

INSPECTION REPORT

**WHITTLEBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Towcester, Northants

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122003

Headteacher: Mrs A Sargeant

Reporting inspector: Carole Green
21526

Dates of inspection: 27/01/03 – 29/01/03

Inspection number: 248312

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

© Crown copyright 2003

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: Voluntary controlled

Age range of pupils: 5 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Whittlebury Church of England Primary School
High Street
Whittlebury
Towcester
Northamptonshire

Postcode: NN12 8XH

Telephone number: 01327 857700

Fax number: 01327 857700

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs P Roffey

Date of previous inspection: 02/03/98

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21526	Carole Green	Registered inspector	English Art and Design Geography History Music Religious Education Foundation Stage Special Educational Needs	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19578	Ted Worby	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
17557	Sandie Sykes	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Information and Communication Technology Design and Technology Physical Education Educational Inclusion English as an Additional Language	How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

Norfolk LEA

Professional Development Centre
Woodside Road
Norwich
NR7 9QL

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?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	18
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	19
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	21
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	23
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	27

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Whittlebury Church of England Primary is a small village school with 50 pupils on roll aged between five and eleven years-old. There are currently significantly more boys than girls in the school with 32 boys and 18 girls. The majority of pupils live in the village of Whittlebury but about a third come from the surrounding area, including the small market town of Towcester. A large majority of the pupils are from white British backgrounds with a small minority from mixed white and black Caribbean backgrounds. No pupils are eligible for free school meals; this is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (16 per cent) is above the national average. Pupils are normally taught in two classes but for this academic year where there are larger than usual numbers of junior aged pupils in the school, there are three classes. Pupils start school at the beginning of the academic year in which they reach their fifth birthday. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school varies from year to year but is generally average. Most pupils have attended some form of pre-school provision before starting school. At the time of the inspection there were three children in the Reception year group.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a school with many strengths where all staff work well together to provide a secure and stimulating environment where pupils learn well. Children in the Reception year make satisfactory progress. By the time they are seven pupils' attainment in reading, speaking and mathematics are above national expectations but standards in science are below those expected nationally. Eleven year-olds attain standards in English and mathematics that are above national expectations and standards in science are similar to national expectations. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and this is a strength of the school. The quality of teaching is good overall. The very good leadership and management of the headteacher together with the very effective governing body ensures the commitment and capacity for further improvement. The school uses its resources very effectively and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The standards that pupils reach in speaking, reading and mathematics are above national expectations. The oldest pupils attain standards in writing that are above national expectations.
- The quality of teaching is good overall in all classes and at times is very good for the oldest pupils.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. They make good progress.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and she is well supported by a very effective governing body.
- Relationships between adults, between adults and pupils and with parents and the wider community are excellent, resulting in a very strong and positive school ethos.
- The school uses its resources and limited accommodation very well to provide a range of stimulating learning experiences for its pupils. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively and where their individual strengths are used well they make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

What could be improved

- Attainment in science for pupils in the infant class and the lower junior class is below national expectations.
- The planned curriculum for children under five is not well balanced.
- Systems for recording and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress need to be further developed.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1998 and overall the school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified for improvement. The governors, headteacher and staff have worked very hard to successfully remove the serious weaknesses that were identified at that time. There has been very good improvement in the quality of teaching which was unsatisfactory for the pupils in the infant class, so that now it is good overall. Consequently there has been good progress in the standards pupils achieve in English and mathematics in all classes. The effective introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and a new mathematics scheme has supported the good development of pupils in using and applying their mathematical knowledge. Experimental and investigative work in science has improved especially for the oldest pupils, but where teachers' subject knowledge is not sound standards in science for pupils in the infant and lower junior classes remain below average. The school now makes very effective and efficient use of its resources, especially in the way it deploys its teaching assistants. Changes within the accommodation together with the purchase of extra resources have improved the provision for pupils under five, although there still remain some weaknesses in planning a balanced curriculum for these youngest children. Monitoring and evaluation systems have been set in place, but are not used sufficiently to set targets for future attainment. Overall progress since the last inspection has been good.

STANDARDS

The standards achieved by seven and eleven year-olds in 2002 national tests are not published in this report, as cohorts are too small to make comparative data valid.

Evidence from the inspection shows standards for seven year-olds to be above national expectations in speaking, reading and mathematics. Standards in writing are close to national expectations, but standards in science are below those expected nationally for seven year-olds. By the time they are eleven pupils attain standards in English and mathematics which are above national expectations and the standards they attain in science are similar to national expectations. Inspectors were particularly impressed by pupils' very good speaking skills and their very positive attitudes to reading. This supports their good progress. Pupils' listening skills are less well developed. Although they listen carefully when adults are speaking they do not listen as well to each other. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are very positive. They enjoy their learning and concentrate well in class.
Behaviour, in and out of	Behaviour in classrooms and in the playground is very good.

classrooms	Pupils get on well together and work collaboratively in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between staff, between pupils and between staff and pupils are excellent. Pupils are proud of their school and of their own and of each other's achievements. Personal development is good - pupils willingly take on responsibilities.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above the national average. Pupils are punctual for lessons. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their very good behaviour is a strength of the school. They work hard in lessons and persevere when work is challenging. Their personal development is good. They are fully involved in the daily routines of the school and older pupils willingly take on the responsibility of looking after younger pupils at lunchtimes. The excellent relationships that are formed within the school promote and sustain a very positive school ethos.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	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 overall is good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teaching of the oldest pupils is consistently good and occasionally very good. Teachers' planning is effective and they identify very clearly what it is they want pupils to learn. The teacher in the infant classroom plans interesting and stimulating activities and this engages pupils' interest, and supports their good progress, especially in reading and mathematics. Teaching for older pupils is equally good and resources are used well to enhance pupils' learning. Teaching assistants are used very effectively in small group work and their individual strengths are used to good effect, especially in supporting pupils with special educational needs and in developing pupils' information and communication technology skills. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics lessons in all classes is good and this supports the above average standards that pupils achieve in these subjects. Teachers are particularly skilful at matching work to the wide range of abilities in each class. Consequently all pupils make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The provision of rich and stimulating activities provide a good breadth of experiences. This together with good use of resources within the local community effectively supports pupils' learning. The curriculum for pupils under five however is not sufficiently balanced.
Provision for pupils with special educational	Very good. Pupils are very well supported. All staff ensure that pupils are fully included in all activities

needs	
-------	--

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' spiritual development is sound, provision for their moral and cultural development is good, and provision for their social development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	All staff know the children well and relationships across the school are excellent. However, procedures for monitoring pupils' personal and academic progress are underdeveloped.

The school has established an excellent partnership with parents, who are kept very well informed of school events and their children's progress. The school brochure, together with the governors' annual report for parents are well written and very informative.

There is a strong emphasis within the school on teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The school has developed its own effective approach to the teaching of literacy for older pupils and this is having a positive impact on the high standards they attain in reading and writing. Planning for the curriculum for children under five needs to be revised, as there are currently insufficient opportunities to support their personal, social, emotional and creative development. The school cares well for its pupils and they are taught to be responsible and caring. They take part in a good range of social, sporting and cultural events. The school is very successful in promoting pupils' self-confidence, especially for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher leads and manages the school very well. She has gained the support and respect of staff, governors and parents. Consequently the school community works well together and is committed to improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very effective. They know the school well and take their responsibilities seriously.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There has been extensive monitoring and evaluation of teaching since the last inspection and this has supported the good improvement in the quality of teaching since that time. The monitoring and evaluation of pupils' performance and progress is less rigorous and the school recognises this as an area for further improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its resources well. It is particularly successful at making the best use of resources within the local community.

Levels of staffing and resources are good; there has been significant improvement in the resources for children under five since the last inspection. The school's accommodation is very limited, as there is no school hall or headteacher's office. The headteacher and staff

ensure the flexible use of accommodation and this together with the support of parents and the local high school ensures that pupils have access to a wide range of stimulating learning experiences. Financial management is very effective and governors have a good understanding of the principles of Best Value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like coming to school. • They feel comfortable in approaching the school with their questions or problems. • The good leadership and management of the headteacher. • They are kept well informed about school events and their children's progress. • The school works closely with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra curricular activities. • Pupils' behaviour.

The inspection team endorses parents' positive views of the school, but finds no evidence to support their concerns about pupils' behaviour. The range and number of extra-curricular activities is good for this size of school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. At the time of the last inspection, in 1998, standards, for seven year-olds, were average in reading, mathematics and science. They were below average in writing, and the progress pupils were making in the infant class was unsatisfactory in speaking and listening, writing and mathematics. Standards for eleven year-olds at the end of Year 6 were average in English, mathematics and science, but were below average in art and design, design and technology and history.
2. The school's national test results for 2002 cannot be validly compared with national statistics, as the number of pupils in each cohort is very small. Similarly it is difficult to analyse trends with such small cohorts and fluctuating numbers of pupils with special educational needs.
3. Evidence during this inspection finds standards for seven year-olds to be above national expectations in speaking, reading and mathematics. Standards in writing and listening match national expectations, but standards in science are below those expected nationally. By the time they are eleven pupils achieve standards above national expectations in speaking, reading and writing and in mathematics. Standards in listening and in science match national expectations. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) for seven and eleven year-olds also match national expectations.
4. The school has successfully implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and this has supported the improvement in the quality of teaching in all classes, together with the higher standards in reading, and mathematics, especially for the younger pupils. The adaptation of the literacy strategy for junior aged pupils with dedicated lessons in reading and spelling contributes to the good standards that they reach in reading and writing. Pupils use their reading, writing, speaking and mathematical skills well across other curriculum areas, and are also beginning to use their ICT skills in a range of different contexts. Statutory targets have been set for pupils in Year 6, but the school does not yet use the information it gains from assessments and test results sufficiently well to ensure that targets are sufficiently challenging. No targets are set for other year groups.
5. In English good improvements have been made since the last inspection especially in the standards achieved by the pupils in the infant class. Pupils quickly become competent speakers because of the good opportunities that are made available in all lessons for them to give their ideas and explain their thinking. By the time they are eleven they confidently express their views and opinions. Pupils' reading skills are equally well developed and are above national expectations in all classes. One of the key strengths of the school is pupils' love of books and their very positive attitudes to reading. Parents support this area of learning well and this helps pupils to make good

progress. Standards in writing in the infant and lower junior class match national expectations and are above national expectations in the upper junior class. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils in all classes are particularly skilful in their use of description and teachers ensure that there are a wide range of opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes, including poetry, letter writing and writing instructions. Pupils' listening skills although of an average standard are not so well developed as their speaking skills. They listen carefully most of the time when being spoken to by adults but do not listen well when other pupils are speaking. Teachers do not create sufficient opportunities to encourage pupils to listen to each other through asking questions of each other or by evaluating each other's work.

6. In mathematics, pupils achieve standards that are above national expectations in all classes and this is a strength of the school. In the infant class pupils use their knowledge of number well to count confidently and carry out mental calculations of two and three digit addition and subtraction problems. Pupils are particularly skilful at investigational work showing very good improvement from the last inspection where it was unsatisfactory and a key issue for improvement. The most able pupils use and apply their mathematical knowledge very confidently by using strategies such as halving and doubling to quickly and accurately reach solutions. Pupils in the junior classes continue to make good progress so that by the time they are eleven they work confidently with decimals and fractions. Pupils respond enthusiastically to problem solving activities and use and apply their mathematical skills well.
7. Standards in science in the infant and lower junior class are below national expectations. Pupils make good progress in the upper junior class to reach standards, which match national expectations by the time they are eleven. Although Year 2 pupils in the infant class and pupils in Years 3 and 4 in the lower junior class have satisfactory scientific knowledge, there are too few opportunities for them to hypothesise, make predictions, and test their own ideas. In contrast pupils in the older junior class investigate changes in materials, make confident predictions and with a good understanding of what makes a fair test they test their own hypotheses.
8. Pupils achieve standards which match national expectations in ICT in all classes. Since the last inspection the school has successfully extended the range of learning opportunities for pupils, so that by the time they are eleven they are competent in their word-processing skills. They use spreadsheets effectively to arrange and calculate the cost of arranging a class party. Good use is made of ICT in a range of curriculum areas.
9. Standards in art and design, geography and music match national expectations, and standards in religious education are in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils make good progress in art and design and music in the upper junior class where specialist teaching supports higher attaining pupils to achieve well.
10. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Provision for these pupils is a strength of the school. They are set appropriate targets and detailed individual education plans identify activities which will help them reach those targets successfully. The good support of teachers and teaching assistants ensures that work is suitably matched to meet their individual needs. Good records are kept of the progress they make.
11. The school development plan sets priorities to raise standards further and good progress has been made since the last inspection. The school recognises the need to raise standards in science further. The headteacher and governors also realise that data from national test results when compared to all and similar schools may be

unreliable because of the small number of pupils in each cohort. They have therefore recently introduced a system to track the progress that each pupil makes from year to year. This is a useful start, but insufficient data is recorded, especially in science, and teachers do not use the data they do have to set challenging targets for all pupils to help them improve further and reach the highest possible standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour were a strength of the school at the time of the last inspection and remain so. Pupils' personal development is good as they form excellent relationships with their teachers and other pupils. These good traits make an important contribution to the pupils' collaborative learning and the very good ethos of the school.
13. Pupils in the infant class have very positive attitudes to school. They play well together, share ideas and resources well and show enjoyment in their achievements. They are learning to show respect and consideration for others. They enjoy stories, becoming absorbed and paying good attention. They concentrate and persevere with tasks, try hard to do their best and are eager to please their teacher with good efforts. The youngest children sometimes find it difficult to concentrate when they are required to sit with the whole class for too long.
14. Older pupils also have very good attitudes to learning. They are very keen to learn, have good concentration levels, listen to adults well and answer questions eagerly. Very often the teacher's questions results in a sea of hands. Pupils respond enthusiastically when work is challenging. They willingly follow daily routines, and enjoy each other's success. Pupils are polite and work co-operatively particularly when working in pairs. This was evident in a significant number of lessons.
15. Good self-discipline is evident throughout the school. Behaviour in classrooms and in the playground is very good. There was no evidence of bullying and the school's very good policy document ensures that, even should it occur, clear guidance is given for dealing with it promptly. There have been no exclusions during the last year.
16. Pupils' personal development is good and they are friendly, courteous, helpful and welcoming to visitors. They are polite to adults and their peers. However, they do not always listen sufficiently well to each other in class, but are aware of each other's feelings and values. As pupils grow older they become more responsible and independent and develop a greater maturity and growing confidence. Pupils learn much about healthy lifestyles in their personal, social and health education programmes. Pupils are eager to be actively involved in daily routines such as acts of collective worship and setting tables at lunchtime. They carry out their duties well. They are proud of their school and their achievements and feel secure in their environment.
17. Attendance is above the national average which is an improvement since the last inspection. The rate of unauthorised absence is below the national average and this reflects the school's efficient follow-up of all absences. The procedure for the monitoring of unauthorised absence has improved since the last inspection with the school working successfully to improve better timekeeping.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching across the school overall is good. Of the twenty-eight lessons or part lessons seen, all but two lessons were satisfactory or better. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. In over two-thirds of lessons the teaching was good or better. The teaching of the oldest pupils is a particular strength where the majority of lessons seen was of good or very good quality.
19. The good and very good teaching across the school has some or all of the following features:
- enthusiastic, knowledgeable and humorous teaching makes good use of pupils' ideas and experiences;
 - teaching assistants play an effective role in supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs, and this supports their good progress;
 - detailed lesson plans identify very clearly what it is they want pupils to learn. The intentions for learning are presented very clearly at the start of the lesson so that pupils know what it is they are meant to learn and they are regularly referred to throughout the lesson;
 - good links with previous learning are made so that pupils are clear about how the work builds upon what they already know and understand;
 - challenging tasks encourage pupils to think for themselves and to become actively involved in discussions and planning practical investigations;
 - questioning effectively develops pupils' thinking and probes their understanding. This supports their good speaking skills;
 - high quality relationships between adults and pupils ensures the full participation of pupils of all abilities;
 - the quality of adults' responses to pupils' ideas and reflections shows sensitivity to the full range of needs within the class; this enhances the very positive school ethos;
 - good use is made of all the resources available, including space and ICT.
20. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen in two science lessons, where teachers' subject knowledge was thin and there was insufficient challenge for the more able pupils.
21. The school has successfully introduced the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Staff work well as a team and teachers and teaching assistants have good subject knowledge in English and mathematics. This enables them to make suitable adaptations to lesson plans, so that they can match resources to the learning needs of pupils. Good progress is made in both these subjects because the planning for learning is very thorough, all available resources are used very effectively and a strong emphasis is given to using the correct vocabulary.
22. The teaching of literacy is good, providing pupils with good opportunities to develop their speaking and reading skills in many contexts across the curriculum. The effectiveness of the school's reading group arrangements clearly promotes very positive attitudes to reading as well as good reading skills. Pupils' writing skills are developed well through the provision of a wide range of opportunities to write for different purposes. There are insufficient opportunities however for pupils to develop their listening skills in lessons across the curriculum. This particularly limits the progress pupils make in responding to, and building on, others' viewpoints.
23. Mathematics is taught well. Teachers' subject knowledge is sound and thorough planning provides a well-organised basis for the work in hand. Planning is clear and detailed, showing what pupils of different ages are expected to learn in a lesson. Teaching assistants work confidently in partnership with each class teacher,

effectively supporting and stretching individuals so that all pupils make good progress. Resources are used effectively and, in some lessons, adjustments are made, providing less able pupils with additional resources to help them make better progress

24. Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well and are very responsive to their individual needs. They are very skilful at adapting the level of difficulty of their questions to reflect the range of ability within their class and are quick to assess when a pupil has misunderstood. They have very good strategies for helping pupils to rethink their ideas and resolve any misconceptions.
25. Staff maintain high standards of behaviour and communicate their expectations clearly. They manage pupils very well, providing opportunities for them to become involved in discussions and activities as a whole class, in pairs or in small groups. Pupils work with interest, enthusiasm and concentrate well on tasks. Pupils consistently show very positive attitudes to learning.
26. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and carefully. Pupils' books and reports show that staff have high expectations of effort and performance. Comments are encouraging in tone but are not always useful in helping pupils know what they must do next in order to further improve.

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

27. The school meets the statutory requirements of the national curriculum and provides a good range of rich and stimulating activities. The curriculum for children under five covers all the agreed areas of learning but planned activities lack breadth. Insufficient time is spent in promoting their personal, social, emotional and creative development.
28. Curricular opportunities in all classes are carefully chosen to foster both academic achievement and personal development. This includes sex and health education as well as drug awareness. These are taught within appropriate topics or as discrete studies, as appropriate. A range of visitors support the school's personal, social and health curriculum, including the school nurse, road safety and police officers and St. John's Ambulance volunteers.
29. Since the last inspection, the school has made progress in planning for all subjects. The national guidance schemes of work provide the central basis for each subject and a school policy is in place for most subjects. The school has not yet fully adapted all units of work for mixed-age classes. This is particularly apparent in science. As a consequence, when units are used which have been designed for younger pupils, the work is not always sufficiently challenging for older or more able pupils in the class. The school has not produced a framework for guiding the progressive use of experimental work in science and this aspect of the provision remains a weakness in most classes.
30. Teachers and support staff take care to ensure that all pupils have equal access to every part of the curriculum. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. They receive high quality support from teaching assistants in their lessons. They also make skilled contributions across the broad range of provision for all pupils.
31. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. The school is very successful in developing pupils' self-confidence, including those pupils who have special

educational needs. Pupils have many and varied opportunities for working and playing together within and beyond the school. Residential visits for older pupils, field visits and visits to other local schools provide very valuable experiences for pupils of all ages. Provision for pupils during break times does not include sufficient choice for all and football tends to dominate the outdoor space available.

32. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. Pupils learn at an early age the difference between right and wrong and this is reflected in their every day lives and relationships. The school values and promotes good relationships but does not always provide sufficient planned opportunities for pupils to listen to each other and question each other's views and ideas. Opportunities are also missed for pupils to evaluate their and each other's work.
33. The good breadth and range of learning experiences across the curriculum enables good provision for pupils' cultural development. For example, study of the work of an English poet enabled pupils to look at the city of London from a range of social and cultural perspectives. Studies in art give pupils a good insight into the work of a range of European artists and in history and geography, the diversity of cultures worldwide is well explored in a range of topics across the school.
34. The school provides a sound basis for pupils' spiritual development. Pupils are encouraged to take a quiet moment and think about the lives of others in assemblies and in religious education. They learn about the lives of famous people in history and in art, study their own and other people's creativity. The school provides many exciting and interesting experiences and in some lessons, opportunities are taken to encourage pupils to express their joy, amazement and wonder at new discoveries although more could be made of these important moments.
35. The school has very strong links with the community. Specialists within the community enrich learning about art and design and personal and social issues. Volunteers give generously of their time and experiences and the link schools, within the community, offer a good range of learning and social and sporting opportunities.
36. There are clubs for pupils to attend, at lunchtimes and after school, including recorder, art and football clubs. Additional clubs are formed from time-to-time, depending on available leaders and the time of year. Inspection findings do not support the view expressed by some parents that the school provides too few opportunities for children to take part in activities beyond the school day.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. The last inspection found that the school provided sound support and guidance for its pupils. This has improved over the intervening four years and the day-to-day personal care and support for the pupils now is very good. Members of staff provide a welcoming and positive environment and parents are confident that their children are well looked after during the school day. Very good teamwork among the staff ensures that pupils' needs are met in full and that the time they spend in school is safe, happy and enjoyable. Very good care is taken of pupils with special educational needs. All members of staff are familiar with Child Protection and Health and Safety procedures. The schools arrangements comply with current legislation and Local Authority guidelines. The governors conduct regular audits and risk assessments, and these are supported by a detailed policy document. No concerns of health and safety were seen during the inspection. Members of staff have completed specialist first aid

training and appropriate written records are made of all accidents.

38. The procedures for monitoring attendance are good with the headteacher and school bursar playing crucial roles. The school regularly reminds parents of the need for good attendance. Teachers complete registers regularly, carefully and accurately. The school keeps a close eye on all absences and, if no reason has been forthcoming, contacts parents early on the first day. The education welfare officer has regular liaison with the headteacher when concerns are discussed and appropriate action taken.
39. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. Whilst there is a well-known set of aims, teachers and support staff constantly give pupils verbal and written praise. In addition the school operates a very effective reward system. Pupils are rewarded for both academic and non-academic achievements, for effort, for caring and for all aspects of good work and behaviour. This works very effectively and no incidents or inappropriate behaviour were observed during the inspection. Pupils are supervised well at break times and during lunch by conscientious staff who are alert and vigilant. The standard of care is high. The school's care for pupils well-being is illustrated by the way staff take their responsibilities seriously and perform their duties conscientiously.
40. Although the monitoring of pupils' personal development is largely informal, procedures are effective. Relationships between pupils are excellent and teachers are sensitive to pupils' individual needs. This high quality personal support which ensures that pupils' individual needs are recognised helps to ensure that pupils enjoy their time at school and maintain a positive attitude to their work. Pupils use their time at school productively and staff constantly encourage pupils to work hard and to do their best. These factors have a positive influence on the progress pupils make and on the standard they achieve in their work.
41. The school has very good systems for the early identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs. Staff are highly conscientious, and are often guided by the expertise of a specialist teaching assistant. Pupils' individual education plans clearly identify the steps they need to take to ensure improvement and these are shared and reviewed regularly with parents.
42. The staff know individual pupils very well and share informally their collective knowledge in order to support individuals in their learning on a day-to-day basis. Reports to parents at the end of the year are comprehensive, summarising clearly what children know, understand and can do in relation to work covered over the year. Although some targets are included in annual reports to parents it is not clear how far they are linked to work in school and how homework supports pupils in achieving these goals.
43. The school is developing a tracking system, which currently records pupils' attainments in specific tests. Although still at an early stage of development, the school has taken an important step as it now has the basic framework for the development of a comprehensive tracking and target setting system for each pupil, in English, mathematics and science. However, this system is not yet fully developed and is not yet used effectively to set targets for each pupil's future attainment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. The partnership the school has established with parents and the community is excellent. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Parents receive detailed and timely information about school events through weekly newsletters, an excellent and new school prospectus and parents' handbook and notice board displays.
45. Parents' views of the school are very positive. They fully support its aims and values and consider it provides a very caring environment for their children. Parents particularly respect the commitment of the headteacher and staff. Annual Reports are sent to parents and provide, in a very readable manner, useful and informative details of the pupils' work throughout the year. The school also provides regular and well attended consultation evenings for parents enabling them to discuss their child's progress and issues relating to the school in general. Parents of pupils with special educational needs feel very well supported, well informed and fully involved in their children's education and welfare.
46. Parents are actively encouraged to come into school where the headteacher and staff regularly make themselves available to discuss matters with them on a daily basis. Such discussions were witnessed during the inspection and were always of a friendly but very constructive nature with the needs of the child always being of paramount importance. Parents also find it easy to approach staff with complaints or concerns and are confident that they will be dealt with urgently and appropriately.
47. Parents perform a very valuable role in regularly assisting in school and in supporting a range of activities. The staff value their assistance and deploy them well. Their regular support has a positive effect on the good standards that pupils achieve.
48. Very positive responses were received from parents in the questionnaire, with there being almost total agreement that parents are kept well informed, feel confident in approaching staff with concerns and that the school works closely with them. However, there were a small minority of parents who voiced concerns about behaviour and the lack of extra-curricular activities, both of which were fully explored during the inspection. There was no evidence in support of bad behaviour and the range and number of extra-curricular activities was found to be good for this size of school.
49. A very active and enthusiastic group of 'Friends of Whittlebury School' holds a large number of successful fundraising and social events. It contributes greatly to the work of the school and raises significant amounts of money, which are prudently spent under the direction of the headteacher on resources to enhance the quality of education. Parents and governors regularly work together on projects to help the school.
50. The very good links with parents and the community make a significant contribution to pupils' academic progress and their personal and social development. The effective use of this valuable resource considerably enriches the curriculum.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and she is well supported by a very effective governing body. Together they ensure a clear direction for the work and development of the school, and this has ensured good progress since the last inspection. The headteacher, through her enthusiasm, energy and commitment to improvement has gained the respect and support of staff, governors

and parents. Consequently teaching staff and all members of the school community work well together and have a common sense of purpose. The school's explicit aims and values are successfully realised and underpin all their work. Relationships within the school and with the wider community are excellent. All staff are committed to a philosophy of inclusion and this results in a very positive school ethos where all adults and pupils are valued. Consequently pupils are very confident, and are interested in and committed to their learning. This supports their positive attitudes and good progress.

52. The headteacher, governors and staff are committed to raising standards further and priorities identified in the school development plan reflect this aim. The school has recently introduced procedures to record and track pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science, but this information is not yet analysed sufficiently to identify challenging targets for future improvement in each of these subjects.
53. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching has been a major focus of the headteacher's work since the last inspection. With the support of the Local Education Authority regular monitoring and evaluation together with positive and sensitive support has brought good improvements so that the quality of teaching is now good overall. With such a small teaching staff and with responsibilities for all subjects shared between two members of staff, together with the headteacher's high teaching load, it has not been possible to evaluate the quality of teaching in all classes for each of the core subjects.
54. The governing body knows the school very well. Governors give generously of their time and use their individual talents effectively. Many have daily contact with the school so that they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. They willingly take responsibility for drafting and reviewing policies and publications and are often involved in practical tasks. They are also fully involved in the performance management of the headteacher and have set challenging targets which enhance the drive towards the further improvement of standards. Although they are very supportive of the headteacher and staff, governors take their responsibilities very seriously. Their monitoring and evaluation role is well developed and this ensures that they hold the school to account. There have been a number of different chairs of governors since the last inspection but because all governors are so committed and well informed the transition each time has always been very smooth. The current chair of governors has only been in post for a few months but she is very competent and effective in the role and has a very clear grasp of the issues that face the school in the next stage of its development.
55. Financial planning is secure and the school makes good use of its resources. The school budget is currently carrying a high balance. A large proportion of the balance is earmarked for capital expenditure and the remainder has been identified to sustain current teaching assistant support for the next financial year when numbers on roll will have reduced. Governors through their effective strategic planning have budgeted carefully to finance a third class for this academic year because of the high numbers of junior-aged pupils. They thoroughly researched and discussed a range of possibilities for accommodation before agreeing that the best value for money was to adapt an existing room within the school. Pupils are benefiting well from working in small classes. The school uses specific grants very effectively.
56. One of the strengths of the school is its creative use of accommodation and resources. Accommodation within the school is very limited, but since the last inspection a number of changes have been made so that the youngest pupils are now

accommodated in the largest classroom thus considerably improving their learning environment. The headteacher and staff ensure that the use of accommodation is flexible and they make the best possible use of resources and talents within the local community. Consequently pupils have access to a wide range of stimulating high quality learning experiences. During the inspection, for instance, while the lower junior class was benefiting from the ICT resources at the local high school, the older juniors were working in small groups on a carousel of activities. These included still life drawing, led by a parent who is an art specialist, a design and technology activity led by the headteacher and a third group were further developing their ICT skills with the support of a very skilled and knowledgeable teaching assistant. Pupils were thoroughly involved in these activities and the small group work allowed individual support and effective teaching techniques ensured that good progress was made in their learning. There is no school hall so that whole school collective worship takes place in the infant classroom, and pupils eat their packed lunches in classrooms. It is to the credit of pupils and staff alike that these events are set up and are carried out with the minimum of fuss and disruption. Physical education lessons take place in the local village reading room.

57. A further indication of the school's very effective use of resources is the way in which it recognises and utilises the talents of its teaching assistants. They are deployed very effectively and their individual strengths are used well, especially in junior classes where they make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and progress.
58. The school is well resourced in most subject areas and there has been a significant increase in resources for children under five since the last inspection. This has widened the range of learning opportunities for the youngest children, but the lack of balance in their curriculum together with insufficient planning means that they are not taking full advantage of these resources to support their progress.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59. In order to further improve the quality of education provided the school should:
1. improve pupils' attainment in science in the infant and lower junior classes by:
 - (i) further improving teachers' subject knowledge;
 - (ii) ensuring that planned activities are sufficiently challenging for the more able pupils;
 - (iii) revise current scheme of work so that it takes full account of mixed-aged classes.
 2. Revise planning for children under five to ensure that:
 - (i) children experience a more balanced range of activities where more time is given to supporting their personal, social, emotional and creative development;
 - (ii) there are more opportunities for children to initiate their own activities and for adults to support them in those activities;
 - (iii) clear learning intentions, based on the stepping stones and early learning

goals are identified in weekly planning for all activities and that these intentions are shared with all adults working with Foundation Stage children, so that they know what it is children are expected to learn.

3. Further develop current systems for recording and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress and to support pupils in monitoring their own learning by;
 - (i) identifying targets for future attainment based on pupils' current performance in English, mathematics and science for all pupils;
 - (ii) setting, discussing and reviewing these targets with pupils, ensuring that they know and understand what they need to do to improve and reach the agreed targets;
 - (iii) identifying opportunities for giving feedback to pupils both in lessons and when marking their work to remind pupils of their targets, identify the progress they have made and the next steps for improvement;
 - (iv) sharing the agreed targets with parents and encouraging them to identify how they will support pupils at home in reaching their targets;
 - (v) regularly reviewing and analysing pupil performance data to check that pupils of all abilities are making good progress;
 - (vi) identifying opportunities in lessons for pupils to review and evaluate their own and others' work.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	28
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	24

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	2	17	7	2	0	0
Percentage	0	7	61	25	7	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		50
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		8

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	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.4
---------------------------	-----

National comparative data	0.5
---------------------------	-----

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

The standards achieved by eleven year-olds in 2002 national tests are not published in this report, as there were only two pupils in the cohort.

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	47	0	0
White – Irish			
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
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			

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)	3.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15:1
Average class size	17

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	77

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

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

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	184844.00
Total expenditure	157106.00
Expenditure per pupil	3491.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	17040.00
Balance carried forward to next year	44778.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	50
Number of questionnaires returned	28

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	29	7	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	43	11	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	11	61	25	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	61	11	4	0
The teaching is good.	64	36	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	46	7	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	32	0	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	25	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	64	36	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	46	50	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	46	0	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	36	32	0	0

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

60. Children are admitted into school at the beginning of the academic year in which they reach their fifth birthday. They attend part-time for the first half term. The majority of children have attended some form of pre-school provision prior to starting school, and although attainment on entry varies from year to year it is generally average, at a level expected of children of this age. At the time of the inspection there were three Reception-aged children in the infant class.
61. Although medium-term planning is well developed and links well to the nationally prescribed Foundation Stage curriculum, short term weekly planning is too brief and follows the timetable for Year 1 and 2 pupils too closely. This results in an imbalance in the curriculum for these very young children and they do not have sufficient planned opportunities to support their personal, social, emotional and creative development.
62. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory in each of the areas of learning and in mathematics it is good. Basic skills are taught well, but daily and weekly planning does not always identify sufficiently clearly what it is children are expected to learn. Consequently the teaching assistant who often works with the Reception children is not given sufficient guidance on the most effective ways of supporting these young children's learning. This results in some activities being too formal and not sufficiently practical so that children quickly lose interest and concentration, and this slows their progress. The class teacher makes useful regular observations to assess the children's progress against the early learning goals. Many aspects of provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage have improved since the last inspection. Pupils are now accommodated in a larger classroom, have more equipment and daily access to an outside area. They are also supported by a full time teaching assistant.

Personal, social and emotional development

63. Children make satisfactory progress overall in this area of development and most are likely to reach national expectations by the end of their year in Reception. Planning for this area of development, however, is too informal and there are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to take initiative and develop their independence. Children have settled well into the daily routines and when given the opportunity they move confidently between self-chosen activities. They co-operate and concentrate well when working together when they were making models from construction materials, for example, they shared the apparatus fairly and were very proud of their achievements. Children's behaviour and attitudes to their work are generally positive, but when they are required to sit for too long with the rest of the class they lose interest and concentration.

Communication, language and literacy

64. Children make satisfactory progress in this area of learning and most are likely to reach the early learning goals by the end of the Reception year. They are eager to share their ideas and talk confidently to visitors. The class teacher ensures that they have opportunities to explain their work and what they have been learning to the rest

of the class at the end of lessons and this increases their confidence in speaking. Listening skills are less well developed so that, although they listen carefully to whole class stories when sharing a big book at the beginning of literacy lessons, they begin to lose interest and concentration when the teacher is giving instructions or other pupils are talking. This is often because they have been required to sit for too long within a large group. Reception children enjoy looking at books and talking about the illustrations in small groups, but again they lose concentration when the activity is too adult directed and there are insufficient opportunities for them to explore their own thoughts and ideas. Children's writing skills are beginning to develop so that they write their own names in a recognisable form and use their early knowledge of initial letter sounds to attempt to write simple words. There are insufficient opportunities for children to experiment with writing by, for example, providing resources for writing in the role play area and having a writing area in the classroom where children can make and write their own books, cards etc. to support their writing and creative development.

Mathematical development

65. This area of development is well taught with good practical stimulating activities that engage children's interest. Children count accurately to five and beyond and the more able can recognise numerals to five. When weighing oats in the sand tray (good links to the story of Goldilocks and the three bears which the children had been reading), children concentrated well and had a good understanding of the concepts of light, heavy and balance. They explained clearly how they would need to take oats from the heavier side in order to make both sides equal. Children are very involved in these practical activities and their knowledge and understanding are increased through the teacher's skilful questioning and good use of mathematical language. Opportunities to return to this activity during the week increased their understanding and learning further.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

66. Many of the planned activities to promote the different aspects of this area of learning are closely linked to the work of Year 1 and 2 pupils. Where these are practical, making hand puppets and looking at different construction materials, Reception pupils show interest and make good gains in their learning. For instance they enjoy drawing their own houses, and describing them and they build replicas with construction resources well. They are beginning to observe and talk about the different materials that have been used to build the school and other buildings in the area and why different materials might be used. Children are confident in using computers independently. They control the mouse accurately and concentrate well when matching shapes and pictures. Children are beginning to learn through experimentation and with adult help the best ways of joining materials together and are gaining confidence in using a range of different tools.

Physical development

67. Provision for this area of learning has improved since the last inspection. Time is set aside each day for Reception children to spend time in the outdoor area with the teaching assistant. A range of activities are planned to support their physical development, but daily planning lacks detail and structure and does not identify clearly what it is intended that the children should learn from these activities. No observations took place during the inspection of these outdoor activities but planning indicates that pupils have access to a good range of resources including wheeled toys, small

physical education apparatus and the outdoor climbing frame. Inside the classroom children's fine motor skills are developed with the provision of a range of activities such as threading beads and jigsaw puzzles. They make satisfactory progress in this area of learning.

Creative development

68. There are insufficient planned opportunities to support children's creative development. Because planned activities for the Reception children are very closely linked to the timetable of older pupils they do not have daily opportunities to paint, or to explore colour, texture and shape and to stick and glue to create their own designs and pictures. A puppet theatre together with a stimulating range of glove puppets has been constructed in the classroom to support pupils' ability to create their own stories and plays, but during the inspection very few opportunities were observed for the youngest children to play in this area. Music sessions take place with the whole class and although the youngest children enjoy joining in the songs with the rest of the class there are insufficient opportunities for these young children to experiment with sounds made by different instruments and to use their imaginations to create their own compositions.

ENGLISH

69. There has been good improvement in standards in English since the last inspection especially for pupils in the infant class. Inspection findings show that standards in reading are above national expectations across the school. Standards in writing match national expectations for pupils in the infant and lower junior classes and are above national expectations for the oldest pupils. Speaking skills are well developed across the school and listening skills although satisfactory in all classes could be developed further.
70. Pupils soon become confident speakers because of the good opportunities that are made available in lessons for them to express their views and opinions. Because of these frequent opportunities to talk in large and small groups and the sensitive encouragement of the adults working with them, pupils enjoy sharing their ideas, talk to visitors with assurance and express themselves well. In the infant class pupils eagerly discuss the illustrations when sharing a book together and more able pupils predict what might happen next in a story and are able to give very coherent explanations to support their prediction. Opportunities to act out well known stories gives them experiences of taking on the role of different characters which they approach with enthusiasm. Lower juniors are equally keen to talk about the key features of traditional tales and how they are passed on from one generation to another. They articulate their thoughts clearly and choose words carefully so that what they say is interesting to the listener. Pupils of all abilities in the oldest class readily volunteer to share their thoughts and ideas when writing story outlines and they confidently express their opinions and views in religious education lessons using a good range of vocabulary. Pupils' listening skills are less well developed. Although they listen and respond positively to instructions and information from adults they do not always listen carefully to each other. Teachers do not plan sufficiently for pupils to develop their listening skills, so that pupils do not have the opportunity to listen carefully to each other and question each other's ideas. This is an area for future development.
71. The high standards that pupils attain in reading together with their genuine

enthusiasm for this activity is a strength of the school. The youngest pupils quickly develop a love of books and enjoy daily opportunities to read to an adult or listen to stories on cassettes. They use their knowledge of initial letter sounds well to tackle unknown words and by the time they are seven they read fluently and with good expression. The most able pupils are confident in using the reference system in the school library to find non-fiction books and know how to use the index to find further information. Parents also regularly hear their children read at home and this supports their good progress. The school has adopted the National Literacy Strategy, but for junior aged pupils it has been successfully adapted to suit the needs of mixed-aged classes of four year groups, with a wide range of ability. Consequently reading is taught as a distinct activity through ability groups. Teaching continues to focus on the importance of developing good reading habits and successfully instils in pupils a genuine love of books. In a Year 3 reading group pupils showed a good understanding of inference and deduction when reading a complex text and they gave correct interpretations of the words 'scoffed' and 'press-ganged.' Their pleasure and enjoyment together with their ability to successfully interpret and become involved in new texts was clearly demonstrated when one pupil burst into song as he took on the character of one of the pirates in the story! Pupils' enjoyment of reading is equally evident with the oldest pupils who read a variety of texts with accuracy and fluency and discuss themes and characters confidently. Pupils use their research skills well when reading in other subjects and this supports their good progress. The school library is well stocked and well used and the school makes good use of a parent helper who works with pupils from all classes in small groups to teach library and research skills. This supports the good progress that pupils make.

72. Standards in writing have been identified in the school development plan as an area for improvement. Although standards are not as high as in reading, pupils are making good progress. Teachers ensure that pupils have a wide range of opportunities to write for different purposes. In the infant class pupils are confident in their first attempts at writing and begin to use adjectives well when writing poetry. By the time they are seven the most able pupils are using capital letters and full stops correctly and are beginning to introduce speech marks when writing stories. They use their increasing vocabulary well so that one pupil when designing a 'wanted poster' says "If you see the wolf please report to the police because he is deadly and vicious." Junior-aged pupils continue to write for a range of purposes and use their spelling skills effectively so that many polysyllabic words are spelt correctly. Standards in writing for the oldest pupils are above national expectations but higher attaining pupils do not use paragraphs sufficiently to punctuate their writing. Again descriptive work is particularly well developed so that the most able pupils create a chilling atmosphere when writing about London at night based on poems by Wordsworth and a modern poet. Pupils write non-fiction texts equally well and letters of complaint to the local authority are very well drafted with pupils expressing their views very clearly. The skills of writing are taught well, so that pupils know how to plan and draft their work and to take notes. Teachers when discussing and marking pupils work identify for them what they need to do to further improve. Pupils' handwriting is well formed and their work is well presented.
73. The quality of teaching in English is good in all classes and this supports the good progress that pupils make. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and consequently they plan stimulating activities that are interactive and engage pupils' interest. Spelling is particularly well taught especially in junior classes and, as in reading, pupils are grouped according to ability. This enables the teaching of spelling to be carefully matched to pupils' individual needs. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own progress and decide which words or group of words they need to learn next.

New words chosen are often linked to other subject areas currently being studied and consequently pupils are very involved in this work because they can see how it will help them in their writing in other curriculum areas. In these lessons as in other English lessons pupils are frequently encouraged to work in pairs. This supports pupils' very good co-operative skills. Teachers' planning is thorough and effective and is based on pupils' previous experiences. They clearly identify what it is they want pupils to learn and share this at the beginning of lessons, and often remind pupils about what they have been learning at the end of lessons. Teachers use questioning very effectively to assess what individual pupils know and understand and this helps pupils to think more clearly and to articulate their thoughts supporting their good speaking skills. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and consequently pupils achieve well. However, insufficient opportunities are found for pupils to evaluate their own and each other's work. Teachers in the junior classes work very effectively with teaching assistants and this supports the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs. Activities are planned to match pupils' needs and teaching assistants are very skilled at helping pupils make links with previous work so that they can apply the skills they have learned in new situations. All staff support the school's philosophy of inclusion and ensure that pupils with special educational needs play a full part in all aspects of English lessons. They make good progress.

74. The subject is well managed by the subject leader who is very well supported by a teaching assistant in the adaptation of the literacy strategy. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching has taken place and has been very effective in raising the quality of teaching since the last inspection, especially for the younger pupils. Statutory targets are set for eleven year-olds and these are likely to be reached. The recently introduced system for recording pupils' attainment and progress in English is not yet sufficiently developed to set yearly targets for all pupils in reading and writing. Resources and the limited accommodation are used well.

MATHEMATICS

75. At the time of the last inspection standards in mathematics for seven year-olds were average, but their progress was judged to be unsatisfactory. Standards attained by pupils when they were eleven were average.
76. The standards achieved in mathematics overall during the inspection are high and are a strength of the school. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection especially for pupils in the youngest class. Lesson observations and discussions with pupils show that current standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are above average. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. Able pupils in all year groups are given suitable additional challenges in lessons and pupils with special educational needs are very well supported. Pupils consequently make good progress. An analysis of pupils' mathematics books at each year group shows that work in number, shape and measures is above average. Standards achieved in data handling, through ICT, meet the standard required.
77. Pupils currently in Year 2 use their knowledge of number to count accurately in tens, recognise odd and even number sequences and mentally calculate three digit addition and subtraction sums well. They also solve mathematical problems, using standard metric units, confidently using strategies like halving and doubling to find a solution. Pupils make good progress in learning mathematical vocabulary and use these terms correctly when they talk about their work.

78. By Year 6 pupils work confidently with fractions and decimals, using their good understanding of place value to multiply and divide decimals. They accurately identify equivalence between fractions and decimals and use effective strategy to reduce a fraction to its simplest form. They have a secure grasp of mathematical terminology and use appropriate terms when explaining their work.
79. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good throughout the school. In all the lessons seen in each class, teachers' subject knowledge is sound and thorough planning provides a well-organised basis for the work in hand. Teaching assistants work closely in partnership with each class teacher, effectively supporting and challenging individuals so that all pupils make good progress. Resources are used effectively and, in some lessons, adjustments are made, providing individual pupils with additional resources to help them make better progress. This was particularly successful in the Year 3 and Year 4 class, where pupils in each age group and across the spread of abilities were given additional support, enabling them to discover new strategies to solve the mathematical challenge they had been given. Good strides in learning were made. Time is used well in Year 5 and 6, maximising pupils' efforts throughout. Investigative mathematics is particularly strong in Class 1, where the practical approach to mathematics actively promotes pupils' own exploration of ideas.
80. Pupils work hard in lessons. They get on well and help each other. They share their ideas, space and resources readily. They show enthusiasm in lessons, wanting to learn more. They speak articulately about their work. Pupils show responsible attitudes in lessons. Their individually programmed computer mathematics routine is well embedded and no matter what the alternative activity, pupils are diligent in taking their turn as scheduled, without prompting.
81. Staff are secure with the National Numeracy Strategy. Planning is very detailed and thorough and good use is made of the commercially produced resources. This works well to encourage independence and investigative work, as well as providing activities to consolidate pupils' learning.
82. Teachers mark pupils' work diligently but do not always provide effective feedback to pupils about what they need to do next to improve. Staff and pupils value good presentation of work but occasionally too much emphasis is sometimes placed on this aspect. Targets to support improvement have been identified for the year, but they are not referred to enough in lessons to challenge pupils to improve further. Assessment during the course of a lesson is good and enables staff to respond effectively to individual needs.
83. Good progress has been made in mathematics since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly. Resources are well matched to pupils' needs in each lesson. This supports mathematical investigation, which was judged to be unsatisfactory at the last inspection. Information and communication technology makes a strong contribution in mathematics. The subject leader, well supported by other key staff, has enabled significant developments to take place over time.

SCIENCE

84. Lesson observations, discussions with pupils and an analysis of work samples show that the oldest pupils currently achieve the standards expected in science. In contrast, standards achieved by pupils currently in Years 2, 3 and 4 are below those expected

nationally. The school is aware of the need to improve science and has already taken some important steps to address a range of weaknesses. Since the last inspection, some improvement has been made in the school's science provision but the progress that pupils make remains too slow until they reach the upper juniors.

85. Pupils currently in Year 2 show they are familiar with a range of properties of materials. For example, through their observations of building materials, they describe them well, identifying different textures and correctly naming the materials. In their study of sound, they relate their sense of hearing to their ears and show what happens when they move away from a sound. In their study of light they also describe and compare a number of light sources. They record their work well and use simple charts to communicate their ideas. They make observations using their senses appropriately. They are given too few opportunities to make predictions and hypotheses.
86. In contrast, pupils in Year 6 make informed decisions about how to investigate changes in materials when they are mixed with liquids and with assistance, carry out tests recognising and explaining competently why they are fair. Pupils are also beginning to alter variables when carrying out tests, testing their hypotheses with growing confidence. In the course of their work, pupils describe differences between the properties of various materials well, accurately predicting what will happen when different liquids are added. They show their understanding of the need to work carefully and safely when carrying out experiments.
87. Pupils behave well in science lessons and act responsibly when conducting experiments or working outside. Pupils work well in groups, sharing resources well. Older pupils particularly show their enjoyment of learning in science. They show fascination and intense concentration in practical work. Pupils communicate delight and surprise when, for example, they view on a computer screen the microscope images of materials changing as pupils add liquid to them. This enhances their spiritual development too.
88. The quality of teaching of the oldest pupils is sound. Investigative work is made integral to learning and careful attention is given to how groups of pupils are formed, so that all pupils can make the best possible progress. Good emphasis is given to the teaching of the language of science and the effective partnership between adults working in the class means a good range of experience is provided. Work is carefully structured and recorded though this has a tendency to slow the pace in the lesson.
89. Teaching is unsatisfactory across the rest of the school. This is largely because the curricular framework is weak and does not sufficiently support teaching where subject knowledge is insecure. Although the purpose of lessons is made clear, the pace of learning is slow and work does not sufficiently challenge the more able pupils. The teaching methods selected do not allow pupils enough scope to plan and carry out experimental work. In Year 1 and 2, for example, although pupils had a range of interesting objects to observe and discuss at first hand, they had too little chance to suggest their own ideas, make predictions and develop ways in which they could put their ideas to the test.
90. Teachers' marking is diligent, although the quality of it varies. Sometimes, misconceptions are identified and pupils respond to their teacher's comments. This enables further progress in learning. However, as most marking is limited to simple ticks and crosses, spelling corrections and words of general praise, the effectiveness of marking to inform next steps is limited. Tracking systems are developing, which

record achievements at key points in the infant and junior years. This is at a very early stage of development and is not yet being used to set achievement targets across each year.

91. The school does not yet have its own scheme of work. Although staff use the national guidance documents, supplemented by a teachers' resource book, work has not always been refined to meet the needs of mixed-age classes. As a consequence, when units are used which have been designed for younger pupils, the work is not always sufficiently challenging for older or more able pupils in the class. There is no guidance for the progressive use of experimental work in science and this aspect of the provision remains a significant weakness in most classes.
92. The subject leader has begun a training programme and is developing the resources base for science. Very good links have been forged with the local high school, which provides valuable support to the school. The school has not yet found a way to make the best use of the expertise that exists in the school in science. The raising of standards and the monitoring, evaluating and development of teaching remains an area of important development for the school.

ART AND DESIGN

93. Only one art and design lesson was observed during the inspection in the oldest junior class. Judgements are based on pupils' work, planning and discussion. No judgement can be made on standards for pupils when they are seven.
94. Standards in art and design match national expectations for pupils at the age of eleven. This is an improvement from the last inspection when standards for the oldest pupils were judged to be below average.
95. Pupils in the upper junior class make good progress in their learning because of the specialist support they receive from a specialist teacher. Under the guidance of the headteacher she works closely to national curriculum requirements to prepare a series of lessons that give pupils a range of experiences using different media. During the inspection the focus of learning was still life drawing. The very good encouragement and instruction pupils receive enables them to concentrate, experiment and persevere with their drawings. They explore the different effects of a range of media well, and the parent skilfully introduces the work of other artists to demonstrate techniques and show how their work might be further improved. Because pupils' work is praised and their individual efforts are celebrated they feel confident to explore their own ideas and are rightly proud of their achievements.
96. Pupils have experience of a good range of activities in art and design over time and all elements of the art and design curriculum are covered. Good use is made of the local environment and, where appropriate, effective links are made with other curriculum areas. There is currently no policy for art and design but teachers follow national guidelines in their planning.
97. The very good use of resources supports the good progress that pupils are making.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

98. During the inspection, few lesson observations were possible and work samples do not fully show the standard achieved by individual pupils. Consequently, it is not possible to judge what standards pupils achieve currently in Year 2 and Year 6.
99. The breadth of work in pupils' books and in displays around the school show they have a good range of experiences across each stage of learning. These include paper sculpture, folding, shaping materials and assembling components. Pupils are also learning a range of skills including design for an audience in the wider world. Pupils were particularly successful in their design for lunch boxes. Through the analysis of current lunch box designs, pie charts were well constructed in order to develop an improved design for a healthy lunch. This is a good illustration of the strong link in learning that the school makes between different subjects: mathematics, ICT, and design and technology, in this example. Older pupils are developing a good understanding of commercial market demands and this was conveyed through an exploration of slippers designs. This work was based on the actual research completed by a designer/parent in the 'market place' and shows the school's strong awareness of the need to prepare pupils for adult life.
100. In the group sessions where design and technology was being taught, during the inspection pupils showed positive attitudes towards their work and each other. They work well together and share space and resources well. In one particular session, at Year 5, the excellent quality of relationships with adults was shown, in a lively exchange with the teacher, about the likely owner of a particular pair of slippers, finally agreeing that they belonged to the headteacher.

GEOGRAPHY & HISTORY

101. Only two geography lessons were observed during the inspection – one in the infant class and the other in the lower junior class. Levels of attainment match national expectations for pupils at the age of seven; no judgement can be made about standards achieved by pupils when they are eleven. No history lessons were observed during the inspection and therefore no judgement can be made on pupils' attainment in this subject.
102. In geography pupils in the infant class are learning about a contrasting location to their own and can accurately recall facts about a Russian boy from Chukotka giving details of where he lives and his life at school. They describe well how urangas (their houses) are built and explain the reason for the hole in the top. They also have a good understanding of the materials used to build their own homes. This links well with their work in science on materials. When attempting to construct an uranga, pupils raised some very pertinent questions about the lack of light and what it would be like to live inside it.
103. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in the infant class. The teacher carefully builds on pupils' previous knowledge and experience and gives them plenty of opportunity to discuss their ideas. The good use of resources helps to engage pupils' interest. Although pupils are encouraged to identify the different features of houses from the two different locations there is insufficient emphasis on comparison and contrast.
104. In the lower junior class pupils competently develop their research skills to find out about mountain environments using ICT as well as textbooks. Using generic research questions they work collaboratively in their groups and confidently report back their findings at the end of the lesson. Through this process they learn a

number of facts about different mountain ranges and describe well some of the effects on people's lives of living in different environments.

105. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The good use of resources together with clear explanation of the tasks to be completed ensures that pupils make sound progress in the lesson. Opportunities are missed, however, as pupils report back their findings to identify trends, similarities and differences.
106. There is a geography policy in place which describes a rolling programme of study for each class group and ensures that all aspects of the subject are taught.
107. In history, scrutiny of work shows that pupils in the infant class are beginning to have a good understanding of chronological order by drawing a time line showing the events in their own lives from birth to the present time. They learn about important historical events such as the Great Fire of London and the Gunpowder Plot. The history curriculum for junior-aged pupils is based on a four year rolling programme. The emphasis in all classes is for pupils to learn through investigational work and for activities to be as practical as possible. The history policy ensures that all aspects of the history curriculum are covered.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

108. Lesson observations, work samples and discussions with pupils show that current standards in ICT at Year 6 are similar to those expected nationally. Although it was not possible to observe any ICT lessons for the younger pupils, the examples of work in their books indicate that in the current Year 2, standards meet national expectations.
109. Good progress has been made since the school's last inspection. The school has successfully extended the range of pupils' learning opportunities. Staff effectively use a broad range of resources, including time, ensuring all pupils have regular opportunities to develop their skills across the curriculum. This is particularly apparent in the two junior classes.
110. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 use computers competently, with good mouse control manipulating images and text boxes on screen. They show good research skills, for example, in geography they research the distribution and characteristics of mountains, sharing and exchanging ideas before presenting their findings. By Years 5 and 6, pupils tackle a range of projects using ICT. For example, pupils use a spreadsheet to calculate the price of a party and then recalculate it to take account of new budget information. Work samples show that pupils have also researched and tried out a wide range of software, including a range of databases and email.
111. Pupils are enthusiastic in their use of ICT and at the same time, show very responsible attitudes in the way they use the equipment and work together. They enjoy collaborative work and show a lively delight in all that is offered. They are eager to share new discoveries. This was shown particularly in Years 3 and 4 when the relative proportions of K2 and Mount Everest were examined at length. Pupils' sense of wonder was acute and one group's delight in new learning spread across the class.
112. A small amount of direct teaching was observed and the quality was good. Teachers and teaching assistants' roles in teaching are interchangeable. All staff contribute well

to the provision that the school makes. Teachers have been undertaking an extended training course to raise their own levels of confidence and expertise. The subject leader is supported well by the teaching assistant who supports the older pupils. This combination of expertise is very successful and makes a significant contribution to the quality of the provision made by the whole school. The local high school also supports the school well, providing specialist teaching in its own resource base on a weekly basis.

MUSIC

113. Two music lessons were observed during the inspection together with a violin lesson for a group of older junior pupils. The school uses the skills of a specialist teacher in music well and this ensures that pupils make sound progress and attain average standards. Pupils learning to play musical instruments attain above average standards.
114. In the infant class pupils are learning a range of songs which they sing tunefully with enthusiasm and pleasure. Songs are often selected to support learning in other curriculum areas. The specialist teacher is very skilful in holding pupils' attention by including actions and nonsense words. She encourages pupils to discuss the songs and quickly brings them back together again when their chattering becomes too excited. Pupils are very eager to talk but find it difficult to listen to each other. Pupils identify and respond to repeated patterns within songs, but there is insufficient challenge for the more able pupils.
115. In the older junior class pupils quickly recall their learning from previous lessons. They use musical instruments confidently and work well together. Using their skills of collaboration and negotiation well they successfully create their own compositions based on their knowledge of rondo. When listening to each other perform they take great pleasure in each other's achievements. They concentrate and work hard with good results.
116. The quality of teaching for these older pupils is good. The specialist teacher's good subject knowledge together with her skilful management and organisation means pupils make good progress. Although pupils are given the opportunity to listen and comment on each other's work they are not encouraged to evaluate it sufficiently or to suggest how improvements might be made.
117. There are good opportunities provided for older pupils to learn to play musical instruments through the use of specialist teachers, and a group of parents teach younger pupils to play recorders.
118. Although there is currently no policy for music, planning ensures that all elements of the national curriculum are covered.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

119. It was not possible to observe any physical education lessons during the week of inspection. Pupils taking part in the after school football club were very enthusiastic about the prospect of playing football. Several pupils, boys and girls of all ages, showed good football skills at break times across the week of inspection.

120. The lack of hall and small grounds limit the range of activities but the school ensures it makes adequate provision for pupils' physical education. This includes physical activities that take place in the local 'Reading Room' and swimming at Towcester Leisure Centre, the latter being underpinned by a clear school policy.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

121. Two lessons in the junior classes were observed. The last inspection found standards were in line with requirements for the locally agreed syllabus and these standards have been maintained. In both junior classes pupils are learning about Hinduism. Planned work is built on previous learning and pupils are beginning to gain a good understanding of different aspects of this religion. In both lessons pupils were reminded of the importance of respecting other peoples' religious beliefs. Older pupils are beginning to compare different beliefs and points of view sensitively, and talk knowledgeably about some recent work they have completed on Methodism. They understand the purpose of symbolism and can give further appropriate examples from their own experience. Good links are also made to the role of art in religion.
122. In both lessons the good use of resources helped to further pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers are very skilful in their questioning, enabling all pupils to take part and in encouraging pupils to express their own ideas and views. Opportunities are sometimes missed to discuss the influence of religion in people's lives. Teachers' planning is carefully linked to the locally agreed syllabus and, wherever possible, it is linked to visits to places of worship in the local community.
123. Younger pupils learn about a range of stories from the Old Testament and write the Christmas story in their own words well. Again, visits are made to the local church so that pupils can learn more, at first hand, about the Christian religion.
124. The recently agreed policy for religious education describes the two yearly cycles of topics to be covered for infant pupils and the four yearly cycle for junior pupils. The school has a good range of resources to support pupils' learning.