacts was shown through the study of Anglo Saxon treasures found at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk. Pupils enjoy their work and are enthusiastic about continuing their research at home. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and regularly record their work in the form of pictures and diagrams.

132. In one lesson in Year 5 and 6, the teacher's very good questioning techniques and his clear explanation of how historians uses sources to discover the past helped the pupils to work as young historians. They considered a number of questions, for example, and discussed which sources would be useful to their enquiry. They split into groups to worked independently on the task of discovering whether Athens or Sparta was the most important state in Ancient Greece. This involved them in effectively weighing up different types of historical evidence such as books, pictures, CD Roms, the Internet and their previous knowledge to support their arguments. They were given the task of preparing for a debate on the subject when they would need to try and convince others of their findings. All worked well on this task and pupils with special educational needs were supported well by adults and by their peers. Good progress was made in this lesson and pupils improved their historical knowledge, understanding and skills.
133. The subject is taught well and consequently the pupils learn well. Teachers are enthusiastic, and this helps gain pupils' interest. Careful thought is given to ensuring that pupils use historical research skills to gain their knowledge and understanding of the past. Activities are planned well and good resources such as artefacts, pictures and computer programs are used to motivate pupils to work well. Homework, especially in continuing research at home, makes a positive contribution to learning. Although good feedback is given during lessons, marking is inconsistent and, in some classes, does not give pupils guidance on how to improve. Planning for the subject is good. There is a clear policy and the school follows topics identified in the national scheme of work. Learning resources have improved since the time of the last inspection when they were judged to be inadequate.
134. The co-ordinator is full of enthusiasm and has introduced an assessment system although this is still in its early stages. She keeps a record of progress through photographic evidence and samples of pupils' work. Her monitoring of the subject is limited to looking at teachers' planning and ensuring coverage of topics. No time has been allocated to observe teaching although this is an area the co-ordinator recognises would extend her management of the subject.

Strengths in history:

- *clear policy and planning;*
- *improved resources;*
- *teachers' awareness of the enquiry approach in history;*
- *pupils' enthusiasm and positive attitudes.*

Areas for development:

- *need for regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.*

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

135. Pupils achieve well and standards at the end of Year 2 are average. At the end of Year 6, standards are above those expected nationally. This shows good improvement since the last inspection. The progress pupils make is better now because there are now more planned opportunities to use computers and resources have improved significantly. The provision of hardware and software has been updated and incorporates all the necessary programs that will enable the school to cover each strand effectively within the Programmes of Study. The main area of weakness is the use of control technology, particularly with younger pupils. The school is aware of this and plans to improve.
136. From the end of the reception year, pupils make good progress and, by the end of Year 2, they achieve levels expected for their age. The majority of pupils are confident in

opening, loading and working with a number of programs. Most are competent in using a keyboard, although their typing skills are less well developed. Pupils gain an understanding of how different programs can help improve their work. Pupils in Year 1 are beginning to develop word-processing skills, writing words and sentences in their literacy lessons. In Year 2, pupils send and retrieve e-mails from a school in the Forest of Dean. In one lesson, they extended their skills by discovering how to attach photographs of the school, taken with the digital camera, to their e-mails. Learning in this lesson was particularly good and pupils showed very positive attitudes and enthusiasm for their work.

137. Junior pupils, especially from Years 4 to 6, learn and consolidate new skills rapidly because of regular access to computers. Examples of the high standards include pupils accessing the Internet through safe systems and using search engines to locate web sites that answer their queries about Ancient Greece. The same pupils use 'Power Point' to present animated presentations with sound effects, dropping text and graphics onto the screen and moving smoothly from frame to frame. Pupils are highly enthusiastic and fully focused when working on the computers. They make good use of other resources including the school's digital cameras to enhance their work.
138. The teaching and learning observed both in designated ICT lessons and in other subjects are good overall. Teachers have improved their subject knowledge and confidence through training under the New Opportunities Fund. They make very good use of the support offered by a visiting teacher who is employed by a cluster of schools and visits Brimscombe every eight days. Planning is detailed and tasks differentiated to ensure all abilities are catered for. Pupils with special educational needs are supported especially well.
139. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic about her role and she has been instrumental in improving resources recently. She has a clear agenda for further improvements and recognises that the lack of resources to support control technology needs attention in order to improve provision further. A new assessment system has been introduced and the co-ordinator uses staff meetings to ensure coverage and to identify gaps in learning. She has not had the opportunity to monitor teaching and learning in classes to identify and disseminate good practice.

Strengths in ICT :

- *standards achieved in Year 6;*
- *use of ICT across the curriculum;*
- *improved resources;*
- *enthusiasm and very good attitudes of the pupils.*

Areas for development:

- *use of control technology;*
- *monitoring of teaching and learning in classes.*

MUSIC

140. By Year 2 and Year 6, pupils achieve well and attain standards which are above average. This maintains the good standards observed in the previous inspection. Standards of performance are high and pupils of all ages show confidence and enjoyment as they sing and play together in lessons, assemblies and concerts. The expertise and experience of the music co-ordinator, who is the headteacher, have a significant impact on standards. He has established a wide range of individual tuition, school clubs and outside activities which successfully extend pupils' skills. Pupils with

special educational needs benefit from involvement with their peers in group activities and make good progress.

141. No lessons for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils took place during the inspection. In assemblies, these pupils sing well, showing a good awareness of diction, pitch and rhythm. Teachers' planning shows that pupils receive a wide range of opportunities to compose and perform. In links with science the pupils explore the ways that sounds can be made with a range of musical instruments. Evidence from recorded tapes demonstrates pupils play instruments and sing with considerable confidence and evident enjoyment. In assembly, pupils sang a two-part song successfully and tunefully. As a result of the school's commitment to music, relationships are excellent and pupils respond positively to the high expectations of what they should achieve.
142. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 continue to achieve well. They make very good progress in all aspects of the planned programme of learning as a result of very good teaching and the good quantity and quality of resources. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of music from other countries, such as India and Africa. They learn to create percussion parts to songs and compose rhythms and melodies to accompany text. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 were observed in a very good lesson involving the class teacher and the co-ordinator. After the introduction, in which all pupils were involved in identifying the difference between a major chord and a minor chord, the class split up into small groups. All composed and practised a range of solo or group parts providing rhythmic phrases using tuned and untuned percussion. A few played violins, xylophones and chime bars individually. Towards the end of the lesson, they all came together and played and sang 'Iron Horse' a folk song about an early steam train in Scotland. The performance was of a very high standard with everyone playing in good pitch and tempo and singing in unison very tunefully as they played and sang the five verses. It was a very moving and spiritual time at the end as all pupils and the two teachers appreciated the quality of what had been achieved and the efforts of every one involved.
143. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and sometimes very good. Lessons are characterised by a variety of activities that motivate pupils and sustain their interest and regular opportunities for pupils to play tuned and untuned percussion instruments. As a result, the pupils have very good attitudes to their work, concentrate for extended periods of time and try very hard to achieve high standards. Resources are good in quantity and quality and pupils treat instruments with great care.
144. The subject co-ordinator has established music as a major strength of the school by using his own talents and expertise to very good effect in lessons. He has successfully developed a broad and balanced scheme of work for the teaching of the required curriculum and also provides a wide range of other activities to extend pupils' skills further. As a result, the school is well known in the local community for the high quality of public performances given over the Christmas period and in the Summer and in local community events. A good number of pupils benefit from individual instrumental tuition by visiting teachers in the playing of drums, violins, guitars, flutes and clarinets. Many more learn to play the recorder in groups organised by class teachers. The resulting high standards of musical ability are a reflection of the school's strong commitment to the subject.

Strengths in music:

- *standards by Year 2 and Year 6;*
- *range of opportunities, activities and individual tuition;*
- *pupils' enthusiasm and attitudes;*
- *quality of teaching;*
- *role of the co-ordinator;*

- *school's strong commitment to the subject.*

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

145. By Year 2 and Year 6, pupils make good progress and attain above average standards, particularly in swimming and dance. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, when the standards attained were average. Despite the limited numbers of staff, the school provides a very full programme of physical activities, both during and outside lessons, and this makes a significant contribution to the good standards achieved, particularly by older pupils. Boys and girls participate in physical education lessons with equal enthusiasm and work well individually, in pairs or in larger groups.
146. Years 1 and 2 pupils explore simple skills showing increasing control and co-ordination as they link actions together. They practise and improve skills in gymnastics and games with real enthusiasm. They are aware of aspects of safety and perform well practised stretching exercises in their warm up. In dance, pupils of all ages perform to a range of stimuli including dances from other cultures such as Africa and India. Year 2, 3 and 4 pupils learn to develop their skills and responses to music when they participate in Indian dances, linking with their work in geography. They recall the names of dances and their origins and move expressively to percussion rhythms and taped music. They practise hard and discuss ways to improve their performances, working towards a performance to celebrate the festival of Divali. This also contributes effectively to their cultural development. By the end of one lesson pupils were performing at above average levels.
147. Swimming is taught at a nearby leisure centre to pupils from Years 1 and 2 upwards. Records show that standards attained by Year 6 pupils are high. Virtually all pupils already swim the required 25 metres and most swim much further and have also gained personal survival awards.
148. The school provides a progressive programme of games teaching. Pupils participate in friendly competitions with other schools in the area, involving netball, football and cross-country. Year 6 pupils also enjoy the provision for outdoor and adventurous activities, in the form of annual residential visits which are enjoyed by all. Their achievements reflect the hard work of the staff and pupils and significantly add to the very good social and personal development in the school.
149. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In the lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils who, as a result, respond positively to challenges, behave well and work hard to improve their standards. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils were observed taking part in a lesson to develop bat and ball skills. Pupils worked hard to practise and refine their skills. The teacher provided regular support for individuals and groups by showing them how to improve their techniques. The lesson was also characterised by a good quality warm-up session, led by one of the pupils. Close attention was also paid to safety and the progressive development of skills from one activity to the next. Pupils demonstrated their developing knowledge and understanding of tactics in team games.
150. The subject is led well by the co-ordinator, who has, with the support of her colleagues, extended the range of learning opportunities within the curriculum provision to their present good levels. These opportunities contribute to the very good development of pupils' personal and social skills and enhance the quality of the experiences provided by the school for all pupils. The co-ordinator has not been allocated time to observe colleagues although she ensures, through informal discussions, that they are secure in their teaching. The quantity and quality of resources are good, with a good-sized hall and outdoor facilities in both the hard surface and field areas.

Strengths in PE:

- *standards by Year 2 and Year 6;*
- *pupils' attitudes and enthusiasm;*
- *extra-curricular activities;*
- *good planning and teaching.*

Areas for development:

- *opportunities for the co-ordinator to observe teaching.*