

INSPECTION REPORT

SYRESHAM ST JAMES CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Syresham, Brackley

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121993

Headteacher: Mr Paul Moreby

Reporting inspector: Mrs Chris Field
9479

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 3rd December 2002

Inspection number: 248311

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	High Street Syresham Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN13 5HL
Telephone number:	01280 850269
Fax number:	01280 850269
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Malcolm Bull
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
9479	Mrs Chris Field	Registered inspector
19664	Mr John Bayliss	Lay inspector
1189	Mrs Sharon Brown	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Arden Inspections
University of Warwick Science Park
Unit 2, Barclays Venture Centre
Sir William Lyons Road
Coventry
CV4 7EZ

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

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in the village of Syresham, four miles north of Brackley in south Northamptonshire. Pupils who attend the school come from the surrounding area and from a mixture of long-established families and from professional families that have moved to the area. The majority of pupils are from White European backgrounds but a very small proportion has a different heritage. All pupils speak English as their first language. There are 72 pupils on roll: 45 boys and 27 girls aged between five and eleven years. Additionally, the school provides for 11 four-year-old children in the reception class. Children's attainment on entry into reception covers a wide range but overall is average. No pupils are eligible for free school meals which is extremely low when compared to other primary schools. Some 19 per cent of pupils have special educational needs that are mainly for moderate learning difficulties. No pupils have a statement maintained. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Syresham St James Church of England Primary School is an effective school. The aims and mission of "Sharing the Caring" are well met in all aspects of its work. The quality of teaching is good overall and this enables most pupils to achieve well and reach good standards by the end of Year 6. The needs of pupils are well met, however the group who could potentially achieve more are the higher attaining pupils. The headteacher provides good leadership and there is a shared commitment to improvement and good capacity to succeed. Overall, the school's expenditure is above that of most other primary schools but in view of the good standards and good quality education, it is judged to provide good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is well led and soundly managed and all staff and the governors join the headteacher in a united partnership to bring improvement.
- The quality of teaching is good and enables most pupils to attain the standards of which they are capable.
- The curriculum is rich and rewarding; it widens pupils' horizons, fosters a good set of values and principles by which to live and prepares them well for future citizenship.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning, standards of behaviour and personal development are all very good and they develop into caring people who are good to know.

What could be improved

- The management systems in place to assist the school in evaluating fully the outcomes of its work are not rigorous enough.
- Teachers' assessments are not consistently identifying where improvement lies and pupils' have only partial insights into how well they are doing across their studies.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Four key issues were identified by the previous 1998 inspection concerning curriculum planning, assessment, teaching in information and communication technology (ICT) and the quality of display and presentation of work. Since then, the school has made good improvement to ICT and has moved below average standards to an above average level and has established effective curriculum planning. Though satisfactory assessment procedures are in place, there is still work to be done to improve the use of

information to ensure that all pupils are achieving the best they can. The presentation of pupils' work is not of a consistently good standard and this requires more attention. Display around the school makes a positive contribution to the good quality-learning environment. The school's improvement to standards was recognised by an Achievement Award in 2001 and this is an indicator of its effectiveness. The school is in a good position to sustain continuous improvement in the future.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	E	A*	C	E
Mathematics	C	C	B	C
Science	B	A	D	E

Key	
Very high	A*
Well above average	A
above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

Similar schools are those schools with up to 8 per cent of the pupils entitled to free school meals. Caution is required however when analysing this data because of the very small size of the group who take the SATs.

The SATs results in 2002 were much below those in 2001 but were not unexpected. The school's data shows that all the pupils who took the tests made satisfactory progress over their time in school. The sample of pupils' work that inspectors scrutinised confirms the picture of satisfactory progress. Current standards are above average by the end of school in English, mathematics, science, ICT, history and music and these reflect overall good achievement. However, the group of pupils who could potentially make better progress are the high achievers. The school does not set consistently challenging work for them nor does it target their learning with sufficient precision. Those pupils with special educational needs are well supported and their progress is regularly reviewed and new targets set for them in individual education plans. They make good progress and achieve well across the curriculum. The standards achieved by Year 2 pupils in 2002 SATs were well above average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. When set against results in similar schools, the standards were well above average in reading, well below average in writing and average in mathematics. The weakest area in standards has been writing, and especially that of boys. The school has tackled this issue with effective strategies that are assisting better standards. Inspectors found no difference between boys' and girls' very positive attitudes and enthusiasm for work. The quality of written work is good across the school, however presentation and handwriting are two aspects for improvement. Children in the reception class make good progress because their needs are well understood and the curriculum gives good opportunities for them to explore and investigate. The school sets manageable and realistic targets for attainment by Year 6, that reflect the pupils who comprise each year group, however they are not challenging enough.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the	Very good. Pupils want to come to school and they all enjoy their work. Pupils try

school	hard; they work happily and purposefully and take full advantage of the good quality education provided.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Standards of behaviour are very good in class, at break and lunchtimes. There have been no exclusions during the last two years.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are very tolerant and caring. Pupils' development as independent and responsible learners who show initiative is very good.
Attendance	Very low last year compared to other schools, largely because of the significant number of parents who took their children on holiday in term-time. The school day starts punctually and time is used very productively.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching is good overall. Pupils aged from 4 to 11, and regardless of background, share the good quality of teaching. The scrutiny of pupils' past work confirms this picture of good teaching. Teaching is consistently very good in music lessons. The teaching of basic skills is a positive feature and there is good development of these across the curriculum. Teachers work hard to make lessons as appealing to boys as girls; this is significant in view of the 2:1 ratio in school. The strong thrust on questioning enables boys to develop good oral responses that helps them rehearse verbally what they then proceed to write. Marking is not good enough in spotting such shortcomings or in identifying improvement and this is the chief weakness in teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and the management of pupils, the use of time and resources; the use of homework and the contribution of support staff to pupils' learning are all strengths. Planning and ongoing assessment and pupils' own knowledge of their learning, whilst satisfactory, could be enhanced. Overall, the school meets the needs of all pupils well because it knows each one as an individual, though there is room for making more consistent the level of demand placed on high achievers. Good quality individual education plans and very well deployed support staff are the key reasons why pupils with special educational needs achieve at the same good rate as their classmates. All pupils work productively and show very good levels of independence and maturity as self-motivated learners.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is broad, rich and exciting and provides pupils with worthwhile learning experiences. The school caters well for pupils in

of the curriculum	mixed-age classes. The strategies for literacy and numeracy are working well. The school's strong focus on citizenship is a very positive feature in helping pupils to build skills to support life-long learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very well fostered and their cultural development well provided for. The pupils become sensible and mature learners who work together well and develop a good set of principles by which to live.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school gives due concern to matters of pupils' health, safety and welfare and provides very good one-to-one support and guidance. Assessment procedures have been improved, though the use of these to set, share and review targets with pupils and parents could be more consistent. Behaviour and attendance are monitored very effectively. The school is doing all that can reasonably be expected to improve attendance but should keep a watchful eye on the falling rates.
Partnership with parents	Satisfactory. The school strives hard to keep in close personal contact with all parents, most of whom take a very keen interest in the education of their children. The quality of information provided is good. The responses arising from this inspection's consultation with parents, suggest conflicting views about the quality of education being provided.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher sets clear educational direction and leads the school forward with quiet determination. His management of staff is sensitive and promotes well their professional development. Wider management aspects concerning monitoring and evaluating performance are constrained by his very high teaching commitment.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are well informed about the work of the school. They ensure that all legal requirements are met. They apply the principles of best value to help in decision-making well, particularly in the purchase of goods and services.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. There is a useful annual audit undertaken by the head and governors in conjunction with the local education authority that assesses the effectiveness of the school. The school improvement plan usefully ties into this by focussing on priority areas. However, insufficient attention is given to tracking pupils' progress during their time in school or to setting targets aimed at maximising their potential.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There are no shortages of staffing or learning resources in this small school. Accommodation is adequate though the school has a small hall, no field and the secretary and headteacher work from an extremely confined space. Finance is managed effectively and additional finance for boosting standards and for the support of pupils with special educational needs is well

	spent. A large carry forward figure in last year's budget is appropriately earmarked for building developments that will include a sports hall and offices.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good standards of behaviour and their children make good progress. • Their children like school and are helped to become mature and responsible. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school does not keep them well enough informed of how their children are getting on. • The range of activities outside lessons is restricted. • Levels of homework are inconsistent. • Teaching is not good enough • Parents do not feel able to approach the school and the school does not work closely with them

A third of parents responded to the questionnaire issued by inspectors and the above comments represent their views. Parents who attended the meeting with inspectors held much more positive views, as did those to whom inspectors spoke with during their two days in school. Inspectors would reassure those parents with concerns that the school provides good information and pupils' reports meet requirements, teaching is good, homework is appropriate and the range of extra curricular activities is fairly typical for a school of this size.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school is well led and soundly managed and all staff and the governors join the headteacher in a united partnership to bring improvement.

1. Syresham St James Church of England Primary School is an effective school because of the good quality of leadership that draws in all stakeholders in supporting the education of pupils and to securing further improvement. The headteacher gives good leadership to the school and does this in a way that enables everyone to feel valued and their contributions recognised in full. He leads the school forward with quiet determination and a strong sense of Christian values. His leadership ensures that there is good educational direction. His style is motivating and open. He has a clear vision for the future of the school that is focused on the all round education of pupils and to becoming a school of excellence. His approach is very much on building a strong teaching team and is highly supportive of personal and professional development. Clear priorities for improvement are set through a well-conceived action plan that everyone contributes to, and implements. The good improvement seen to developing the provision in ICT from an unsatisfactory level to a good level in four years is testament that the approach works successfully.
2. The headteacher is supported effectively by a willing and enthusiastic staff team, most of whom have been appointed since the time of the previous inspection. Between them, the three teachers and headteacher co-ordinate the ten subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. This is a heavy workload and one they undertake with energy and commitment. As subject leaders they ensure that the subjects they take responsibility for are well resourced and that any required training is provided. The very good quality of curriculum and stimulating experiences provided for the pupils reflect extremely well on the strong commitment the staff pay to providing pupils with very rich, relevant and worthwhile experiences. Communication is good in school and staff share views openly. They recognise one another's strengths and are not afraid to seek support when required. They also freely recognise that the level of critical evaluation could be higher, and the school misses opportunities to identify the weaker aspects of provision as effectively as the positive aspects of its work. As a class teacher for much of the time, the headteacher leads by example in setting high expectations that centre on helping all pupils do their best and that set the standard for the good quality of education being provided. However, the time spent in class has a downside in that it restricts the time available for management activities, primarily monitoring and evaluation both of which are too reliant on informal systems to check for quality and effectiveness. For example, there is a need to bring tighter focus in lesson observations and when sampling pupils' work on those things that will help the school move forward such as looking at the presentation of work, spellings and whether the level of work being achieved, particularly by the highest achievers is good enough. Additionally, too little attention has been paid to tracking pupils' progress year-on-year to ensure that all pupils are learning at the best rate they can and across the subjects they study. There is a will to take this next step towards improvement and the headteacher and other teachers both individually and collectively, are committed to improvement and are ready to advance this area.
3. Governors are well informed about the work of the school. They ensure that all legal requirements are fully met and seek to apply the principles of best value to help in decision-making, particularly in the purchase of goods and services. They hold a sceptical view of the data available to compare the school's results with those schools with a similar intake of pupils, whether in Northamptonshire or nationally since the small

size of year groups makes statistical comparisons unreliable. Governors use other indicators of school performance, for example they monitor the quality of education first hand by undertaking regular visits. They seek the views of local education authority officers, the views of parents and community and use these to help gauge effectiveness. Governors are equally keen that the school provides a rounded education that enables all pupils to make best use of their academic and personal talents. One of their own success criteria is that the school should be recognised as an extension of the family; a place in which pupils are encouraged to show respect for themselves and one another and one in which moral values and principles are given high regard. The school is truly inclusive in educational, social and personal terms due to this concern for every pupil as an individual. In this way they ensure that the school upholds the principles of best value effectively.

4. There are no shortages of staffing or learning resources. Accommodation is adequate though the school has a small hall, no field and the secretary and headteacher work from an extremely confined space. The school's budget is put to good use in the interests of the pupils. The school improvement plan is well focused on the core priorities of the school and the identified improvements to standards, the curriculum and the quality of education are all costed efficiently. Extra funding to help lower attaining pupils to achieve at their level of capability is also used well. Thus, pupils with special educational needs or those who require additional literacy support, for example, are taught well and the progress that they make is at least as good as their class-mates. The school has sensibly tapped into additional resources, for example grants to support new buildings, to the benefit of pupils' education. A large carry forward figure in last year's budget is appropriately earmarked to pay for building work.

The quality of teaching is good and enables most pupils to attain the standards of which they are capable.

5. All evidence seen by inspectors, including 24 lesson observations and the scrutiny of a comprehensive range of pupils' past work points to good teaching and good learning. Three quarters of lessons observed were of good quality with nearly a quarter of very good quality. None of the lessons observed were unsatisfactory. This good picture is a tribute to the determined leadership and strong team spirit amongst staff. Past weaknesses in teaching have been overcome and new strengths have emerged. The school is particularly successful at supporting new teachers to school, including those new to the profession to enable them to be effective in their class teaching roles.
6. All pupils from 4 to 11 years and irrespective of background or gender share this good quality of teaching. Overall, the school meets the needs of all pupils effectively because it knows each one as an individual. The chief shortcomings in otherwise good teaching is the limited use made of assessment in the planning of lessons that consistently assist pupils, especially the high attainers to make the progress of which they are capable and the limited focus on identifying improvements in the marking of work. The strengths of teaching very much outweigh the weaker elements. Teachers have good subject knowledge and the management of pupils, the use of time and resources, and the contribution of support staff to pupils' learning, are all strengths. The quality of relationships is very good and this is a key aspect that is apparent in all classrooms and is underpinning the good learning, taking place.
7. Children in the reception class work and play very effectively because they are taught consistently well and the curriculum is planned to provide the necessary experiences in all six areas that comprise the early learning goals. Reception children, as seen during the inspection, are confident and cheerful learners who are provided with many and

varied opportunities to explore, investigate and talk about their learning. The good focus on children's speaking, listening, reading and writing skills is a particular success story. This process starts early as the youngest children in the school are encouraged very successfully to share their ideas and thoughts in expressive ways. For example, in discussion the children speak clearly and with confidence about why a china teapot being sent to someone as a present, needs to be wrapped in bubble wrap, and not just Christmas paper, to stop it from getting broken. The teacher's well-targeted questions ensure that all fully contribute. When writing they are confident to have a go at retelling the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* for example or writing on the weighing scales which objects are the *heaviest* or *lightest*. The children make good progress in learning and this serves them well in their journey to build skills, knowledge and understanding as they progress through the school.

8. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school. The good quality is a reflection of the integrated nature of the work of teachers and support staff. They all know the needs of their pupils well. The individual education plans enable appropriate action to be taken to make the pupils' learning effective and they make good progress.
9. The skills of literacy and numeracy are being taught effectively. The school is successfully implementing the national strategies. Planning is tied in closely to following national guidelines but is not always adapted well enough to fully meet pupils' individual needs, particularly the highest achievers. In otherwise satisfactory lessons, teachers do not share fully with pupils the objectives they have set for learning. In the better lessons observed, the teacher not only introduced the objectives at the outset so that everyone was clear about what they were expected to know, understand and be able to do by the end of the session, but also returned to them at the end of the lesson and asked the question, "how well do you think you have done?" This is good practice that enables both boys and girls to be involved in assessing their own progress and in identifying where improvement lies. Class teachers give good attention to the promotion of basic skills across the curriculum, for example there is well-promoted use of technical vocabulary in subjects such as design and technology and music. The strong thrust on questioning enables boys to develop good oral responses that helps them rehearse verbally what they then proceed to write. The school's push on writing is resulting in good standards but the generally poor presentation of pupils work detracts from this. The school takes full opportunities to promote numeracy skills across the curriculum, for example in science lessons pupils use their mathematical knowledge well to estimate and measure accurately
10. Literacy lessons typically begin with teachers and pupils reading chosen texts and where most teachers take every opportunity to involve pupils through distributing well thought-out questions widely. Purposeful group and individual activities that create good opportunities for pupils to work productively typically follow this. In some instances, the highest attaining pupils are not sufficiently stretched and are required to do the same work as others. For example in a satisfactory lesson in Year 1/ 2, that looked at the *Pied Piper* story as the stimulus for developing poetry writing, the higher achievers quickly identified powerful adjectives to describe the rats such as *lumpy and scuttling*. In group-work they did the same tasks as their class-mates and the opportunity was missed to extend their learning for example through devising their own poems based on *Rats*. Numeracy skills are being promoted systematically and this is a positive feature. Numeracy lessons follow a consistent format that includes a clear focus on mental problem solving and on developing speed and accuracy. In some lessons, opportunities are being missed to assess how well different pupils respond to questioning and are able to articulate their strategies for solving problems. A tighter focus on assessing

pupils' responses could help the school target more precisely those who have secure understanding and could have their learning advanced more quickly as well as identifying those who require more support.

11. The teaching in music is consistently very good. A visiting specialist in support of the school at the time of its previous inspection continues to provide valuable and much appreciated input to this aspect of the curriculum. Lessons focussing on the rehearsal of carols for both the school's Christmas celebrations and the choir's participation in a local festival were observed to be joyous and uplifting experiences that contributed well to the spiritual development of pupils as well as enabling them to attain good standards of work. The performance of the recorder ensemble demonstrated both very good teaching and learning.
12. Teachers in all classes show good levels of subject knowledge across the subjects they teach. This was very apparent in a good science lesson in the Year 5/6 class. The teacher introduced the lesson aimed at developing pupils' knowledge and understanding about fair testing with a high degree of confidence. He had prepared good resources to bring learning alive. No time was lost as pupils looked at the heart and its functions before considering what effect exercise might have on this important muscle and the body's pulse rate. He skilfully moved the learning forward by asking pupils key questions about the heart, which were further stimulated when he showed them an actual pig's heart whilst clasping and unclasping his fist to help them visualise its movement. The pupils considered external influences that can affect heart and pulse rate such as hormones release caused by *flight* and *fright* experiences and the adrenalin rush that athletes experience in competition. They showed good levels of confidence in predicting their own pulse rate before and after exercise whilst taking into account the average pulse rate of a young adult and their own level of fitness. They were very aware of the need to ensure the right conditions prevailed for undertaking a fair test and made good gains in their learning as they carried out their investigations before comparing findings.
13. Teachers manage behaviour well throughout the school and this results in productive and purposeful learning. This was well demonstrated in a good history lesson in Year 5/6 in which pupils were taken on a virtual experience of life in Ancient Greece. Through her innovative approach to enabling pupils to learn about democracy, the teacher knew that feelings would show and possibly emotions get the better of some as they re-enacted a scenario that resulted in the rich male citizen with voting rights getting on in life whilst the female slave who could not vote or leave the city came last in all respects. Her good awareness of the pupils took the likely outcomes on board so that she could intervene as necessary and ensure positive as well as empathic responses. Additionally, the lesson made a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development.
14. Very good relationships are a significant feature in all lessons. Teachers want to do their best for the pupils and vice-versa and this shows. In a good ICT lesson in Year 3/4, the pupils collaborated in pairs as they used the *Logo* program to identify the procedures necessary to draw the shapes they had planned earlier and drawn in free hand. They showed good determination and perseverance as they adapted the commands required, in the light of the adjustment needed, to ensure accurate modelling of the original design. The tight working space in the ICT suite, which became quite hot and stuffy could easily have given rise to restlessness but this was not the case as the teacher's well-timed interactions and quick response to where she was needed ensured that the lesson progressed happily and productively. There was a good sense of achievement as most eventually accomplished what they had set out to accomplish.

15. The good teaching gives rise to good learning and good achievements overall. Inspectors judge that current standards in Year 6, are above average in English, mathematics, science, ICT, history and music. There was insufficient evidence for inspectors to make secure judgements about standards in other subjects, though some good work was seen in design and technology in a Year 3 /4 lesson.
16. In 2001 the school's success in raising standards and commitment to improving the quality of children's learning was recognised by the Government's Achievement Award. The school's performance in National tests (SATs) was not as positive in 2002. Caution is required however when analysing and comparing data because of the very small size of the group who take the SATs each year. The standards achieved by Year 6 pupils in the 2002 SATs were average in English, above average in mathematics and below average in science. Results overall compared as well below the performance found in similar schools. These results were not unexpected. The school's data shows that all the pupils who took the tests made satisfactory progress over their time in school. The standards achieved by Year 2 pupils in 2002 SATs were well above average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. When set against results in similar schools, the standards were well above average in reading, well below average in writing and average in mathematics.
17. The weakest area in standards as shown up by the SATs has been identified as writing, and especially the achievements of boys. The school has been tackling writing with effective strategies that are assisting better standards that should be reflected in 2003 SATs. Inspectors found no difference between boys' and girls' very positive attitudes and enthusiasm for work. Writing standards are judged to be good across the school. The range and quality of writing is good, though some work is marred by sloppy presentation that is not acceptable. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, write letters of apology from the perspective of characters in the traditional tales they have read. Letters from Goldilocks to the three bears make interesting reading. They write party invitations and give instructions for brushing teeth. They write interesting pieces entitled, '*About me...*'. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils have created shape poems in the style of a Christmas tree. One boy has written; '*crystal gold baubles dangle in the forest of branches...*'. In response to the stimulus, '*It was so quiet...*' pupils have written high quality pieces: '*it was so quiet I heard the speedy sound of the clock as it raced against time....it was so quiet that I heard the classroom crying with all the pounding feet thumping on its tongue...*'. In Years 5 and 6, work is creative and original. In a piece that was word processed entitled *Save our Planet*, the author presented good imagery as he wrote: '*The strangely shaped craft passed out of its own galaxy into an enchanted space....as it passed Saturn its rings shone like silver ice going round a monster disco ball...*'.
18. The school sets manageable and realistic targets for attainment in English and mathematics that reflect the pupils who comprise each Year 6 group. Targets in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 for 2003 are higher than in 2002 but are not sufficiently challenging to reflect the school's declared ambitions. The commitment to improvement in standards is good. Managers have begun the process of filtering these into the planning, assessment and evaluation of progress made by distinct groups of pupils. A useful start has been made, for example in setting writing targets for all pupils, but the school acknowledges that more work is necessary to sharpen the practice needed to track whether the progress made by pupils matches the expectations of staff across all of the subjects they learn.

The curriculum is rich and rewarding; it widens pupils' horizons, fosters a good set of values and principles by which to live and prepares them well for future citizenship.

19. The youngest children have settled well into school routines and already are very confident learners as a result of the good attention the staff give to planning and providing a rich and relevant curriculum. The focus here is very much on learning by doing and all experiences are geared toward the children experiencing things for themselves. There is good attention paid to making learning meaningful for the children as for example when they write Christmas cards, wrap presents and then walk to the local shop to post them. They join in assemblies and listen attentively to the stories about good qualities in people from the Bible and older pupils in school. They are confident when asked to list some of the good qualities present in the *Buddies* from Year 6 who look after them at break and lunchtimes.
20. The curriculum for 5-11 year olds is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The school caters well for pupils in mixed-age classes. There is good enrichment from strong church and community links and from the good range of visits and visitors invited into school to share their experiences. The curriculum for ICT is in much better shape than at the time of the previous inspection and good provision is now made whereas before it was unsatisfactory. The school is providing very worthwhile experiences across the whole of the National Curriculum and religious education. The provision made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall and fosters a good set of principles by which to live. The school is aware of the white European background of the majority of pupils and seeks to extend pupils' experiences and understanding about the multi cultural aspects of the world about them through a range of useful studies. For example, pupils have visited a Sikh Gurdwara to enable better insights into the beliefs and lifestyle of non-Christian people. The very good emphasis given to promoting citizenship which includes race awareness, is resulting in pupils being assisted to build skills to support life-long learning. When talking to inspectors a group of older pupils said that the most important thing to them at school was the feeling of being safe and cared for and the wide range of friendships they enjoyed. Parents speak very highly of the very good values and principles the school promotes
21. Good attention is paid to promoting cross-curricular links. For example, as part of their topic on the Tudors, pupils in Year3/4, have written about Tudor life in English lessons, dressed up as armourers during history, made candles during science as part of finding out about liquids and solids and designed and made clay busts. During *Arts Week* every teacher taught every pupil in school. Pupils' experienced weaving, clay-making, felt-making, silk painting, origami, batik work, Thai alphabet work, Chinese and Japanese writing, made Chinese lions and masks and willow pattern plates. Ones showing a Christmas scene have, now replaced lanterns in the style of ancient Chinese ones that flanked the main school corridor that inspectors saw when they first visited the school.
22. The range of experiences made available to pupils is not just limited to school hours. Pupils have met with sporting success in an athletics festival, district netball competition and the recorder ensemble was an entrant in the Young Musicians of the Year event. The school arranges a good programme of visits for example to London to the Tate Modern and London Eye to support work in fairground-rides design. Older pupils participate in a residential visit to Scarborough, York and Whitby as part of a comparative geographical study with Brackley and its environs. They also visit Eden Camp to support their history work. Pupils have worked with Linda Newbury a visiting author to help with developing creative writing skills. Le Club Francais – a French language club has just re-started and is open to all junior-age pupils. Some parents have concerns that the school does not provide enough extra-curricular experiences.

Inspectors judge the range and quality, as shown above, are adding value to pupils' education and hopefully this will reassure them on this count.

23. A key strength in the curriculum is the well-planned Citizenship project which runs three times during a pupils' time in school and is organised so that bronze, silver or gold certificates may be achieved. The scheme involves ten sections that focus on life skills, for example taking responsibility, keeping safe, caring for others and the environment and community service. A range of visitors are involved in sharing their expertise with the pupils, such as police, fire service, school crossing patrol and dental hygienist. Pupils are involved in visits to the Police HQ and undertake courtroom role-play. The life education caravan visits to raise awareness about general health matters including drugs mis-use. There is good opportunity for pupils and parents to evaluate progress in moving through the programme. The project culminates in an official awards ceremony where a high-ranking police officer makes the presentations.

Pupils' attitudes to learning, standards of behaviour and personal development are all very good and they develop into caring people who are good to know.

24. The school's aim that says, '*Our school provides for all our children within the framework of a Christian community, the opportunity to learn, to work hard and to value themselves and other people*' is well reflected in its work and the pupils respond well to the expectation so clearly seen in school. The linchpin in ensuring the aim is well met is the very good quality of relationships at all levels. These focus on tolerance and mutual respect. Staff form very good role models in the promotion of the very good relationships in school. The pupils take their lead from such examples and work together most successfully. Pupils want to come to school and most do their very best when they are there. Their social and moral development is highly developed and so, lessons are sessions where pupils and staff share good learning experiences, enjoyment is tangible and enthusiasm is high. This was clearly observed in virtually all lessons, and especially so in the ICT room that is very tight on space and requires pupils to work sensibly, harmoniously and in an extremely well-organised fashion at all times.
25. Another significant strength is the very good quality of behaviour. There have been no exclusions during the last two years and this is testament to the school's good record on inclusion. Behaviour is very good in lessons, around the school buildings and in the playground. Because the pupils' know the expectation of behaviour so well, they abide by the wishes of others, respect their rights and behave very well towards them. This was clearly seen in a personal and social education lesson in the reception class where the children formed a circle to consider the importance of those who help us as part of the wider topic, '*belonging to a family*'. The children showed good understanding about the need to be kind and love one another. They showed sensitivity to the needs of others in the contributions they made. Relationships during the group discussion were respectful and harmonious, and were helped significantly by the well-chosen approach of the teacher who reinforced key points and ensured that everyone took a full part in sharing their ideas and making their views known. In the independent tasks the children began work on making some delightful family tree books.
26. Pupils' development as independent and responsible learners who show initiative is very good. Confidence as learners and more generally, as people, is highly apparent about the school. The youngest children in school rise to the challenge to be '*worker of the day*' whilst older pupils readily seek the opportunity to show good enough endeavour so as to be mentioned in the *Gold Book*. Pupils talk confidently about their interests and hold stimulating conversations with each other and with adults. In an English lesson in Year 5/6, pupils were articulate in voicing their opinions about different types of

journalistic reporting. They put forward well-reasoned arguments about what makes newsprint persuasive and attractive to the reader when in the tabloid style. In other situations pupils willingly take responsibility when acting in various monitor roles, caring for the animals in the *Wildwatch* area, organising charitable endeavours or overseeing the fair use of play equipment.

27. It is very evident that the pupils are the prime strength of the school and that they are treated as so. The school mission, *Sharing the Caring*, is at the heart of the school's effectiveness, is well understood by everyone and is well met in practice.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

<p>The management systems in place to assist the school in evaluating fully the outcomes of its work are not rigorous enough.</p>
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28. The headteacher has a secure understanding of the school's strengths and shortcomings and has produced the well-conceived school improvement plan that gives firm focus to the work of all staff. In general, management systems are satisfactory as outlined earlier in this report but too little time is being spent in enabling full self-critical review, particularly through a detailed analysis of the range of data available and by using this to target better achievements. There is much consistency in what the school does, though in some areas such as assessment, monitoring and evaluation, further improvement can still be made.
29. The reflection of the school's aims, values and priorities in the work of the staff is very good and is a key strength of the school. Insofar as the process of target setting and tracking is concerned, much emphasis at present is on establishing current attainment and setting targets for the future. The process is not yet geared enough to tracking how well pupils are doing between these two marker points. Whilst the overall targets for attainment by the end of Year 6 are known by all staff and all are instrumental in moving pupils towards these targets, their use to set targets for different groups or individuals in each year group is at a very early stage of development. Senior managers understand the need for refinement in the process to focus on how effective is ongoing learning in order to eliminate any slack and to accelerate learning where there is potential.
30. The process of establishing a consistent pattern of assessment across all subjects and in all years is still in the course of introduction. Assessment in reading and writing is of good quality and the data produced is used well to follow the progress made by pupils and to eliminate under-achievement. A similar package of assessment to track the development of skills and knowledge in other subjects is less well developed. In some subjects, such as ICT, there is more consistent assessment of progress but in others the process is often informal and differs from class to class. The school knows this is the case and managers are very determined to make the necessary improvements. Because there is insufficient information, it is not yet possible for staff to set targets in all subjects and to track the progress made.
31. All staff work hard in the interests of their pupils and subject leaders guide the development and improvement of their subjects well. However, not everyone has had the opportunity to observe directly the curriculum, quality of education and standards in other classes. There are good informal systems to help subject leaders gain insights into the strengths and shortcomings of these things. In addition, the headteacher has observed lessons and given useful feedback to staff in order to make improvement. However, there is not yet a consistent pattern of lesson monitoring and evaluation that

everyone is party to and the focus so far has been on *teaching input* rather than *learning outcomes*. The picture of achievement, progress and teaching and learning is thus not as complete as it could be and this gives some scope for inconsistency of practice.

32. School managers have included the enhancement of subject leaders' roles as one of the priorities and are working towards its implementation. They recognise that training in lesson observation and evaluation is the next step forward. The pace of development is being curtailed however because of the heavy teaching commitment of all teachers and the headteacher and the limited scope to release people from their teaching role to undertake other activities. However, staff are ready for the challenges that increased monitoring will bring, and very much see it as a vehicle for improvement in terms of quality learning experiences for all pupils. There is a will and determination to succeed in bringing about improvement and the prospects are promising.

Teachers' assessments are not consistently identifying where improvement lies and pupils have only partial insights into how well they are doing across their studies.

33. Teaching is good across the board as flagged up earlier in this report. There are two key areas for improvement - the use of assessment and marking that will support more consistent learning and enable pupils to assess how well they are achieving.
34. In all lessons teachers are identifying the key objectives for learning but there is inconsistent practice in further defining extended opportunities for higher attaining pupils. Additionally, although teachers identify the focus for learning, few return to this when assessing how well different pupils learn. In the best lessons, for example in Year 5/6, the teacher further identifies clear objectives that take full account of the range of pupils' different abilities and pursues these during the lesson through the work set and by re-visiting them in the plenary session. This practice can usefully assist managers in tracking how well different pupils learn across the subjects they study and year-on-year and can support more accurate target setting. It also ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve their work. The school has yet to find ways to share features of the best practice in order to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning.
35. Marking of work typically celebrates effort but does not sufficiently focus on progress against precise targets and its use to show pupils how to improve could be more consistent.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

36. Syresham St James Church of England Primary School provides an effective education for its pupils and attainment levels are above average. School managers are far from complacent and everyone in school works hard for improvement. Accordingly, the school should continue its best efforts to:

Improve management by extending the range of data used to help the school evaluate fully the outcomes of its work and by:

- Setting out a plan that clearly shows what monitoring is to take place, and what it is expected to achieve in pursuit of highlighting the best practice and eliminating weaker aspects.

- Making more rigorous the systems in place to track pupils' progress over time in all subjects, particularly high achievers.
- Ensuring that targets are set for every year group in English, mathematics and science that are regularly reviewed and adjusted upwards as necessary.
- Further developing systems to assess, monitor and evaluate individual pupils' performance across subjects.

See paragraphs: 2, 18.

Improve teacher's use of assessments and pupils' knowledge of how well they are learning by:

- Insisting that teachers' assess learning outcomes regularly and record this weekly in an agreed format.
- Widening the use of pupils' targets in the planning of lessons, to inform the direction of lessons, to support group-work, and to review what has been learnt in the plenary session.
- Sharing individual targets with pupils and their parents so that they can play a full part in assessing and reviewing individual progress.
- Using marking as a tool for assessing pupils' progress and giving clear feedback on the next steps for improvement, especially high achievers.

See paragraphs: 6, 9, 10.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

24

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

7

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	5	13	6	0	0	0
Percentage	0	21	54	25	0	0	0

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

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)

83

Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals

0

Special educational needs

YR –
Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

0

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

15

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

7

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4
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Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	13.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Because there were only a very small number of Year 2 pupils who took the tests, the results are not published.

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	9	4	13

Because there were fewer than 10 boys and 10 girls in Year 6, only overall test results are published.

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62 (89)	85 (89)	85 (89)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62 (78)	85 (89)	85 (100)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Similar schools are those schools with up to 8 per cent of the pupils entitled to free school meals.

Caution is required however when analysing this data because of the very small size of the group who take the SATs.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	74	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Average class size	19

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	63

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	239,802
Total expenditure	208,825
Expenditure per pupil	2400
Balance brought forward from previous year	10,130
Balance carry forward to the next year	32,875

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

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	83
Number of questionnaires returned	27

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	41	7	7	0
My child is making good progress in school.	30	56	4	7	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	41	4	0	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	30	26	11	7
The teaching is good.	37	30	11	15	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	11	37	30	22	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	26	22	11	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	26	56	11	4	4
The school works closely with parents.	11	41	37	7	4
The school is well led and managed.	22	59	15	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	52	7	4	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	7	33	22	22	15

The strong disagreement recorded above was not expressed at the meeting with the Registered Inspector nor in the discussions held with around a dozen parents during the two days of inspection.

NB Rows may not total 100% due to rounding