

ASHPERTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ashperton Ledbury

LEA area : Herefordshire

Unique reference number : 116649

Headteacher : Mr. D. Swann

Reporting inspector : Elizabeth Camplin
3586

Dates of inspection : 16th – 20th September 2002

Inspection number : 247656

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

Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ashperton Primary School Ashperton Ledbury Herefordshire
Postcode:	HR8 2SE
Telephone number:	01531 670385
Fax number:	01531 670385
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of Chair of Governors:	Mr. B. Willder
Date of previous inspection:	October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject Responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3586	E. Camplin	Registered inspector	<p>Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage</p> <p>Religious education</p> <p>English as an additional language</p>	<p>Information about the school</p> <p>The school's results and achievements</p> <p>Teaching and learning</p> <p>The curriculum and other opportunities for learning</p> <p>Key Issues for action</p> <p>Leadership and management</p>
8937	H. Allen	Lay inspector	Equality of opportunity	<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>Pupils' welfare, health and safety</p> <p>Partnership with parents and carers</p>
22778	A. Shannon	Team inspector	<p>English</p> <p>Information and communication technology</p> <p>Geography</p> <p>History</p> <p>Music</p>	
29378	K. Watson	Team inspector	<p>Mathematics</p> <p>Science</p> <p>Art and design</p> <p>Design and technology</p> <p>Physical education</p> <p>Provision for pupils with special educational needs</p>	

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International
Upperton House
The Avenue
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 3YB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	15
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	21
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	22
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ashperton Community Primary School is small compared with primary schools nationally. The roll has steadily risen since the previous inspection from 132 to 145. There are 23 more boys than girls and 10 out of 17 children of reception age currently attend part-time. Most children transfer from local nurseries or playgroups and their social, language and mathematical development are above average. The percentage of pupils entitled to free schools meals is below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is above average, though the percentage with statements (one pupil) is below average. Moderate learning difficulties are the predominant cause for additional support with learning. (6 pupils) There are six pupils from settled Traveller backgrounds, no refugee pupils and no pupils with English as an additional language. Pupils come from a wide range of different backgrounds. A significant proportion lives on farms in Ashperton and surrounding villages. Overall, socio-economic circumstances are above average though there are 23% of families in the area who qualify for income support benefit. The percentage of pupils who leave and enter the school at times other than the start of each academic year is relatively high.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school where standards in Year 6 are above the national average. Results of statutory assessment tests in 2002 were high. Standards are good because the school is well led and soundly managed and offers its pupils a broad-based education of good quality. Value for money is sound in return for a high level of funding compared with other shire primary schools. The headteacher, supported by his colleagues, ensures pupils' access to good teaching, though teachers are more effective in meeting the needs of children in reception, Year 1 and Years 4 to 6 than they are in other year groups. Pupils are very mature, responsible and self-reliant when they transfer to secondary school.

What the school does well

- It enables children in the reception class to make a very successful start to school.
- Teaching in Years 4 to 6 is exceptional. It is very good or better in 75 per cent of lessons.
- Its pupils are happy, caring of each other, and almost all are very keen to work hard.
- It earns the respect of parents for the way in which the headteacher and the whole staff team work on behalf of their children.

What could be improved

- Standardised test results at the end of Year 2, particularly in reading, and in writing in Year 6.
- The effectiveness of the action plan for becoming an even better school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement has been sound since the previous inspection in October 1997. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are even more impressive than they were then. Key issues to raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT), to improve pupils' knowledge of different world-cultures and to resolve matters of safety in the car park have been successfully addressed. The good standards achieved in Year 6 have been maintained, especially in mathematics and science. Good standards in statutory assessment results in Year 2 have not been maintained. Every subject now has a scheme of work based on national guidance that provides teachers with satisfactory starting points from which to plan a

broad and relevant curriculum. Teachers with responsibility for managing the curriculum keep satisfactory oversight of the quality of plans for every year group. These developments have resulted in better teaching and learning but have not eradicated the small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress are no longer unsatisfactory but teachers and governors do not make the best use of information concerning pupils' progress to set group and school improvement targets.

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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	C	A	C	E
Mathematics	D	B	B	C
Science	C	A	B	C

Key

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

Pupils' academic performance is compared with schools that are in the most advantaged category.

Currently, standards are good in English and mathematics in Year 6 and satisfactory in Year 2. They are good in science in both key stages. Pupils in Year 6 are well on the way to meeting or exceeding the school's realistic statutory performance targets. Overall, since 2000, standards have been good compared with national averages. Pupils have achieved well in mathematics and science in comparison with prior attainment in Year 2. Test results in 2002 were well above the average for 2001 in all three subjects. Pupils excelled in reading, with a 100 per cent success rate, though 20 per cent failed to reach teachers' expectations for Level 4 or higher in writing. Standards in Year 2 fell to below the national average between 1997 and 2001, despite higher than average results in science. This was due to a poor performance in reading and mathematics, particularly by boys. In 2002, good standards were sustained in science and improved in mathematics, but were again below the average for 2001, overall. Standards are above expectation throughout the school in art. In other subjects, with the exception of music and physical education, where there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement, standards meet requirements and achievement is satisfactory. Children of all levels of attainment achieve well in the reception class and are on course to attain highly. Standards are likely to be well above expectations in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language, literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development and above expectations in mathematical development. Though there was insufficient observation of physical development to make a firm judgement, signs of good progress are also clearly identifiable.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. From the reception class to Year 6 pupils enjoy school and are highly motivated to learn in most classes.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. There have been no exclusions. All pupils respect and follow the golden rules displayed in every classroom and in the hall.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children are settled and very independent for their age in reception. Pupils take very good care of each other and capably shoulder responsibility. They are very mature by Year 6.
Attendance	Good. In 2002, at 95.5 per cent, it exceeded the government target by 0.5 per cent.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Over 90 per cent of teaching is at least satisfactory and two-thirds is good or better. Work in pupils' books is presented well and is consistent with the good quality of learning observed during the inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and from settled Traveller backgrounds, make good progress, overall, between entering the school in reception and leaving in Year 6. Opportunities in the best lessons for speaking, listening and applying skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are very impressive. They result in significant gains in knowledge and understanding due to pupils' high levels of concentration, effort and interest in their work. Nonetheless, learning is not consistently good in all classes. In Years 2 and 3 the pace of learning is sound overall but occasionally too slow. This is because a small number of lessons are unsatisfactory in English and mathematics. Teachers' knowledge of both subjects is secure and objectives for the progression of skills are soundly planned but the organisation of tasks, and the management of pupils, is not always effective. As a result pupils are either unsure of what is expected or work too slowly.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall and very good in reception. All subjects meet statutory requirements. Learning is enhanced by activities outside lessons, educational visits and very good links with other education providers. The lower than average allocation of teaching time for foundation subjects reduces opportunities for pupils to practise literacy.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. These pupils are supported well by the special needs co-ordinator and teachers' assistants. They have appropriate targets to improve spelling, reading and number work.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school's approach to moral and social development is very successful and accounts for pupils' high standards of behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers include many opportunities in daily lessons for learning about cultural and religious traditions in Britain and around the world. Spiritual development is sound though opportunities to promote it are missed during school assemblies.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Sound overall. Daily care and standards of first aid are very good. The school is also very effective in promoting good conduct and eliminating bullying. Pupils' progress is satisfactorily tracked and reported but systems to evaluate the progress of different groups, such as gifted and talented pupils, are inadequate. Child protection practice is sound but the policy is out of date.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good leadership and sound management. The headteacher and deputy headteacher set a high standard in the way they work to promote the school's caring aims and values. New members of staff are inducted very well. Responsibilities are fairly delegated. Systems for improving the performance of teachers are well received but have yet to be consistently effective. Some policies are out of date and do not reflect the school's good practice.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Sound. Governors are united in their aim to promote a caring and effective school. They meet their statutory responsibility to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum and the care and safety of pupils and staff. They have set appropriate targets for the school to improve. Governors have not been sufficiently effective as critical friends.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school is good at maintaining its strengths and recognising where educational provision needs to improve. It has set relevant priorities for raising standards but the action plan lacks clear criteria for finding out how well different groups of pupils perform.
The strategic use of resources	Sound. Resources and expertise are being directed towards priorities for raising standards and for improving the quality of the accommodation and grounds. A high contingency fund is being sensibly reduced this year by releasing the headteacher from a heavy teaching workload so that he can concentrate on school management.

The school is well staffed and learning resources are good. Accommodation is well organised though demand on space is increasing as numbers rise. Principles of best value are soundly applied.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are pleased with almost everything. They respect and like the headteacher and staff and find them approachable. They think teaching is very good and that pupils behave and progress very well. They think that communication between home and school is good and that the staff team welcomes parents as partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents find it difficult to keep in close touch with teachers about their children's progress. They want an opportunity to find out about how they are getting on in the spring term. They would also welcome more informal opportunities to see the school in action and access to clubs for pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3.

Parents have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and how to make it an even better school. The school listens to suggestions and will reinstate a consultation evening next spring. It aims to continue to consult parents about how to move forward in meeting their other aspirations.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children in the reception class achieve high standards. The vast majority enters school having already achieved the first two of the four steps concerned with meeting early learning goals described in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage. For so early in the autumn term, they are already building well on prior learning at a nursery or playgroup. Children work in harmony, listen carefully, think and express themselves clearly. They are alert when answering questions, such as when discussing characters in a story in literacy lessons, or when comparing sets of objects in numeracy. They use a broad vocabulary, often remembering the meaning of new words introduced by the teacher. For example, they used 'brittle' when describing why a hard piece of clay breaks easily. All children recognise some letter sounds and names, and write their names legibly, and the higher-attainers know all their letters and 'have a go' at writing news or stories. Children all understand that print carries meaning and many work out simple words with one or two syllables. They make very good use of picture cues to help them interpret plot and setting. Children are very good at following instructions, even when they involve re-call of several points.

2. Good levels of achievement in reception result from the teacher planning work that builds on their thorough knowledge of individual strengths and areas for development when children enter school. The teacher also takes account of information from colleagues about weaknesses in older pupils' knowledge, understanding or skills, especially those noted amongst pupils of lower attainment. This is because the school has identified that some older pupils' difficulties stem from a lack of specific support for special educational needs when they were in the reception year. Earlier intervention for supporting such children is a recent improvement in school policy and an important step forward in developing an effective strategy for raising standards in Year 2.

3. Standards are too low in Year 2, except in science. Between 1999 and 2001, results of statutory assessment were lower than those achieved by pupils of the same age nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, despite good standards in the year group when they started school. A poor performance by boys compared to boys nationally mainly accounts for the trend, though girls also averaged below the standard of their peers. The school has sought to raise standards by participating in a special project within the local education authority aimed at under-achieving boys. More books that appealed to boys were purchased. Teachers' assistants were deployed as well as the part-time teacher for special educational needs to work with boys too. This action led to a significant improvement in the percentage of pupils, boys and girls alike, achieving above average standards in statutory tests in all three subjects in 2002. Results improved by a whole percentage point in writing and mathematics, compared with 2001. However, eight of the 25 pupils in the year group failed to attain the standard expected in reading and mathematics and five missed Level 2 in writing. Most of these were boys. There were mitigating circumstances for this associated with pupil mobility, extended holidays and because eight of the pupils had special educational needs. They were below average in reception and actually achieved sound results compared with their attainment on entry to school. All eight pupils are continuing to receive additional support for literacy and numeracy. It is helping them to catch up with their peers and their progress is good. Nonetheless, reading and knowledge of letter blends and spelling patterns are still a weakness in Years 2 and 3. The school recognises that there are issues to address in its approach to teaching reading in Years 1 to 3. It has appropriate plans to improve lessons and to involve more parents in helping children to read regularly at home.

4. Currently, pupils in Year 2 are attaining average standards in reading, writing and mathematics and attainment is above average in science. They are making satisfactory progress having made a good start in Year 1. They have a good vocabulary and express themselves well. Most read competently, though lower-attaining pupils are hesitant rather than fluent because, like Year 3 pupils, they are not as good as they should be at blending the sounds of letters. They write with a sound level of fluency and flair when writing stories or news. At present there are too few examples in exercise books of pupils undertaking work that will enable them to reach high standards in mathematics at the end of the year. This is partly because the school adheres too rigidly to a commercial scheme that concentrates on the average standard for Year 2, and partly due to pupils' limited experience of solving practical problems that are presented in written form rather than in numerals. The school caters more effectively for practical investigations in science. This enables pupils to achieve well. Pupils of all abilities show a good grasp of the links between the four attainment targets in science. They have a clear understanding of the importance of observation, simple prediction, testing ideas and reaching conclusions.

5. The performance record of pupils in Year 6 is good and there has been no difference in the attainment of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Standards achieved are higher than in Year 2 and have been ever since the time of the previous inspection. The trend in improvement in the performance of pupils in Year 6 between 1997 and 2001 was below all schools nationally, but this was because the starting point was so high. Standards in statutory tests that year were well above the national average. A comparatively low achieving year in 1999 accounted for the reversal in the trend but standards have risen each year since then and have been consistently above average. Differences between boys and girls are minimal and boys easily close the gap so evident at the end of the infant stage. In 2000 they were again well above average and results in 2002 are very high compared with national results in 2001. Pupils of all abilities achieved as well as, or beyond the teacher's expectations of them, except in writing. Ninety-five per cent of pupils attained the expected standard in English and science, and 86 per cent reached it in mathematics. Pupils' performance was excellent in reading. All pupils attained Level 4, the expected standard, and 43 per cent exceeded it. In mathematics, an impressive 48 per cent reached Level 5 and 67 per cent reached the same high level in science.

6. Results were weaker in 2002 than they should have been in writing. The class teacher, who is also the co-ordinator for English, has established why. She identified that most pupils chose the non-fiction option to design a leaflet. Many able writers did not demonstrate their true capability because they did not use an extensive vocabulary in describing their ideas. Those who chose to write a story achieved better results as they wrote to their strengths.

7. Currently, pupils in Year 6 are achieving well in English, mathematics, science and art and have reached the standard expected in every other subject. They do better than prior attainment in Year 2 would indicate, especially the boys, and are well on course to meet the school's statutory targets for 2003. These are above the average standard expected nationally. Standards of writing in Year 6 are good. A higher than average percentage of pupils produce very imaginative creative writing of a high standard and no pupils have poor standards. Handwriting and spelling is very good and prose is well structured. Pupils make good use of ICT when publishing their work. However, even the highest attaining pupils rarely produce a lengthy piece of fiction or projects in foundation subjects that require extensive research or searching exploration of ideas and opinions. Pupils' writing in subjects such as design and technology, art, history and geography is carefully presented but it lacks breadth and depth. There are very few examples, for example, of pupils justifying a choice for design or evaluating the outcome rigorously. It shows that pupils have insufficient time for writing in lessons other than English. The inspection team is in full agreement with the school that it

must find ways to address this issue.

8. There is not such a significant problem in mathematics. The school has successfully raised standards in numeracy after a year in which it has been the first priority in the School Improvement Plan. Pupils have improved their performance in the numeracy hour and in the extent to which they competently apply numeracy skills in other subjects. Teachers have concentrated at the end of lessons on self-evaluation and improving pupils' understanding of the standards they are achieving. Therefore, every pupil, irrespective of the ability group in which they work, capably engages in rigorous discussion about whether each has met their learning objectives.

9. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 meet the required standard in ICT and make sound use of ICT in all of their work now that they have regular access to good resources. They have well-developed skills in art and design and a good knowledge of the work of a variety of artists and craftspeople from the past and present around the world. Though there was inadequate evidence to judge standards in physical education and music, standards in other foundation subjects and religious education in the work that was seen was at least sound.

10. Overall, pupils' current rate of progress in the infant stage is satisfactory and good in the junior stage. There is no reason why the very good rate of progress achieved in Years 4, 5 and 6 should not also happen in all year groups. The school must now concentrate on raising standards in literacy, particularly in Years 2 and 3.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. Levels of attendance are also improving. At 94.4 per cent, they were average in 2001. They were 0.5 above the government target of 95 per cent in 2002.

12. Parents report that children enjoy their work at school. This is confirmed by children's smiling faces as they arrive and are greeted by staff and other pupils. Pupils respond very well to enthusiastic teachers and support staff and are eager to do well in lessons. They are generally able to sustain concentration very well even when they find some parts of lessons less interesting. Pupils show consideration for others at all times. They help one another when working in a group and support each other when they find work difficult. They move quietly around the school, for example, when going to the hall for physical education, the computer suite for ICT, or going out to play at break times when fellow pupils may still be in lessons.

13. Parents are justifiably very pleased with behaviour and report no incidents of bullying. They are grateful that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. Pupils have a very clear understanding of right from wrong and consider it important to take account of the feelings of others. They are caring of both their friends and all other pupils in the school. This is reflected in the way all pupils play very well together at break and lunchtimes. They ensure everyone is included but understand the need to take turns, for example, when they are unable to use the school playing field and have to use the playground for games such as football, hockey and basket ball.

14. Pupils take on responsibilities from a very early age. For example, at the end of break a child from the reception class, without being asked, collected up plastic giant mini-beasts in the outdoor play area and returned them to their proper place. Pupils of all ages are sensible and do not waste any time as they get out and put away their work. When appropriate, pupils eagerly take on monitor duties, such as taking registers to the office and distributing or

collecting up items during lessons when asked to do so by teachers and teaching assistants. House captains are elected by pupils and chosen representatives of all ages on the School Council are proud to put forward class views and take their duties very seriously. The recent improvements to the school playground, such as benches, shelters and new playground markings were made at the suggestion of the School Council. Older pupils greatly enjoy the responsibility of looking after younger ones. They carry out duties, such as putting out and clearing away play equipment, helping in the dining hall and taking the younger pupils back to their classes at the end of lunchtime, and helping reception children in their outside play area. Pupils' social skills are well developed with pupils not only displaying great courtesy to each other and staff but also to any parents or visitors they meet around the school. Pupils appreciate the support they receive from members of the community and willingly engage in projects to help those less fortunate than themselves. For example, last term the school raised over £750 for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

15. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is reflected in their regular attendance. However, there can be a slow start to the day with a few parents arriving with their children after the bell and school coaches sometimes arriving after 9 o'clock.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching is good overall, but there is a noticeable difference in quality in some classes compared with others. In three classes, one for the reception year and two serving Years 4 to 6, teaching is predominantly very good, with a significant percentage of excellent practice, especially in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Teaching is also consistently good in Year 1. It is mainly sound in Year 2 and in the class for the youngest juniors and a minority of Year 4 pupils. Three unsatisfactory lessons observed during the inspection all occurred in these latter two classes.

17. In the foundation stage, the teacher and two teaching assistants share a very good understanding of the curriculum and have very high expectations of children. This is reflected in class and individual targets and in the inter-active captions that accompany work in wall displays. Teachers establish excellent relationships with children even before they start school by getting to know them in special 'taster' visits, such as this year's 'ugly bugs' ball'. They manage them sensitively yet firmly, so that most children quickly develop confidence, sustain interest and work at a good pace.

18. The teacher in reception makes excellent use of her creative flair to stimulate rapid learning in skills associated with working with tools and materials. She also uses her expertise in ICT to make sure children understand the benefits of using technology to practise basic skills in numeracy, literacy, and art. Children concentrate and apply themselves impressively when engaged in these practical activities. Children extend their knowledge and understanding very well because teachers balance direction and guidance with exciting opportunities for children to explore and learn independently. An excellent example of such practice was seen in a lesson in the computer suite, when children used a drawing programme to draw a picture of a friend. Their understanding of how to use the controls on the mouse was reinforced and pupils were ably supported in using the keyboard to type their names and print out their work.

19. Adults in reception take clear account of differences in children's age, capability and special educational needs. They make sure, for example, that part-time children have opportunities to use the hall for physical education on two mornings each week, whereas other classes wait until the afternoon sessions to use it. Work in books belonging to pupils who have just entered Year 1 shows that recording tasks are usually carefully matched to individual needs. All children are encouraged to be as independent as they can in their

spelling, sentence construction and choice of writing activity. Average and higher-attaining children respond positively and use reading, writing and number knowledge in an increasingly wide variety of ways as the year progresses. They take pride in the presentation of their work.

20. Last year, support for lower-attaining children in reception, on the school's register of special educational needs, was consistent with recommendations in the new Code of Practice. These children are given considerable support from teaching assistants who help children to express themselves orally and model writing and numbers for them. Teachers make very good use of reward systems, such as stickers and smiley faces. They provide regular feedback on how well children learn. These methods motivate children to persevere with the things they find difficult. Just occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to draw average children's attention to letters they have reversed, or to find new ways to consolidate a lower-attaining child's knowledge of the alphabet. Overall, excellent classroom organisation and management and very effective teaching methods enable children in reception to make very good progress in their learning.

21. In Year 1 the teacher shows a good knowledge of pupils' prior learning and does not waste time re-assessing or spending too much time on covering things that children already know and can do. Discussions at the beginning of lessons are rigorous but managed in a quiet, patient and reflective style that encourages all pupils to listen carefully, take time to think and explain ideas or difficulties. The literacy and numeracy lessons challenge all pupils. This is because the teacher extends the higher-attaining pupils whilst pupils of lower levels of attainment are closely supported by a gifted teacher's assistant whose questions and ability to explain things are very good. The last few minutes of lessons are used constructively to encourage children to sum up what they have learnt and find out what they will do next time. A pupil with a statement of special educational needs, and another newly admitted to the class, get plenty of support and encouragement, so that they readily join in discussion. Teaching and learning could be even better if the teacher continued to evaluate the purpose of every learning activity and whether pupils with behaviour difficulties sit in a place where they are always in an adult's line of vision.

22. In Years 4 to 6, teachers' expectations are very high and they communicate very effectively with pupils of all levels of attainment and ethnic backgrounds. They know exactly what each pupil is capable of achieving. Each day, all pupils, including two pupils with hearing loss, are involved in lively discussion about a variety of ideas or events. Group and individual tasks are planned meticulously to ensure all pupils consolidate recent new learning and move on to the next stage. Pupils enjoy working together and make full use of lesson time. They understand what they need to do to improve and their intellectual, creative or physical effort is often exemplary.

23. In Years 2 and 3, teachers have a good knowledge of all subjects, including literacy, numeracy and ICT. For the most part, they are able to identify appropriate lesson objectives and make expectations of pupils clear. The special educational needs teacher and classroom assistants support the age group well when teaching them in small groups and this gives pupils confidence to improve their reading, writing and understanding of number when working one-to-one with these adults. Most lessons are organised soundly but a minority has shortcomings in teaching methods and the way pupils are managed. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher did not do enough to involve a group who had been outside for additional help with numeracy. The result was that they were unable to participate in the end of the lesson. Not all teachers have thought critically enough about how to set activities that motivate pupils, especially the lower-attaining groups, and that give them a chance to understand and succeed. Pupils sometimes struggle to understand what they are to do. For example, this was the case when pupils in Year 2 were trying to identify coins that added up to 10 pence, and when lower-attaining pupils in Year 3 were attempting to use

speechmarks. Higher-attaining pupils of the same age sometimes have a tendency to waste time, such as when planning the setting for a first draft of a story.

24. Part of the reason for slow learning is the over-anxiety of teachers to cover all the learning intentions in lesson plans. They do not give pupils sufficient time to think and when pupils do respond effort is not always acknowledged. Teachers phrase some feedback about learning negatively rather than positively and this unsettles pupils. Pupils' eagerness to learn dissolves when the atmosphere in the classroom becomes tense. Yet, when the teacher captures their interest, as in a lesson dedicated to practising listening, pupils gain more and more from the lesson as it progresses.

25. There is a weakness that both key stages need to address. Teachers in Years 1 to 6 do not provide sufficient opportunities to use literacy in a wide enough range of activities. Pupils have inadequate experience, therefore, of making the best use of their good vocabulary and imagination, for example, in writing instructions or evaluating working methods in the context of design and technology. They rarely produce extended pieces of writing in history, geography or religious education in which they explore cause and effect or moral issues. This means that even higher-attaining pupils in Year 6 who write particularly well make less progress than they could.

26. Since 1997, teaching has improved because the most significant weaknesses highlighted at that time have been carefully addressed. The assessment of individual progress is better and resources for outdoor play and ICT have improved and are used well. The need now is to achieve greater consistency in the quality of literacy and numeracy lessons.

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

27. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and ensures a good range and quality of learning opportunities for pupils throughout the school. Its organisation has improved soundly since the last inspection. The long-term curriculum plan has been reviewed; the strategies for numeracy and literacy are used throughout the school and are helping to raise standards in most classes. National guidance is used to provide an interesting core of work in science and foundation subjects that meets the needs of all pupils. The curriculum for ICT, which was unsatisfactory at the last inspection, has been much improved and all classes now make effective use of the new computer suite. Sound use is made of the syllabus for religious education and acts of collective worship meet statutory requirements. The school makes good use of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum, such as theatre and puppet companies that foster appreciation of drama, literature and music. Pupils are closely involved in local art, music, poetry and physical education initiatives. These include Ledbury Poetry Festival and concerts and sports involving other primary schools and the local John Masefield High School. However, although literacy and numeracy are rightly given priority on the timetable, there are times when lessons go on too long and learning suffers. The way that the timetable is structured means that time is tight for foundation subjects. Teachers should consider the possibility of including one lesson for a foundation subject in the mornings in order to help them to promote literacy, particularly writing, through the rest of the curriculum.

28. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school has appointed a co-ordinator who has no class commitment but supports appropriately identified groups of pupils for two half-days each week. This arrangement is very effective in ensuring that pupils' individual needs are carefully diagnosed, and each has an education plan that is carefully matched to next steps in learning. The co-ordinator works closely with class teachers to assess progress and review targets on a regular basis. She maintains good contacts with parents and makes full use of support agencies where necessary, for instance where pupils have a statement or a specific disability, such as hearing impairment. The mathematics co-ordinator also maintains a list of pupils with special needs in numeracy, and with the help of a specially trained non-teaching assistant, these pupils receive extra help for as long as they need it. This additional support is helping lower-attaining pupils to achieve higher standards in mathematics.

29. A good range of extra-curricular opportunities are provided through the year including sports, such as netball, football and cricket; music, such as recorders and choir and other activities, for example, French and drama. These are well attended but at present are provided mostly for pupils in the top three years, due to constraints on space and the number of adults available to organise them. The school has to restrict numbers because of safety considerations but all pupils are given the opportunity to attend leisure activities as they move through the school, and a good number choose to do so. In this, as in the main curriculum, the school is very proactive in ensuring that all pupils are given equal opportunities to take part in every aspect of school life. Links with other local schools and with the community are very strong. Regular sports fixtures are arranged and good use made of outside sports agencies, such as Herefordshire Cricket Club and Hereford United Football Club to provide coaching. Links with the local high school enable pupils to participate in a pyramid orchestra, carol service and prom. Groups of higher-attaining pupils regularly attend workshops where they work with similar pupils from other schools on such things as improving computer skills, creative writing, history and problem solving.

30. The school successfully cultivates pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The strongest of these are social and moral development, which are clearly evident in every aspect of school life. Cultural development is also good. It includes stimulating opportunities for pupils to draw on their full range of experiences, including those in the settled Traveller group represented in the school. Pupils are also encouraged to explore the customs and beliefs of those groups that are not represented in the school. Spiritual development is sound.

31. Moral development is very good because principles of honesty, fairness and respect for others are constantly reinforced through daily lessons and assemblies. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good indeed, and this helps to foster an atmosphere where pupils come to understand the difference between right and wrong and to respect the need for a moral code. Issues concerning sex education, drug misuse, bullying and race relations are sensitively dealt with as part of the science curriculum or through religious or personal and health education. Pupils know that if they have any problems, for instance at lunchtime play, they can approach any member of the teaching or non-teaching staff who will deal sympathetically with the matter.

32. Social development is promoted daily in many small ways. Pupils are given responsibility to select resources and to do special jobs, such as carrying the register or giving out the milk. Pupils are encouraged to work together, supporting each other where they can, and this is a strong feature of many lessons. There are many examples of older pupils helping to look after younger ones, for instance when leading them out of assembly, and they carry out these duties willingly. The house system is well established and respected, and Year 6 pupils look forward to electing captains and vice-captains and generally taking more

responsibility. All classes display the group rules that they have agreed, and these are reinforced with such things as star awards for kind and caring behaviour. The school regularly raises money for charities. The recently introduced School Council also effectively provides pupils with a sense of further responsibility and extends awareness of good citizenship.

33. Cultural development is well promoted through art, literature and music, and reinforced through visits by artists, musicians and poets. Art displays show that the qualities of such varying culture as African, Ancient Greek or Aboriginal are celebrated and appreciated. In Religious education, the emphasis is on Christianity but pupils learn about other religions, such as Islam and Hinduism. Such subjects as art and poetry are also well used to promote spirituality through an appreciation of what makes the work special, or what it says about the values and beliefs of others. Assemblies are used to explore a range of values and feelings, such as honesty, self-esteem and the rewards of working well in teams. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to create a 'special' atmosphere where pupils are encouraged to reflect quietly about who they are and their place in the world. The use of music before and after the act of worship would be more effective if pupils listened more carefully, and were encouraged to appreciate the unique qualities of that composer or particular piece of music.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. The school has maintained its good practice since the previous inspection and remains effective in providing for pupils' welfare, health and safety. It has very good procedures for promoting good conduct and eliminating oppressive behaviour.

35. The school creates an atmosphere of warmth, security and well-being where pupils feel safe. Parents consider that a high priority is given to the physical and emotional well-being of pupils and inspection findings strongly support this view. All members of staff know pupils well and monitor personal development effectively. Pupils therefore feel valued and understand they can talk to their teacher, classroom support assistant, midday supervisors or headteacher if they have a problem or are upset for any reason.

36. Child protection procedures are secure though training has not taken place for some time and needs to be addressed urgently. However, the need to report any concerns about pupils' welfare to the teacher responsible is clearly understood by all staff. There are sufficient first aiders and any incidents, including minor ones, are fully recorded and parents notified, when appropriate. The members of staff who are first line contact in the case of accidents are well known to and respected by other staff and pupils. The recent introduction of 'walkie-talkies' for use by lunchtime supervisors to alert other staff to any problems on the playground is an example of the school's very good practice in ensuring pupils' welfare. Formal risk assessments and safety audits have been carried out and urgent matters have been attended to. The school places a very high priority on creating the right environment for learning. The site manager effectively ensures the buildings are maintained in a clean, bright and safe condition and the school and grounds are as secure as possible. The school does not have sufficient accommodation to allocate space for a first aid station but makes the best use it can of the area around the school office to attend to pupils' medical needs.

37. Parking arrangements have improved since the last inspection but the school is understandably concerned about the school's proximity to a major road. In the absence of any other available parking areas governors have made the existing car park as safe as possible. There is now an effective barrier between the parking area and the school building where pupils can wait to be collected by their parents. Parents are consistently reminded to be vigilant when dropping off or picking up their children and to escort them through the car

park to and from the school gate. Parents using the car park, particularly at the start of the day, show every consideration for others and accept that their departure might be delayed until other cars clear the car park. Staff always escort pupils who travel by coach from and to the vehicle.

38. The school stresses the importance of good behaviour and pupils understand the need for the few simple school rules that they are expected to obey. Pupils also devise class rules of their own and this motivates pupils to observe them. Teachers are generally consistent in their behaviour management and use positive reinforcement as the preferred means of improving behaviour. Pupils enjoy incentives, such as stickers and certificates. They wear their 'great', 'cool' and 'I worked my socks off' stickers with pride. Senior pupils show their concern for the environment by collecting dropped stickers and other litter and placing it in one of the many bins around the play areas. There are appropriate procedures for managing any incidents of inappropriate behaviour, including incidents of bullying and racial harassment. Such incidents are extremely rare but when they occur they are taken very seriously. There is a process that includes the involvement of the headteacher and parents and this can result in a behaviour contract being drawn up with the child concerned. Teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors support teachers very well. They ensure there is consistency in dealing with pupil behaviour outside the classroom. Overall, pupils' learning is considerably enhanced by the effectiveness of procedures for creating a happy and orderly community.

39. Some features of good practice in welfare, health and safety are not accurately reflected in school policies and the Prospectus. For example, the child protection policy does not name the current co-ordinator and the Prospectus does not provide the information either, even though the policy states that details are to be included.

40. Since the previous inspection the headteacher and staff have satisfactorily improved the way they identify how well pupils are progressing. Assessment in the reception class is very thorough and from Year 1 to Year 6 every teacher maintains sound records in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Samples of work are regularly retained that exemplify judgements about achievement. The school uses assessment information constructively to set statutory performance targets for Year 6 and voluntary targets for Year 2. These are realistic and challenging. The headteacher checks whether pupils do as well as expected, exceed expectations or experience difficulties with learning. He shares this information with teachers and most are good at modifying their teaching style or the curriculum accordingly. Where progress is a cause for concern, the co-ordinator for special educational needs and parents are appropriately consulted and pupils are given the extra help they need. One parent, for example, met with a member of the inspection team to explain how well such action taken in Year 1 had helped her son to improve. Now in Year 4, he no longer requires extra help. Assessment in foundation subjects is sound. Teachers conform to the advice of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority by keeping notes that summarise what the class has learnt at the end of each unit of work or term. Teachers have recently started to retain evidence of improvement in portfolios for ICT. This new practice is helping them to evaluate their own effectiveness in providing an appropriate range of learning opportunities for ICT in every subject.

41. The school's plan for future development includes objectives to strengthen assessment. This plan has good features but does not make clear how the school intends to make full use of assessment information to identify the achievements of different groups by age, gender, attainment or ethnicity. For example, there is nothing to explain how the school will analyse how well children with only one term's experience in the reception class perform compared with those who attend full-time for three terms. Pupils from settled Traveller backgrounds are not tracked as a group, and there is no formal system for identifying and

monitoring gifted and talented pupils. This means that the school cannot be sure that it is fully meeting the needs of all groups despite an undoubted commitment to the principle of equal opportunities and educational inclusion.

42. This is an inclusive school where the welfare and academic performance of every pupil is considered. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, including two pupils with sensory impairment and a pupil with a statement of special educational needs. Teachers take account, for example, of some pupils' need to use a hearing aid. Communication with parents about their children's needs and targets is very good. Parents are involved when targets are reviewed.

43. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. The school follows up unexplained absences and acknowledges pupils' good attendance. It discourages parents from taking their children out of school for family holidays during term time, though not all parents heed the plea.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. The effectiveness of links with parents and the information they receive have shown considerable improvement since the last inspection. Parents speak very highly of the school and of the very good working partnership with the staff. Parents appreciate the open door policy and many make good use of the opportunities to speak informally to the headteacher and class teachers, particularly at the end of the school day. All parents have the opportunity to exchange information with teachers by use of the reading or homework diaries and many parents confirm they are happy to telephone the school to discuss any problems. The headteacher and staff have reciprocal views of parents. They value the contribution they make to children's learning both in school and at home, though they would like even more parents to support children regularly with reading and spelling homework. They acknowledge that they are very fortunate to have an active 'Friends of Ashperton School' association that raises considerable funds to purchase extra resources for the school or to improve the learning environment. For example, the recent impressive improvements to the playground were possible thanks to their financial support.

45. Parents are encouraged to help in school as much as they can and teachers gladly accept offers of help with a variety of such things as reading, craft activities, school trips and swimming. However, some parents would like more opportunities to observe aspects of the school day informally, such as school or class assemblies. They would also like the school to admit younger pupils to clubs out of lesson time. The school listens to parents' suggestions and concerns and intends to discuss what can be done to meet parents' aspirations.

46. The governors' annual report to parents, the Prospectus and newsletters are of a high standard. They are easy to read and often amusing through the inclusion of light-hearted illustration. They provide much invaluable information concerning topic work that will be covered each term and homework that can be expected. The welcome and information packs provided for parents of reception children are of particularly high quality. They contain very detailed information of the activities the younger children will be expected to do and very good advice as to how they can work with their children at home.

47. The school regularly consults with parents and the homework policy takes account of many of their responses to a special questionnaire, that included a question about homework, to which the school received a return of just over 50 per cent. The quality of annual reports has been considerably improved since the last inspection. They inform parents of what individual pupils can do and the progress they have made during the year.

They describe appropriate targets to consolidate children's learning. The school has responded positively to parents' requests to re-instate a parent consultation evening in the spring term 2003. Governors are also seeking to do all they can to alleviate parents' concerns about pupils' safety along the busy trunk road on which the school is situated.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The headteacher provides the school with good leadership and sound management. He is very good at inspiring the respect, loyalty and affection of pupils, staff, governors and parents. He earns this regard by his unstinting efforts to provide a caring, happy and stimulating environment in which the diverse interests and abilities of all children are successfully developed. His vision is clearly communicated in the school's mission statement and is as well met now as it was at the time of the previous inspection. Parents of children who have recently been admitted to the school, some after transferring from other schools, are full of praise for the welcome they receive. There is an equally strong emphasis on inducting new staff. Two teachers who have a year or less experience of working in the school could not speak more highly of the advice and support provided. It has helped them to settle happily and get to grips with their class responsibilities.

49. Since 1997, governors have been adept at appointing staff whose skills and experience are well matched to the school's needs. Key amongst these is the deputy headteacher, the teacher for the foundation stage and co-ordinator for ICT, and the part-time teacher who supports pupils with special educational needs. All three have helped to improve the school in their specific areas of responsibility. In particular, the deputy headteacher has made a significant contribution to addressing the key issues for action from 1997. He has proved himself very effective in devising systems of management that help staff to improve their teaching and the way they keep track of how well pupils learn. He is vigilant in his use of assessment information to plan for pupils' future learning in Years 4 and 5 and is trying hard to help colleagues to develop the same high standards. The focus on making clear links between assessment information and learning objectives has clearly helped to improve statutory assessment results in Year 6 this year and to pinpoint where standards still need to get better. As an appraiser of three teachers' performance, the deputy headteacher is instrumental in encouraging teachers for whom he is responsible to critically evaluate the success of their work. He helps them to identify targets that are firmly linked to raising standards in reading, writing and numeracy. This is making a positive difference to children's learning, for example, in Year 1.

50. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have an excellent relationship and complementary skills. The partnership is serving the school well, especially now that the headteacher has been released from the heavy commitment of class teaching and the deputy headteacher has one day a week for management duties. They are quickly coming to clear decisions about how to manage time more efficiently to steer initiatives in the School Improvement Plan. The plan includes the right priorities for making Ashperton an even better school but still lacks clarity about the steps to be taken to meet targets and timescales or about how success will be measured.

51. There is an exemplary team spirit amongst staff. Every adult who works in the school feels appreciated. Responsibilities are shared fairly and everyone understands what is expected of them. They contribute soundly to monitoring the school's performance and to taking effective action. Standards in numeracy have risen as a result of shared effort and there is now a commitment to do the same in literacy. Teachers and teachers' assistants alike enjoy the challenge provided through the introduction of performance management. They acknowledge that shared dialogue about the work they do helps them professionally. They are also grateful that the headteacher and governors apportion part of the school budget

to giving them time away from class responsibility. They use this time efficiently to work on their subject or aspect action plans. They have observed or worked alongside colleagues teaching, have brought schemes of work up-to-date and re-organised resources to make them more accessible. However, most personal improvement targets lack criteria for success linked directly to weaknesses in standards in their subjects, teaching methods, or in promoting literacy through every subject. This is a feature of appraisal that they agree needs to improve, particularly if the school is to successfully eliminate the small percentage of unsatisfactory teaching.

52. The governing body soundly fulfils its statutory responsibilities. It is very successful in meeting its obligation to communicate effectively with parents and has made sure that the policies for race equality, performance management, professional development and special educational needs meet requirements. It has a schedule for bringing other policies up-to-date. It is not as effective in evaluating and accounting for the school's performance. This is partly because the reports governors receive termly from the headteacher about the school's progress are descriptive rather than evaluative. It is also because, though governors bring a wide range of skills, expertise and experience to their roles, they have not exploited these sufficiently. They have not sought reasons, for example, for the difference in standards between both key stages. Governors have already taken steps to improve the situation. They have just appointed a new Chair and Vice Chair of Governors both of whom are determined to provide strong leadership and direction. The experience of this inspection has helped them to realise that they must be more rigorous in reviewing how well pupils learn. They concede that they have tended to take success for granted and have not sought to probe to find out how well the school serves its different groups of pupils. These include boys compared with girls, children in reception, pupils from settled Traveller backgrounds, pupils with special educational needs and pupils who transfer to Ashperton from other schools.

53. Overall, the school makes good use of its workforce, accommodation and learning resources. Most teachers have responsibilities that match their areas of expertise or aptitude, though there is a need for a minority to achieve greater consistency in the way they manage classes to get the best out of pupils. The co-ordinator has capably managed action to raise standards in ICT and is promoting better use of ICT in all subjects. The school makes good use of new technology for tracking individual pupil's performance and for writing annual reports for parents. There are enough resources of good quality in every subject, with particular strengths in ICT and for outdoor activities. Accommodation is in very good condition, attractively maintained and, for the most part, well used although the hall and playing fields are not used often enough during morning sessions. With a growing roll there is increasing pressure on classroom space and a lack of adequate facilities for pupils' medical care. Teaching assistants provide very good value for money. They often suggest practical action to make learning more effective, such as paired reading time when pupils in Year 6 read with children in reception. They support slower learners and help pupils to achieve high standards of behaviour.

54. Finance is managed satisfactorily. The school makes good use of grants for supporting pupils with special educational needs, for training teachers in ICT, and for training teacher assistants to support pupils' learning in numeracy and literacy. It fights to win new funds, especially when there is a prospect of improving safety procedures, such as the current bid for a share of grant from the government's 'Safer Routes to Schools' initiative. However, it has, until this year, held back a high percentage of the budget in its contingency fund. The School Improvement Plan and annual governors report to parents failed to explain why this was happening. The actual reasoning behind the decision to save the money was, however, strategically sensible. It is now being used appropriately to fund an additional teacher so that the headteacher is released from class teaching responsibility for a year. This means that he can spend more time on educational priorities in the School Improvement Plan

and on making sure that there are up-to-date school policies to reflect the school's good practice. These include, for example, a policy for gifted and talented pupils and for child protection.

55. The principles of good value are implemented soundly. The school competes satisfactorily with similar schools in the standards achieved in Year 6. It has a very good record of consulting with parents, pupils and staff about the quality of care and the curriculum. Every effort is made to secure the best value from the purchase of resources. However, the school has lacked clear criteria for judging how different groups of pupils perform compared with all and similar schools. Governors tend to use subjective rather than objective methods for reaching conclusions about value for money, and need to remedy this. Overall, however, the school provides sound value in return for its financial resources. Children make a good start to learning, make slower progress in the upper infant and lower junior years, then make up lost ground rapidly in Years 4, 5 and 6. They leave the school at the end of Year 6 having achieved well, personally and academically.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. In order to improve the quality of education provided and the standards pupils achieve, the governors, headteacher and staff should work together to:

1. *Improve statutory test results in Year 2, particularly in reading, and in writing in Year 6, by making sure that:-*

a. The difficulties experienced by pupils with statutory assessment tasks are carefully identified and addressed;

b. Procedures are strengthened for checking how well teaching methods enable all groups of pupils to understand what is expected of them and make the best use of lesson time;

c. Time for teaching reading is used as effectively in infant classes as it is in classes for older juniors;

d. There is sufficient time for pupils to practise reading and writing through the good range of learning activities in science, religious education and other foundation subjects. *(Paragraphs 4, 7, 25, 78, 80-82, 88-90)*

2. *Be more effective in taking action to improve the school and in finding out how well the school is performing, by making sure that:-*

a. Every subject has an appropriate share of teaching time and that the timetable is structured to make the best use of that time; *(Paragraphs 27, 101, 108, 133)*

b. Assessment information is used to check the progress and achievement of different groups of pupils; *(Paragraph 41)*

c. Pupils' performance is compared each year with the performance of pupils in similar schools so that appropriate improvement targets can be set; *(Paragraph 55)*

d. When co-ordinators observe lessons, they concentrate on evaluating the quality of learning, to identify how teachers can provide more help to specific groups of pupils; *(Paragraphs 82, 89, 96, 134)*

e. Performance targets for teachers are consistently linked with school improvement targets that show how their successful completion should raise standards; *(Paragraph 51)*

f. Governors are fully informed about progress with the objectives in the action plan; *(Paragraph 52)*

g. School policies are up-to-date and reflect the school's good practice; *(Paragraphs 39, 54)*

h. Governors fully understand how to make valid judgements about the extent to which the school provides good value for money. *(Paragraph 55)*

Minor issues

Governors may wish to consider adding objectives to the inspection action plan linked to:-

Finding out how well assemblies contribute to pupils' spiritual development; *(Paragraph 33)*

Training in child protection procedures; *(Paragraph 36)*

Extending accommodation to provide pupils with access to a medical room and to sufficient classroom space as the roll rises; *(Paragraphs 36, 59)*

Minimising the risks attached to the school being sited adjacent to a very busy trunk road. *(Paragraphs 47, 54)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	36
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	9	8	10	3	0	0
Percentage	17	25	22	28	8	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	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	140
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	40

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	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.30
National comparative data	5.60

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.40
National comparative data	0.50

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001			

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	15	15	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (73)	88 (80)	88 (87)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	14	14	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	82 (80)	82 (87)	100 (93)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year. Numbers of boys and girls are excluded because they are fewer than ten.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	10	18	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	8	9
	Girls	14	15	17
	Total	22	23	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	79 (94)	82 (71)	93 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	8	9
	Girls	14	14	17
	Total	20	22	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (94)	79 (76)	93 (100)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
144	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.40
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.60
Average class size	24.10

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	108

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	341098
Total expenditure	321373
Expenditure per pupil	2247
Balance brought forward from previous year	30664
Balance carried forward to next year	50389

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	140
Number of questionnaires returned	73

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	32	0	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68	28	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	78	22	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	36	12	0	0
The teaching is good.	82	18	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	48	15	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	88	11	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	23	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	51	43	5	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	79	17	3	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	81	18	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	34	23	0	9

Other issues raised by parents

The danger to pupils posed by the school being sited adjacent to a busy trunk road.

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

57. Since 1997, the best features of teaching and learning have been maintained. Weaknesses highlighted at that time in assessing individual's progress, resources for outdoor play, and in teaching the foundations for ICT, have also been carefully addressed. Overall, the quality of teaching and the breadth of curriculum are impressive and even better than reported at the time of the previous inspection.

58. When they enter the school, children build constructively on the good general knowledge and social skills they bring with them from home, playgroups and nurseries. Teachers and teachers' assistants get to know children and their needs quickly by consulting closely with parents, nursery teachers and playgroup leaders about what children can already do and understand. They are aware of the achievement of the highest-attaining children and of the minority who experience difficulties with learning. They are well informed about children who have poor vision, impaired hearing, or whose speech is delayed. All this information is used effectively to plan appropriate and exciting activities for the variety of individual needs. Just occasionally, the teacher has found a need for extra help for children with very specific learning difficulties. Action was taken for example, to improve provision for a child who has recently transferred to Year 1. Learning objectives are carefully shared with children at the start of every lesson and then reviewed equally carefully at the end. Adults work hard to encourage all children's enjoyment, curiosity, co-operation and independence and together they create a delightful classroom atmosphere and learning environment.

Personal, social and emotional development

59. Teaching and learning are very good in this area. Children quickly learn to trust the adults who are responsible for their care and welfare. Parents are impressed by the way the headteacher, teacher and her assistants work together to make children welcome and encourage good relationships. Parents have no difficulty persuading children to get ready for school. Already, after being in the reception class for such a short time, boys and girls are all full of enthusiasm for learning. In their behaviour and attitudes they display many signs of very good achievement for their age. They become engrossed in lessons and listen intently for extended periods of time when the teacher is talking to them, such as when preparing to use clay to make models of their faces. They often make spontaneous observations about things that capture their interest and they concentrate very well. Children take responsibility for tidying up and even the youngest and most immature children try to be independent, for example, they will try to put on aprons, take them off and hang them up on their own. They play sensibly with older children in the playground. They all understand the need for simple rules in the classroom and show strong motivation to remember them.

Communication, language and literacy

60. Basic skills are very well taught and for their age children achieve well in this area. Speaking and listening are very well developed and children also have a very good knowledge of the way in which books are organised and the purposes of writing. They all understand the meaning of 'title' and recognise simple words repeated in the text, such as 'Biff'. The higher-attaining children already read whole words and phrases with appropriate expression; the lower-attaining use their growing knowledge of letter sounds to work out key words, such as 'is' and 'it'. In all the work that they do with children, teachers and their assistants ensure that they challenge children to talk, share ideas and understand the need for oral and written forms of communication. A very good example of this occurred in the computer suite when

children were learning to use a drawing program. The teacher drew children's attention to swirling and curling patterns and entered a sentence about them under the computer drawings.

61. The emphasis on good communication is strong in all the areas of learning and the environment is rich in print. The walls and learning areas contain numerous captions, questions, labels and books. Children are encouraged to pause, browse, and learn from what they see. Under photographs of themselves as babies, one caption reads, for example, 'Can you guess who the babies are in these photographs?' Captions in the attractive book corner prompt children to identify favourite stories and to write the title of a book they have enjoyed and place it on a bookworm chart. In addition to reading stories and rhymes each day, teachers promote a love of reading by involving parents as partners. They appreciate the contribution of those who share books with children every evening and who come into the classroom to help. They aim to encourage every child's family to help develop good reading habits as much as they can.

62. Children are carefully taught to form letters legibly and neatly and to write their own names. They make their own dictionaries. One child with special educational needs, however, had difficulty with drawing pictures to match the sounds of each letter. The approach had not been adapted to compensate for poor pencil control, and the child would have benefited from making use of photographs or pictures to represent each letter. Teachers provide stimulating opportunities to read and discuss stories, poems and information books on a daily basis. In one very good lesson children 'had a go' at making a page for a class book, based on the story 'Who is it?' At the end of the lesson every child was deservedly given a sticker as a reward. The only missed opportunity was to refer to the question mark, as children were encouraged to consider further questions, such as 'Is it a boy or a girl?' and 'How do we know?' The teacher was never short of volunteers to provide answers!

Mathematical development

63. As a result of good teaching, children already have an above average knowledge of numbers and are gaining a very good understanding of the language of comparison. Their achievement in this area is good because of access to many practical opportunities to learn mathematical ideas through play, in addition to well structured numeracy lessons. In the good numeracy lesson observed, the teacher made very good use of an inter-active whiteboard to demonstrate how to sort and order numbers of objects up to 10. Several higher-attaining children are already accurate and confident in recognising these numbers whilst only a small minority are still unsure of how to match numbers from one to three. Children remember the sequence of instructions for starting up and closing down a computer. They compare the position of eyes, ears and the nose as they make pictures of their faces, some using vocabulary such as above, next to and pair. One higher-attaining child helped another to learn the preposition 'above' as he correctly answered 'eyebrows' to the question 'What comes above your eyes?' The water play area is used imaginatively to extend children's knowledge of capacity and measure. There are instructions on display, for example, for filling containers and for discussing whether they are empty, full or half full. Children are given weekly mathematical targets and encouraged to practise them at home as well as at school. This week's target, to learn to say number names in order to twenty, was not only prominent on the wall but also used immediately after registration as a quick consolidation activity. There is no room for doubt that mathematics is given appropriate emphasis in the curriculum.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

64. This area is very competently taught and results in children making remarkable progress in their knowledge of ICT, and good progress in the foundations of science, design and technology, history, geography and religious education. Teachers make excellent use of resources and organise groups very well to enable children to share and help each other. In an excellent lesson in the computer suite children had plenty of opportunities to use a mouse, work on the keyboard and to use the printer. Adults also make very good use of a digital camera to make portraits of children's profiles, and then children use them to make a class book about themselves. Children have regular access to tape recorders and earphones and often listen for sustained periods to stories and music. This helps them express preferences. They love making things with construction toys and different materials. Discussion about the properties of clay prior to making clay faces was very well managed and children made many discoveries, such as that when clay is exposed to air it hardens and becomes brittle. Children are interested in how things are made and why some making activities are special. A boy and girl who have just started in Year 1 remember, for example, making bread for harvest and look forward to the festival coming around again soon. Children are curious about how they grow and finding out more about their bodies. They enjoy putting labels on the right body parts on a life-sized picture of a child. Parents, too, play a full part in extending children's knowledge of where they live and how they change and develop. They have loaned photographs and samples of baby clothes to stimulate interest in the topic of growth.

Physical development

65. Though there was insufficient first-hand evidence to make a firm judgement about standards achieved, the quality of planning and teaching is very good in this area of learning. Children have regular well-organised opportunities to exercise in the school hall. They practise manipulative skills by using their fingers and hands daily to shape and cut materials and handle tools and classroom play equipment. For example, they make very good progress as they make models with dough and clay and play musical instruments. The standard reached by the full-time group of seven children who made clay masks was very high for their age. Particular attention is also given to making sure children have opportunities to actively explore the environment for learning outside the classroom. These areas have been very imaginatively developed with considerable help from parents. During the past year they have raised over £700 to purchase climbing and scrambling equipment. Playground markings are also very appealing to children and are used well at the beginning of the day and at playtimes. Classroom support staff have devised an excellent scheme that encourages pupils in Year 6 to play outside with reception children and this helps children to learn to use space imaginatively and collaborate in shared tasks. It also increases children's awareness of the importance of exercise and what happens to the body when it works hard.

Creative development

66. Teaching and learning are very good in this area. Very good use is made of adults' skills in music and art to teach children to express themselves in different ways. Children are taught to sing with enjoyment and expression, and to create soft and loud sounds using percussion instruments. They thoroughly enjoy music lessons and are quick to respond to invitations to suggest different ways of making sounds with their hands or feet. In the lesson seen they shared imaginative ideas, such as flicking their fingers, slapping their hands on the floor and rubbing the palms of their hands together. The teacher kept their attention and interest throughout the lesson and in view of this recognises she should provide even more opportunities for children to initiate learning activities for themselves. Children also made considerable progress in another lesson where the objective was to make clay models of their faces. Careful demonstration and explanation by the teacher and excellent use of mirrors to study their own image resulted in every child making a well-proportioned face.

They had all the usual features and also individual characteristics, such as plaits and hair-bands. In addition to structured activities there are many activities for children to choose for themselves, such as painting, drawing and making models. The imaginative play areas inside and outside the classroom are popular with children because they are so well equipped and organised. They do much to extend children's vocabulary, improve their ability to organise their own play and their confidence to explore the learning environment.

ENGLISH

67. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall. The trend in statutory assessment results has deteriorated in Year 2 but standards at the end of Year 6 were as high in 2002 as they were in 1997. The trend has been even over the intervening five years, despite fluctuations. There were two relatively unsuccessful years when they matched, but did not exceed, national averages. Three, including this year, were good years when results exceeded national averages. In 2002, an impressive 95 per cent of pupils in Year 6 reached at least the expected standard, including 100 per cent of the girls.

Strengths in the subject

68. Teaching is good overall. A particularly high quality of teaching in Years 4 to 6 accounts for the good standards achieved at the end of Year 6. The decision to reorganise group reading in junior classes has been very successful and has resulted in the considerable improvement in the standards achieved by older juniors.

69. Most pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 work securely within the expected levels for their ages and many pupils work at the higher standard, especially in speaking and listening in both key stages, and in reading in Year 6. Standards in writing are broadly in line with those expected nationally. Currently, most pupils are working confidently within the levels expected, with a good proportion in Year 6 likely to reach the higher standard of Level 5 by 2003. Findings of the inspection support the more favourable judgement made by the teacher in teacher assessment in 2002 rather than the outcomes of statutory assessment tests. It was confirmed through a scrutiny of samples of work that many pupils failed to make the best use of their good literacy knowledge and skills in a task to create a publicity leaflet.

70. Pupils usually make effective progress in speaking and listening as a result of a broad range of opportunities for talk and drama, both in lessons and outside of lessons. At Christmas, younger pupils, for example, successfully performed a musical nativity play. The video of the play shows that they were very confident in speaking their lines clearly and with expression. By the end of Year 2, most pupils listen carefully and follow instructions. Younger infants are good listeners and are always keen to make a contribution to oral activities. Many pupils express ideas and opinions in clear extended sentences. Higher-attaining pupils discuss their reading books and confidently offer opinions about the story. Teachers try to ensure that all pupils make a full contribution to lessons and those with special educational needs have good support from the classroom assistants so that they too participate well in whole-class discussions. Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening as they move through Years 3 to 6. They regularly work in pairs, sharing their ideas and opinions in all subjects of the curriculum, and coming to a consensus of opinion. They learn the technical vocabulary of subjects and use it appropriately; for example in science lessons.

71. The school makes good use of a structured reading scheme to develop pupils' reading skills. It also encourages pupils to make effective use of dictionaries, thesauruses, information books and ICT to develop correct spelling, knowledge of similes and synonyms, and to undertake independent research. Pupils know how to use an index and contents page and how to locate books in the library that effectively support their research skills in other subjects, such as history. Year 2 pupils, for example, made an information book called 'Castles' and higher-attaining pupils were able to add a contents page, a glossary and an index. The home/school reading journal that pupils keep encourages regular reading at home as well as in school.

72. Pupils with identified reading difficulties receive very good additional support from teachers and classroom assistants so they make sound progress in their reading. Group and guided reading activities outside the literacy hour are successfully used to promote older pupils' reading for understanding. This has resulted in 100 per cent of eleven-year-old pupils gaining the expected Level 4 or higher in the statutory tests in 2002. Higher-attaining pupils read fluently and expressively and enjoy talking about the story they are reading and explaining what is happening. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 read poetry and a range of literature. By the end of Year 6 pupils have become independent readers and most have preferences for different authors. Although these often include J. K. Rowling and the Harry Potter stories, it is not to the exclusion of other authors. Pupils' progress in reading is consistently monitored by teachers and satisfactory records of their achievement are kept to monitor their progress.

73. Handwriting is taught very well and there is appropriate emphasis on comprehension and the purposes of writing. Pupils in Year 6 write fluently in joined script. By the end of Year 2, most pupils use capital letters and full stops correctly, although some pupils still use a mixture of upper and lower case letters in words. Higher-attaining pupils are beginning to use interesting vocabulary, for example, 'Dad came pounding down the path...' and 'The seagull swooped down...' By the end of Year 6, pupils are attaining well. This is because teachers in Years 4 to 6 model writing on the board very clearly to show pupils how to develop their ideas and improve their work. Pupils effectively write in a number of styles, for different purposes and with a specific audience in mind. They produce a good range of creative writing and write character studies, diary entries and reports. They also write informative factual accounts, letters of complaint and clear persuasive scripts. They learn to write descriptively; for example, Year 4/5 pupils studied *Leopard* a hunter poem of the Yoruba people of West Africa and, using it as a model, one pupil wrote:

*Placid pursuer
Once a young cub, all fluffy and soft*

*Spirited slaughterer
her paws pad softly over the grass
while she searches for prey.*

74. By the age of eleven, pupils use more complex sentences in their writing and have learned to effectively use figurative language.

*It was so still you could hear dreams and thoughts
hovering across the beach,
like children yelling in the playground.*

75. By Year 6 pupils edit their work effectively and understand the importance of redrafting writing to improve the plot, the sequence of ideas, or sentence structure. They often work with a partner, commenting sensibly on each other's work.

76. Teachers have responded well to the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and most implement it well. In Years 1, 4, 5 & 6, teachers use skilful questioning to encourage pupils' thinking and to clarify their understanding. They take great care to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are included in the whole-class discussions. Group activities are adapted to meet the needs of groups of pupils of differing abilities and backgrounds, and assessments are carried out regularly in lessons. The final session of the lesson is used to see if the objectives set have been achieved and to correct any misconceptions. When teaching is very good or excellent, teachers display an enthusiasm for the subject, which effectively motivates pupils to sustain concentration and work hard.

77. English makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the study of appropriate texts, which allows the pupils to explore their own feelings and values. For example, the school uses visits by poets and artists to stimulate and enhance the work of the pupils. The poet, Ros Goddard, worked very successfully with the older pupils to link abstract art and poetry. Many of the poems are of an excellent standard and are displayed along with the abstract painting. Together they make an interesting display.

*I see an arrow pointing my destiny
I hear a deadly silence drowning my brain
I am alone but a stranger still watches.*

78. The subject is being effectively managed. The co-ordinator has a clear plan of what needs to be done to raise standards further. She provides good support for colleagues. She checks the planning and has also observed the quality of teaching and noted where lessons have room for improvement. She has been proactive, for example, in learning from statutory assessment results and taken the decision to focus on improving writing skills in junior classes and the organisation of shared reading times in the infants. The use of ICT and the use of literacy skills in other subjects have been appropriately identified as areas for further development. The school makes sound use of a range of assessment procedures to set individual targets for improvement. Higher expectations of higher-attaining pupils have led to an increase in the percentage attaining well above average standards. Their achievement compares favourably with pupils in similar schools. There have been useful initiatives to boost the standards achieved by lower-attaining pupils, for example earlier intervention for the youngest pupils and additional learning support for the older pupils. Teachers' assistants have been well trained and lead literacy groups very competently. They have a positive effect on pupils' learning.

79. The subject has a good range of resources, including fiction and non-fiction books, picture packs, computer software and CD ROMs. The school has a good collection of Big Books for use during Literacy lessons, these together with the non-fiction books are adequately housed in the library, a room shared with the computer suite. The library was not seen in use during the inspection.

Areas for development

80. Pupils have many opportunities to write in subjects other than English, and overall pupils of all levels of attainment make good use of literacy in science, religious education, history and geography, to write notes, instructions and reports. There are relatively few examples, however, of pupils writing at greater length and depth as they move through the school. There is little to distinguish, for example, between some writing in religious education from pupils in Year 4 and pupils in Year 6 who work in similar attainment bands.

81. Teaching in Years 2 and 3, though predominantly sound, is not fully secure. Two lessons were unsatisfactory and others had some shortcomings that distracted pupils from learning well. It was noticeable that, at this early stage of the autumn term, teachers do not yet know pupils well enough to be sure what to do to encourage them to work to the best of their abilities. They do not manage all pupils effectively, tending sometimes to make negative comments about pupils' responses rather than praising effort. As a result, a minority of Year 2 and younger junior pupils is not good at listening. They become rather listless and lose interest and this impedes their learning. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 2 and 3 enjoy stories but often lack confidence to use their knowledge of letter blends to help them to read unfamiliar words. Lessons in both year groups provide sound opportunities for pupils to practise Basic English skills but learning is also inhibited because the teacher rushes pupils to answer questions quickly. Pupils have insufficient time to think or ask questions of their own. Sometimes lesson objectives are too ambitious, as in one lesson about speech marks in Year 3 when pupils became confused and needed several reminders of the purpose of the task. Marking is not consistently thorough so that opportunities are missed to draw pupils' attention to recurring errors, such as reversed letters or incorrect spellings.

82. The weaker lessons gave some insight, therefore, into why the school, despite sound efforts, has not yet been successful in reversing the decline in statutory assessment tests in Year 2. It needs to raise the quality of teaching and concentrate rigorously on eliminating significant weaknesses, such as boys' persistently poor results compared with boys of the same age in similar schools. Plans to address these areas for improvement should continue to be a high priority to enable pupils in every class to make very good progress.

MATHEMATICS

83. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards should have been higher in Year 2 than they were between 1999 and 2002 but in Year 6 they have risen steadily and were very high in national tests in 2002.

Strengths in the subject

84. Skilled teaching in Year 1 enables pupils to build on the good start they make in the reception class. By the end of this year, for example, most pupils count confidently and solve addition and subtraction problems with up to ten objects. The higher attainers sequence numbers to 100 and use appropriate methods to solve addition and subtraction problems. In a lesson observed, pupils only just starting Year 1 were gaining confidence and speed in adding single digit numbers to make 7. Higher-attaining pupils could count backwards and forwards between 0 and 20, and some could answer questions like 'what number is 4 less than 14?' By the end of Year 2 pupils are tackling a much wider range of tasks and the higher-attaining pupils are adding and subtracting to more than 100, working with simple fractions and learning about symmetry, right angles and two and three-dimensional shapes. In one lesson some pupils at the beginning of Year 2 had good recall of number bonds to 20 and were able to answer quickly such questions as 'what is added to 13 to make 20?'

85. In Years 4, 5 and 6 there is some very good and sometimes excellent teaching. This has enabled pupils of all levels of prior attainment to make rapid progress over these years and achieve some very good standards by the end of Year 6. Almost all pupils by this stage are using their understanding of place value to multiply and divide numbers by 10 and 100 and higher-attaining pupils are working with decimals to three places. They measure and draw angles accurately, construct frequency and pie charts, sometimes using a computer, plot a position using co-ordinates and measure weight, distance, area and volume using the full range of standard units. In a lesson observed during this inspection many Year 4 pupils were confidently working with numbers up to 100,000 and some beyond. Most could round

numbers to the next 10 or 100. In another lesson Year 5 and Year 6 pupils were quick to spot number patterns, such as odd and even, or numbers with a common factor. Most completed the main activity to multiply by nearly 50 or nearly 100 with confidence. For example, finding 26×48 by halving 2600 (26×100) and taking away two lots of 26. The higher-attaining group tackled a complex problem with Ancient Egyptian multiplication in a very positive and mature way.

86. Teachers in the very successful lessons have high expectations for learning and behaviour. They establish very good relationships with pupils through a climate of mutual respect. They set very clear objectives for learning. These are shared with the pupils so that they all fully understand what is expected of them. Good assessment enables tasks to be carefully targeted at different levels of attainment and skilled questioning encourages pupils to explain their thinking. In these lessons the pupils positively enjoy rising to the challenge and all of them make very good progress.

87. The National Numeracy Strategy is now well established and the recent purchase of a published scheme has helped to build teacher confidence. Setting is successfully used for a few pupils. Moving up or down a class gives them the chance to work at a more appropriate level, and regular extra support is given to pupils identified as having particular difficulties with numeracy. This support, given by a specially qualified non-teaching assistant and overseen by the co-ordinator, has helped to increase confidence and raise standards for a good number of pupils with special needs. The co-ordinator has shown good leadership, both as a role model and in his efforts to support other teachers in the classroom. He has introduced a series of initiatives in the last few years with the aim of raising standards. Many of these, such as the assessment and marking policies, have already had a positive impact.

Areas for development

88. The quality of the teaching is not consistent throughout the school. This results in a decline in the rate of learning in the middle years. It goes some way towards explaining the relatively poor results at the end of Year 2 even though there is evidence to show that special educational needs in numeracy, pupil mobility and extended holidays were a contributory cause of recent gender differences in standards. It does not, however, explain the poor performance of boys in years previous to 2002. The inspection team could find no difference in the way boys and girls were treated, and nothing to suggest that particular teaching styles are to blame.

89. There is an established system for checking and evaluating teaching in the classroom, but this has not been sufficiently focused on trying to identify the things that impede as well as improve learning. For example, there has been no analysis of the extent to which all teachers ask probing questions or provide all pupils with an equal chance to explain their thinking. Recognising this, the co-ordinator has advised more explicit use of the final few minutes of the numeracy hour to probe and evaluate learning. It is important too, to recognise that the very good behaviour evident in most lessons occasionally lapses in Years 2 and 3. Class routines need to be firmly established, so that even when a class is shared or is taken by another teacher, pupils know what is expected of them and react accordingly.

90. There are times when the group work sessions go on too long and pupils struggle to maintain concentration. In some cases the same learning could take place in a shorter time. The subject policy and scheme is not as explicit as it could be about the promotion of numeracy in other subjects, for instance work with temperature and negative numbers in science, measuring in design technology or data handling in ICT. Whilst there was a good range of evidence in infants books that numeracy is consolidated through such things as measuring quantities of ingredients in cooking and the circumference of parts of the arm,

waist and head, it was not always easy to see in teachers' plans. There was a distinct lack of evidence in junior books of pupils devising written problems for each other to work out. They could be encouraged to use their own initiative to identify interesting problems associated with real life, such as planning how to spend a budget for a party or calculating how much carpet they would need to cover the classroom.

SCIENCE

91. There has been good improvement in science since the last inspection when pupils were making sound progress throughout the school and achieving standards in line with national averages in Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils are making good progress in both key stages and achieve above average standards by the end of these years. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and those from settled Traveller backgrounds progress at the same rate as other pupils. Results of statutory assessment have been good. In Year 2, in 2001, the school was in the top five per cent of schools nationally when 100 per cent of pupils reached the expected standard. Lower-attaining pupils performed particularly well. 31 per cent of pupils gained Level 3 this year, seven per cent higher than in 2001. In Year 6, in 2001, the school's performance in the science tests was above average in comparison with similar schools and results were even better in 2002.

Strengths in the subject

92. Attitudes to the subject are very good. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good in most classes and this leads to pupils being well motivated and trying hard. They co-operate and work well together, which means that they are able to take full advantage of the wide variety of experimental and investigative tasks planned by the teachers.

93. Teaching overall is good in the infant classes and often very good in the juniors. In the best lessons, teachers set clear objectives for learning that are communicated to the pupils. Planning and class management are of a high order so that no time is wasted and pupils learn at a brisk pace. Questioning skills are very good and give pupils the confidence to express opinions knowing that all opinions are respected. Teachers throughout the school are confident in their subject knowledge and use effective teaching methods so that pupils make good progress in acquiring scientific skills as well as knowledge. The key to this success lies in the way pupils are encouraged to carry out their own investigations in an independent way and draw their own conclusions. This process starts in the early years and is continued throughout the school. By the time pupils reach the older classes they capably organise an investigation taking account of safety factors, the need to make a test fair and the importance of drawing conclusions based on the evidence. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 were confidently predicting which materials would conduct electricity and planning a test to see if they were right. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were able to explain that when testing materials for sound insulation there should be only one variable and that if it was to be a fair test, everything else should stay the same.

94. The curriculum is broad and balanced and takes full account of National Curriculum requirements. The system of planning through topics encourages much cross-curricular work, and many science units are linked to subjects such as ICT, design and technology, art or physical education. For instance, one of the topics in the early years is 'Ourselves' and in addition to learning about how the human body moves, pupils are making pictures of themselves on the computer, painting portraits in art and exploring movements in physical education. The co-ordinator has been instrumental in introducing a new scheme of work, improving the school environmental area and encouraging visits and visitors to enhance the curriculum.

Areas for development

95. The school has been adapting a published science scheme for about a year, and the co-ordinator is aware of the need to monitor its implementation carefully and to ensure that there is a systematic progression of skills and knowledge. Where there is more than one year group in a class it is particularly important to avoid repetition of work covered in the previous year and at the moment this is not always the case. This is also linked to the need for more rigorous assessment. Plans are well in hand to include science in the assessment folders already used for literacy and numeracy, and this should help teachers' planning. Other priorities, such as differentiated tasks for higher and lower-attaining pupils, making assessments related to National Curriculum levels, and giving more time to writing and presentation are identified in the latest curriculum review but not in the subject development plan. There is a need to make sure that initiatives that will have a positive effect on learning are more clearly identified.

96. Teaching is usually of a good or better quality but it is still important to improve the approach to checking what is happening in each classroom. Current observations do not always focus on methods that make a real difference to learning.

ART AND DESIGN and DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

97. Although there are many links between these two subjects, it is clear that standards throughout the school in art are higher than in design and technology. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils benefit from consistently good teaching in art and make good progress and reach standards above national expectations by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Standards in design and technology, on the other hand, are in line with expectations and the subject is soundly taught. There are no significant differences in the achievement of any groups of pupils in these subjects.

Strengths in the subjects

98. Design and technology is soundly planned to ensure at least minimum coverage of the required curriculum. Good links are often made with other subjects, such as English, music and science. The class of oldest pupils provided a good example of this when, following on from science work on 'sound', pupils experimented with a variety of materials to make sounds that could accompany a young children's story. This information will be used to plan and make a range of musical instruments. Pupils in Year 2 have made pictures with moving parts based on their study of minibeasts, and have used a computer program to plan their design for Joseph's coat. The subject is often linked with history through such projects as sewing a Tudor design onto material to use in the making of a calendar.

99. Art, too, is often linked to other subjects but its strength lies mainly in the wide variety of techniques and materials used to produce a range of high quality work throughout the school. There are examples in portfolios, photographs and on display of work showing the use of collage, clay, pastels, charcoal, water colours, fabric paints and many more. From the reception class onward pupils are encouraged to use these materials in an imaginative and creative way, so that by the end of Year 2 they are already producing individual or collaborative pieces of high quality. Their work shows how well the subject contributes to pupils' social, cultural and spiritual development. A good example is the lovely watercolour pictures on display connected with a topic on butterflies that were inspired by studying pictures by a well-known artist. Famous artists are very well used to inspire work, other examples being sculptures created from natural materials and pictures in the style of Picasso, Van Gogh or Matisse. Work produced during cross-curricular days, such as the

large and colourful models of sea creatures hanging in the entrance hall, are also of high quality. By the end of Year 6 pupils are able to talk with confidence about a wide range of artistic experiences.

100. Art also makes a good contribution to literacy through its links to creative writing. For example, the class of older juniors have worked with a poet to produce poems linked to abstract patterns. Spirituality is developed well through the use of music and poetry to inspire creativity, and through the appreciation of the work of other artists. The co-ordinator has been very successful in inspiring the staff and making art a central part of the school curriculum.

Areas for development

101. New policies are in hand for both subjects and need to concentrate on the systematic development of skills and knowledge. This is particularly important in design and technology where at present it is difficult to see the systematic progression of skills. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are already beginning to plan and evaluate their work but this sound beginning is not adequately built upon higher up the school. More advanced skills, such as designing for a purpose taking note of the views of users, making progressive plans, or evaluating in depth without the aid of worksheet questions, is not much in evidence in the older classes. In both subjects there is a need to collect and grade pieces of pupils' work so that teachers know what can be expected of pupils at each stage. Lesson time for design and technology is very restricted and the co-ordinator would do well to check its adequacy in each class.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

102. By the age of 7 and 11, pupils' attainment matches national expectations and standards of achievement are satisfactory. There is no significant variation between the attainment of different groups of pupils in either the infant or junior year groups. The school has maintained satisfactory standards and a sound quality of teaching since the last inspection.

Strengths in the subjects

103. In history, role-play and educational visits are used well to give pupils a sense of life in the past and to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. For example, pupils visit Hartlebury Castle museum where they dress in Victorian style clothes and experience what it was like in a Victorian schoolroom or to be a servant in a great house. This helps to build confidence in speaking and listening, while at the same time re-enforcing knowledge and understanding of historical events. These visits make a lasting impression on the pupils, who talk about them with great animation. After a successful visit to Ludlow Castle for a geography project, pupils in Year 2 worked in pairs to produce a whole-class guidebook to the castle. Teachers made effective links with history, literacy and ICT as children were given a photograph from their visit and wrote a contribution to the guidebook using a computer. The result is a very pleasing 'Big Book'.

104. Due to the way the subjects were timetabled during the course of the inspection no geography lessons were seen, and only one history lesson which was with the youngest junior pupils. However, there is sufficient evidence in teachers' plans to show that a suitable range of topics is studied. There is some progression built into these topics, but the co-ordinator is aware that there is room for improvement in checking that appropriate progression of skills is taught rigorously. Evidence from pupils' previous work and current displays, and from talking to the co-ordinator and pupils, indicates that the quality of work in geography and history meets expectations. All pupils make satisfactory progress in all aspects of the subjects. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well.

105. By the age of seven, pupils progress well in map reading. They are aware of their location in the British Isles and they locate London and some major cities in an atlas. They understand that in order to read a map a key to the symbols is needed. The teachers use imaginative approaches to improve pupils' knowledge and awareness of the immediate locality through regular walks to observe and discuss conservation issues, such as the need to prevent litter.

106. By the age of eleven, pupils show a satisfactory understanding and knowledge of chronology and are competent using a timeline. Pupils use secondary sources of evidence well to find out about the past and benefit from a good variety of Victorian artefacts when studying that period. They have studied a range of periods in history, and in geography they have learned about many of the world's physical features, such as rivers and mountains. They consider environmental issues, such as the effects of tourism on the environment.

107. Both history and geography have satisfactory resources, which are being added to continuously. Artefacts are displayed well in classrooms and pupils use them when discussing their function and for writing factually. The school has good links with the local high school and higher-attaining pupils have benefited from being able to attend history/ICT workshops. The schemes of work are based on the national guidelines and the long-term plan has been completely revised to take account of mixed-age classes.

Areas for development

108. Teachers insist on a good standard of presentation but there are missed opportunities in some classes in both history and geography for pupils to use their good writing skills in depth. For example, pupils of all levels of attainment in Year 6 made good notes in response to enquiry tasks, such as, *How has transport or the school changed in the last 50 years?* They did not, however, use these notes to write more extended prose to compare or evaluate life then and now. A lower than average share of curriculum time is being devoted to the teaching of history and geography and accounts for pupils' sound rather than rapid progress. The allocation of time is due for review in the light of the school's determination to extend writing opportunities in both subjects.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

109. By the ages of 7 and 11, pupils' attainment matches national expectations and achievement is satisfactory. There is no significant variation between the attainment of different groups of pupils in either infant or junior year groups. This represents good improvement since the last inspection.

Strengths in the subject

110. The teaching of ICT is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory and during the inspection excellent lessons were observed. Infants use the Windows operating system to

load a program. They know how to gain access to a specific file. By the age of seven, they change the print size, style and colour of text and know how to use the spell checker and print off their own work. Older pupils use data-handling programs at appropriate levels to enter and retrieve data for work, for example, in science. Pupils also use ICT well for work in design and technology, for example exploring and experimenting with designs and developing the design to make a pattern for Joseph's dreamcoat. By the age of eleven, they have a good understanding of the main tool bar when using programs, such as Granada writer, and successfully incorporate sounds into multi-media presentations. Pupils throughout the school make good use of word-processing skills to edit and present work for display.

111. In the few lessons observed, which all took place in the computer suite, learning was usually good because the lessons were well planned with very clear learning objectives and teachers modelled new skills clearly for pupils to observe and imitate. Good classroom management and organisation allowed pupils to make good use of the time available to them to practise and develop skills. A good example of this was in a Year 6 lesson where pupils were observed beginning to create a computer game for the very youngest children to play. By the end of the lesson every pupil had created a page of sounds which were activated by pictures. Pupils are also beginning to use the Internet but their skills in this area are limited. All pupils have their own e-mail account at school but there was no evidence during the inspection of pupils being taught to use e-mail.

112. The school's use of the New Opportunities Fund has had a significant impact on the quality of teaching and the progress the school is making in raising standards. The introduction of the nationally recommended scheme of work has been effective in ensuring clearly focused lessons and a structure for progression through the school. The co-ordinator supports teachers to develop their confidence and skills in areas that have been identified as being a particular weakness, such as control technology. Good classroom management and clear learning objectives have ensured that teaching of the subject has improved and that good learning takes place.

113. The subject is well led and managed. Satisfactory assessment procedures have been introduced that enable teachers to see areas of learning that need reinforcing before new skills are taught. The co-ordinator has monitored all aspects of the subject and drawn up a detailed development plan to ensure that improvement is ongoing.

114. In the last inspection standards in ICT were below those expected for pupils aged eleven because resources for the subject were inadequate. Since then the school has made very good progress in improving resources. All pupils now have access to a well-equipped computer suite, a portable inter-active whiteboard, a projector and a digital camera. These are regularly used in classrooms. The impact of these improvements is clearly visible throughout the school and account for the rise in standards. Pupils now make good progress in relation to their prior achievement. The majority of the pupils who are now in Year 1 are attaining as well as pupils in Year 2 because these are the first pupils to have had the benefit of the new computer suite for the whole of their time at school. The use of support staff for group work in the computer suite is a success and pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit considerably by being taught by the co-ordinator for ICT. The astute deployment of these staff do much to ensure that pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

Areas for development

115. The co-ordinator has set out a clear plan of action for supporting teaching and learning and aims to ensure that all pupils have rigorous improvement targets in ICT. She has not yet, however, conducted an audit of standards achieved. This needs to be incorporated

into the improvement plan so that teachers and governors know exactly how to build on what pupils can do and address gaps in learning. In view of the co-ordinator's and her colleagues' enthusiasm for ICT, their capacity to succeed with the plan is very good.

MUSIC

116. There is insufficient evidence to judge pupils' overall standards or achievement in music, the quality of teaching and learning, and improvements since the last inspection.

Strengths in the subject

117. Leadership by the co-ordinator has a positive effect on the musical life of the school. The co-ordinator ensures that teachers provide pupils with opportunities to experience a good range of activities.

118. Singing throughout the school is satisfactory in whole-school assemblies and in school productions, such as 'The Grumpy Sheep'. Unison singing is enthusiastic, tuneful and rhythmic. Pupils who take instrumental lessons in Years 4 to 6 make good progress and perform above national expectations. The peripatetic teachers think highly of the musical ability of the pupils.

119. The only lesson seen was good. It was well planned, well organised and taken at a satisfactory pace for the young age group. Consequently, the pupils' interest was held and good learning took place in how to maintain four beats to the bar. Throughout the school pupils are enthusiastic about their enjoyment of music.

120. The music curriculum is broad and balanced and follows national guidelines. A published scheme is used, providing good support for teachers who lack confidence in the subject. There is a very positive impact on the music curriculum of all pupils from the peripatetic teaching. These teachers take part alongside pupils in concerts and assemblies. Older pupils have the opportunity to learn the recorder and to sing in the school choir. The school has also benefited from its strong links with the local high school's music teacher who visits the school to conduct a small school orchestra. The school also takes part in *The Pyramid Prom*, an opportunity for the primary pupils of the area to perform together at the local high school. The school also stages musical/dramatic productions. All these activities make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development by providing opportunities for pupils to perform music from their own and other cultural heritages, and by promoting greater independence and self-confidence.

121. The co-ordinator for music is very keen and knowledgeable. She supports colleagues well by monitoring planning and observing lessons. She keeps tapes of both the whole school performances and pupils' work achieved in lessons. These show that by the age of eleven pupils have a good knowledge of dynamics, rhythm, tempo and pitch and use percussion instruments imaginatively. They learn to perform their compositions from a graphic score, and sometimes make good use of ICT to experiment with sounds. Resources are adequate to support class music lessons.

122. There was no evidence of any significant need for improvements in the subject. Parents consider music to be one of the strongest subjects in the school curriculum and annual reports to parents reflect their point of view.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

123. Only two gymnastics lessons were observed during this inspection, so it is not possible to make an overall judgement on standards in physical education. However, from studying teachers' planning, observing after school clubs, and talking to pupils, it is clear that the good standards reported in the last inspection have been maintained. Boys and girls are equally included in all activities and make similar progress.

Strengths in the subject

124. Teaching is good. Teachers plan a good range of lessons that are enjoyed by all pupils. They show interest in their activities, work hard and at a good pace. The positive and inclusive atmosphere and very good relationships that are evident throughout the school enable pupils of all levels of attainment to make good progress. In the gymnastics lesson observed in the hall, pupils from Years 5 and 6 showed good control in the way they held balance positions and linked them in sequences. Pupils at the after-school games club demonstrated some good skills in controlling and passing a football or netball, and an appreciation of moving into a space to receive a pass.

125. The teaching of games is particularly well developed, and pupils enjoy a very good range of sporting activities in lesson time and after school. Clubs for netball, football, rounders and cricket are well attended by both boys and girls, and teams representing the school have been very successful in local competitions. Other events, such as sports day, parents and teachers versus pupils matches, and an annual track athletics match against other local schools, provide further worthwhile opportunities to extend skills. Community links are very strong with coaches for various sports coming into school to work with the pupils, and teachers from the local high school helping with activities, such as dance.

126. The curriculum is well planned to include all aspects of physical education including outdoor and adventurous activities and swimming. Over the last four years every pupil has achieved the National Curriculum requirements in swimming. Resources are good. The school has a well-equipped hall that is regularly timetabled for every class, and a good-sized playing field as well as a good range of apparatus and sporting equipment. The co-ordinator, who has a qualification as a physical education teacher trainer, provides strong leadership and has helped to provide in-service training to increase the confidence of the teaching staff.

Areas for development

127. Although the balance of time in the planned curriculum is sound, it is clear from talking to the older pupils that their knowledge and understanding of games and sports is greater than that in other areas, such as dance, gymnastics and athletics. The co-ordinator needs to consider whether, when checking standards in lessons, the focus should be on these aspects. The new scheme of work for the subject puts the emphasis on the development of skills, and if the focus for improvement continues to be on the progressive development of these skills in all aspects of physical education, then standards should continue to rise.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

128. Satisfactory standards have been sustained throughout the school since 1997 because the subject continues to benefit from sound leadership and management and consistently sound teaching.

Strengths in the subject

129. Teachers have kept abreast of changes in the local agreed syllabus. The co-ordinator maintains regular oversight of planning to ensure that work for each key stage is matched to recommendations in the syllabus. This means that by the end of Year 2 pupils have begun to realise that many people share a belief in the idea of God as a Creator. They have gained an early insight into the beliefs and customs of different religions and have begun to compare them. They know that Christians and Jews, for example, believe in the power of prayer and attend special places to worship God. They know that the Bible and Torah are special books that contain stories, prayers, rules and principles that provide the foundation for their faith. Pupils in Year 6 know about other world religions. They have explored and compared the Muslim and Hindu beliefs with Christianity. They discuss and write about religious and moral principles in the context of the modern world. They identify moral dilemmas and situations arising from lack of tolerance towards people from different ethnic backgrounds. Consideration of such issues helps explain why people need principles and rules to order their lives. They have a secure perception of the hidden meaning of parables in the Bible, the significance of prayer and the purpose of customs, such as baptism and pilgrimage.

130. There are good features of teaching in both key stages. Pupils are encouraged to talk freely about their ideas and feelings. Intentions for new learning are described well in lesson plans and are explained carefully at the beginning of the lessons. Pupils are clear about what is expected of them. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good and pupils respond well to questions and suggestions. In a successful lesson in Year 1, for example, the idea of special places was introduced in a way that all pupils could easily understand because they related to their personal experiences. The teacher's patient questions and explanations enabled pupils to gain the confidence to explain why their home, a hospital, or a police station is a special place to them. One of the boys provided a detailed account of why a police station is special because the police helped his family with a problem arising from an act of vandalism. By the end of the lesson pupils were ready to move on to consider, next time, why a church is special to Christians. The attention teachers give to considering the quality of life and comfort provided by family and friends contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, and cultural development. Lessons help pupils to value and care for each other.

131. Teachers and teachers' assistants expect pupils to concentrate and try hard. Throughout the school pupils respect this and take pride in the presentation of their work. Teachers make sure that writing and drawings are always finished. They mark work regularly and comments are often positive, providing pupils with the incentive to do their best, such as 'well done, some good suggestions' in a lower-attaining boy's book. Teachers think about ways in which to motivate pupils so that they communicate what they are learning in a variety of ways. There is sound use of stories, labels, descriptions, and encouragement for pupils to express different points of view. The standard achieved by pupils with special educational needs, lower, average and higher attainment is distinguishable by detail in their writing, accuracy of spelling and variety in vocabulary used rather than effort and application, both of which are good. In Year 2, for example, all pupils know that the story of Moses is to be found in the Bible and the Torah but the higher-attaining pupils write at greater length and make reference to text written in Hebrew, the Jewish language. In Year 6, all pupils write about how religious texts are organised. They have all studied the Ten Commandments, thought about why rules are necessary, and steadily improved their ability to summarise, describe and justify what they know and think. Again, it is the quality and depth of the writing that separates the pupils of lower and higher attainment.

132. Resources for learning have been steadily improved since 1997 and are now adequate, of good quality, and well organised. Visits to the local church and other schools stimulate pupils' interest in the subject. This was very apparent when pupils from Year 1 recalled with pleasure the visit to the church with a member of the governing body. Pupils have become more interested in religious education as a result of such changes.

Areas for development

133. The time allocated for lessons is less than many schools manage each week. The amount of work produced by pupils indicates that pupils have too few opportunities to initiate lines of inquiry. Worthwhile discussion at the beginning of lessons is not always exploited well enough. Pupils rarely write at length about aspects of religion that most interest them. Some tasks fail to inspire pupils and the pace of working then slows down. For example, lower-attaining pupils in Year 3 were not challenged by filling in two or three missing words in a sentence about baptism and then colouring in a picture of Jesus being baptised. It was pupils' talk about the picture that made the activity meaningful. Not enough use was made at the end of the lesson for pupils to share either what they had learnt or what they had found difficult. When the work of pupils from different classes is compared, it is not always easy to distinguish between a pupil in Year 4 and another in Year 6. One higher-attaining pupil in Year 4, for example, wrote about as much as a pupil of average ability in Year 6 about the New Testament and Sikh customs.

134. As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils sometimes repeat work or lack opportunities to explore a religious idea from a different standpoint. Comments in books do not make clear connections between the learning objective for religious education and what was good about the response or what was misunderstood. The reason is that assessment is still not as thorough as it could be. Teachers do not all regularly record how, from year to year, pupils learn about religion in more depth. The extent to which they use ICT is unclear in samples of pupils' work. The co-ordinator realises all these things and aims, shortly, to introduce a new assessment system for teachers to try out. She also aims to review and evaluate what pupils have learned well, and where they have experienced difficulties, so that the curriculum can be adapted over the coming year. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and determined to raise standards. Realistic performance management targets have been agreed with the headteacher. The action plan now needs to focus more explicitly on addressing the weaker features of curriculum organisation and teaching and learning.