

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MARY'S C of E VC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Banbury

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123094

Headteacher: Mr P Ducker

Reporting inspector: Ms A Coyle  
20603

Dates of inspection: 30<sup>th</sup> June - 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2003

Inspection number:  
248424

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Southam Road Banbury Oxfordshire
Postcode:	OX16 2EG
Telephone number:	(01295) 263 026
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Wegerhoff
Date of previous inspection:	6 <sup>th</sup> October 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20603	Ms A Coyle	Registered inspector	Special educational needs Educational inclusion	How high are the standards? How well are the pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
9974	Mr D Singh	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?
20971	Mr A Beake	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Religious education	How well the school is led and managed
20063	Mr G Slamon	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Music Physical education	
22113	Mrs A King	Team inspector	Science Geography History Foundation Stage	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Mary's C of E VC Primary School is situated in Banbury. It serves a wide catchment area, which consists of privately owned and local authority properties. The school is of a similar size to most other primary schools and there are 273 girls and boys on roll, including 15 children in the Reception class. Forty-four children attend the Nursery on a part-time basis and are admitted in the term of their fourth birthday. Most transfer to the Reception class when they are five, except the summer-born children who move to Year 1 after four terms in the Nursery. Attainment on entry is low because children have limited communication and personal skills when they first begin. Twenty per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority families and 14 per cent speak English as an additional language, of which three per cent are at an early stage of language acquisition. These figures are higher than the national average. The main languages spoken at home, other than English, are Urdu, Punjabi, Cantonese and French. Fourteen per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national figure, and 19 per cent have been identified as having special educational needs, which is similar to most other schools. Pupils' needs include moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural needs, speech and communication difficulties and autism. Five pupils have statements for their special educational needs. The current headteacher is leaving at the end of the summer term and the deputy has been appointed temporarily as acting headteacher.

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

This is a welcoming school that provides a sound quality of education for its pupils. Pupils generally attain the expected standards by the time they leave at the end of Year 6 in most subjects, except in English and science where they are below average. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, and the headteacher, senior managers and governors provide good leadership and management. The school gives sound value for money.

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

- Standards are good in art and design, design and technology, music and religious education.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are good.
- Teaching is often good in the nursery and in the junior classes, and pupils with special educational needs are supported well throughout the school.
- The provision for pupils who learn English as an additional language is good.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is promoted well. Cultural development is very good and there is a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- The headteacher provides good leadership of the school and is supported well by the governors and senior management team.

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

- Standards are not as high as they should be in English and science, and the most capable pupils are not challenged enough.
- A few shortcomings in teaching lead to varied progress in the infant classes.
- Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is inconsistent.

*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 1997. Since then, it has made satisfactory improvement overall. Standards have improved significantly in mathematics, curricular planning has been developed and the procedures for assessing pupils are better than they were five years ago. However, the most capable pupils still do not do as well as they could and the information gained from assessments is not used sufficiently to guide teachers' planning in some subjects. Nevertheless, the roles of the co-ordinators have been established to a satisfactory level and include the monitoring of teaching. Overall, the school has a sound capacity for further development because the staff and governors are working together to improve the provision, and areas such as the standards in writing have already been noted for improvement.

## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

well above average      A

above average          B

average                    C

below average          D

well below average      E

The above table shows that standards of attainment were well below the national average in English, above average in mathematics and below average in science in 2002. Trends show continuing low results in English but an improving picture in mathematics and science since 2000. The school's results for 2002 were above those of similar schools in mathematics but well below average in English and science. The inspection evidence does not wholly concur with these results and shows that, by the end of Year 6, the current group of pupils achieve sound standards in mathematics. However, standards are still below average in English and science. The school did not meet its targets in 2002 and has set suitable targets for next year. Pupils achieve sound standards in most other subjects of the curriculum by the end of Year 6, and good standards in art and design, design and technology, music and religious education. The school has identified writing as an area for improvement.

At the end of Year 2, the standards attained in 2002 were well below the national average in reading, mathematics and science. They were below average in writing.<sup>1</sup> When compared with the results of similar schools, standards were well below average overall. The inspection evidence largely agrees with this picture and shows that pupils in Year 2 currently achieve standards that are below the expected levels generally. Overall, pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not achieve well enough.

The youngest children enter the Nursery with well-below-average attainment but make good progress in their first year. However, they do not achieve all of the Early Learning Goals<sup>2</sup> in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and creative and physical development by the time they reach the end of the Reception year.

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### <sup>1</sup> ON LEVELS:

By the end of Year 2, pupils are expected to attain Level 2 in all National Curriculum subjects. Those who achieve Level 3 are therefore attaining above nationally expected levels.

By the end of Year 6, pupils are expected to attain Level 4 in all National Curriculum subjects. Those who attain Level 5 are therefore attaining above nationally expected levels.

### <sup>2</sup> ON EARLY LEARNING GOALS:

From September 2000, QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) has introduced a set of 'Early Learning Goals for children's learning'. These goals are a set of skills, knowledge and understanding that children might be expected to achieve by the end of the reception year in the following areas of learning: language, literacy and communication; mathematics; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development; physical development; and personal, social and emotional development.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils show interest in their work and are keen to be involved in activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave well in lessons and at play.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils relate well to each other and are tolerant.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Levels of attendance have improved over the last year.

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are strengths of the school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Of the lessons observed, teaching was good, or better, in five out of every ten. This represents an improvement since the last inspection and accounts for the satisfactory progress taking place overall. The teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy is secure and teachers use the resources well to motivate and interest pupils. Support staff and bilingual assistants are deployed well to help individuals and small groups of pupils.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school provides a broad curriculum that includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education for pupils in the infant and junior classes. However, the curriculum for the children in the Nursery and Reception classes is not consistent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school responds effectively to the Code of Practice <sup>3</sup> and the co-ordinator teaches pupils well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils are integrated well and supported closely by the co-ordinator and bilingual assistants to help them acquire language skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good. Pupils are provided with good opportunities for developing their spiritual, moral and social awareness. Cultural development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school takes care of its pupils within a supportive learning environment, although the use of assessment information is still being developed and extended to help staff plan the curriculum.

<sup>3</sup> Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1993 Education Act.



The school works in good partnership with parents. A very wide range of extra-curricular activities extends the curriculum.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher, deputy and senior managers provide clear educational direction and are supported capably by the subject co-ordinators.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors are involved well with the work of the school. They are knowledgeable and supportive of staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. Teaching is monitored regularly but standards are still not high enough in English and science.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school's finances are linked appropriately to the improvement plan.

Staffing levels are good and the school has enough resources, although the current building works have caused difficulties for physical education lessons and the storage of equipment. The school applies best value principles appropriately in the purchase and use of resources.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children enjoy coming to school.</li> <li>The school is led and managed effectively by the headteacher.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More consistent homework.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the positive views of the parents. Children enjoy coming to school and are keen to do so, and the school is led and managed well. Homework is an area for improvement, as it is not used consistently to help raise standards.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards are lower than those found at the time of the last inspection and are currently below the national expectations by the end of Year 6 in the core subjects of English and science. Standards are in line with the nationally expected levels in mathematics, however, by the time the pupils leave the school. Children enter the Nursery with few personal skills and limited communication, and several have speech difficulties or language needs when they first begin. Nevertheless, they make good progress in the Nursery, because of the good teaching, so that by the time they go into the Reception class they have acquired enough language and social skills to settle quickly. However, attainment on entry to the Reception year is lower than that found amongst many four-year-olds in other schools. Most children make satisfactory progress and attain some of the Early Learning Goals but standards are generally below those expected in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. In addition, one group of children is missing out on part of their education because the school does not take the youngest summer-born children into the Reception class at all but moves them straight from the nursery into Year 1. This means that they do not have full access to a Foundation Stage curriculum and so cannot attain the standards expected before they start on their studies of the National Curriculum in Year 1. This is unsatisfactory.
2. In English, pupils' performance at the end of Year 6 in the 2002 National Curriculum tests was well below the national average and that of pupils in similar schools. Only 60 per cent of pupils in Year 6 attained the expected Level 4 last year and just 13 per cent attained the higher Level 5. These results show that the school did not meet its target of 80 per cent for 2002, although more pupils achieved the expected level than in 2001. Pupils' performance in reading at the end of Year 2 was well below the national average and below average in writing. The results were well below those of similar schools. Only 80 per cent attained the expected Level 2 in reading, with just 20 per cent at the higher Level 3, whilst just 82 per cent attained Level 2 in writing but four per cent reached the higher Level 3. Trends show that the results have varied since the last inspection. The present inspection findings show that current attainment in reading and writing is below the national average but there has been an improvement since last year and standards are approaching the national expectations. However, by the time pupils reach Year 6, standards are still below average because basic literacy skills are not taught consistently well enough across the year groups, although pupils make sound use of computers to help them extend their learning. Standards of handwriting and the presentation of work are not consistent and the school has correctly identified the need to improve writing.
3. In the 2002 national tests for mathematics, the results were above the national average and those of similar schools at the end of Year 6. However, the school did not meet its target, as only 75 per cent attained the expected Level 4 or above, although 20 per cent attained the higher Level 5 and 10 per cent attained Level 6, which was better than the national picture. At the end of Year 2, only 76 per cent attained Level 2 and 20 per cent attained the higher Level 3. This was below the national average and much lower than the results of similar schools. Standards have been variable at the end of Year 2 over the last four years, but they have improved at the end of Year 6. The inspection findings show that standards are currently in line with the national expectations for the pupils at the end of Year 6 but below at the end of Year 2. Basic numeracy skills are taught and used appropriately across the curriculum, and computers are used well.
4. In the science results for 2002 at the end of Year 6, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level was well below the national average and below those of similar schools. Although 83 per cent attained Level 4, only 25 per cent attained the higher Level 5. In Year 2, the teacher assessments indicated that standards were well below average in relation to the national figures; only 76 per cent attained Level 2 and 14 per cent attained the higher Level 3. The evidence gathered during the inspection largely concurs with these results and shows attainment to be below the nationally expected levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. However, pupils make sound progress overall, and literacy skills, numeracy skills and computer technology are used appropriately to help them increase their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts.

5. Pupils achieve appropriately in most other subjects of the curriculum throughout the school, including geography, history, information and communication technology and physical education. Standards are good in art and design, design and technology, music and religious education. Pupils' learning is promoted steadily and subject links are used effectively to support topic work. However, the most capable are not challenged sufficiently to do well and are not achieving as well as they might.
6. Pupils who learn English as an additional language make good progress and achieve well. All are integrated fully in lessons and identified early for language support if they require it. Bilingual staff support children in the nursery and reception classes well to help them get used to the English language by using the children's mother tongue to help them understand new words. For example, Urdu and Punjabi are spoken by some staff whilst others have a little knowledge of other languages. The good use of home languages and close guidance given by staff help pupils in Years 1 to 6 to make good progress. As a result of the careful teaching of individuals withdrawn from lessons by the co-ordinator, most achieve success and do well.
7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. This is because the co-ordinator concentrates closely on pupils' acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills and she works diligently to help them understand new work. Pupils benefit from working in small groups and often strive to do well, notably in English and mathematics.

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

8. Pupils' attitudes, their behaviour in most lessons and relationships are good. Pupils' positive characteristics complement the manner in which they serve and value their school and community.
9. Most pupils display positive attitudes to school and good attitudes to learning. This was evident in many lessons where pupils consistently approach their tasks with enthusiasm and interest, displaying appropriate levels of concentration. Pupils enjoy working in groups, sharing ideas and information, but the opportunity for pupils to work independently is not a prominent feature in all lessons. Pupils speak highly of their teachers and support staff, and they value the time and commitment that teachers give outside of lessons. Pupils' inquisitive nature is a significant feature of their learning and effectively supports spiritual and multi-cultural development. Most have disciplined attitudes to activities undertaken outside lessons. As a result, they are often active participants in activities. For example, pupils enjoy board games, football and computer sessions at break time and after school.
10. In informal interviews, a significant number of pupils spoke positively about learning French and participating in the gardening club activities, which pupils value and effectively support their social and cultural development. The activities motivated both racial and gender groups and inspired learning. They shared their positive perception about the school and indicated that staff are caring, sensitive and supportive. They reported that teachers offered good teaching and interesting lessons, and valued them and empathised with them by catering for their differing needs. These views contribute to effective relationships between teachers and pupils and promote a culture conducive to learning and teaching.
11. Most pupils behave in a mature manner and ensure they support a warm and friendly environment. The pupils are polite and welcoming to adults and consistently observe the school's high expectations of behaviour. They open doors for visitors and are keen to please and impress both staff and visitors. Pupils are courteous and respectful to others and older pupils are caring and protective of younger pupils. These positive characteristics were often very significant features of the inspection. There are rare incidents of inappropriate behaviour and during the inspection there were no signs of bullying or other types of aggressive and anti-social behaviour. Very occasionally, some pupils lose concentration during lessons and speak out of turn. Noise levels were occasionally high in some parts of the school. There were occasional incidents of jostling and pushing, mostly from boys and younger pupils. Pupils are adamant that all incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. There have been no exclusions in the last two academic years.
12. Pupils' relationships with each other and teachers are constructive and purposeful and the different

racial groups work and learn in a positive manner. Most relationships are based on mutual respect and understanding and the relationships contribute significantly to the school's purposeful ethos and to good achievement. The school community understands and appreciates diversity and the need to promote and develop friendships, which are evident across the school.

13. Pupils willingly accept the responsibilities they are given, which increase as they grow older; for example, they serve as 'buddies', caring for younger pupils, represent others on the school council, and act as class monitors and fund-raisers. They take their responsibilities very seriously and discharge them conscientiously, valuing the opportunity to serve the school and community. This creates a friendly and stimulating learning environment, which effectively supports pupils' personal development.
14. Most pupils attend school regularly and this ensures the school achieves a satisfactory level of attendance. Since the last inspection the school has successfully managed to reduce absence and continues to discourage the taking of extended family holidays during term time. As a result, authorised absence has fallen and is at present in line with similar schools nationally. The school continues to achieve very low levels of unauthorised absence, which are well below the national average. This progress is due to the hard work of the school community, support from most parents and the Education Welfare Service. Teachers ensure efficient registration of pupils at prescribed times and they monitor absences carefully, which enables the school and parents to account for the child's whereabouts when necessary. A valued system of rewards for those pupils who achieve regular and full attendance also encourages good attendance. Time keeping is not issue for the majority, but could be improved to support the learning of small minority of persistent latecomers, who disrupt learning and teaching. The school continues to sustain many of the most characteristics evident in the previous inspection.

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

15. The quality of teaching is good overall in the nursery and satisfactory in the reception class. Teaching is only rarely unsatisfactory; overall, it is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, and good in Years 3 to 6. Of the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was judged to be good or better in five out of every ten, which is an improvement since the last inspection in 1997. Teaching is occasionally excellent in music when it is taught by the specialist visiting teacher because her expert knowledge and lively approach inspire and motivate pupils very well.
16. The quality of learning is generally satisfactory. It is good in the junior classes, especially when lessons are planned with appropriate objectives for what pupils are to learn, and when these are made clear to the pupils at the start of the lessons and reinforced throughout. This is especially notable in numeracy, where the teaching of basic skills is good. Teachers' plans take into account the differing needs of pupils with special educational needs, although they do not always specify how work will be adapted for pupils of higher ability and the gifted and talented pupils; this is an area for improvement. Teachers and support staff work well together as a hard-working team and this has a good effect on learning. As a result of the teachers' good relationships with pupils, levels of motivation and interest are often good.
17. Adults involved in the teaching of the youngest children in the school are knowledgeable and patient. They provide a happy, calm environment in the nursery and reception class, where all children are valued. Teaching and bilingual support staff work together well to guide children and encourage good learning. However, the limitations of the accommodation, caused by the building works, have constrained the opportunities for outdoor play. In addition, one group of children whose birthdays fall in the summer do not have the experience of a curriculum for the reception year because they go straight from the nursery into Year 1, missing out a whole year. This is unsatisfactory because they are denied access to an appropriate curriculum. Throughout the rest of the school, teachers' planning successfully incorporates the National Curriculum programmes of study, and all teachers in the infant and junior classes draw well on a wide range of contexts to help pupils learn, making use of links across the curriculum.
18. In English, teachers have sound knowledge of the subject. However, although the National Literacy Strategy has been implemented appropriately, it has not had enough effect on building pupils' skills.

Nevertheless, most lessons have clear learning objectives that are focused because of the sound coverage of the curriculum, and some teachers use skilful questioning techniques to develop pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. The good teaching in the upper junior classes presents models of good practice for colleagues to follow. Pupils who learn English as an additional language are taught particularly well when they are withdrawn in small groups for specialist teaching by the very competent co-ordinator. However, more generally, literacy skills are not taught well enough across areas of the curriculum and this results in some untidy work and unsatisfactory presentation of completed writing. In addition, the most capable pupils are not challenged enough and teachers' planning does not take enough account of their prior attainment.

19. The school's strategies for teaching numeracy are sound. Teachers help pupils to be aware of what they are learning by sharing the lesson objectives with them. They teach basic skills effectively, although follow-up work does not always meet pupils' needs in accordance with their abilities. Lessons usually begin with good, lively question-and-answer sessions but teachers vary in how well they include pupils. During the main part of the lesson, teachers often adopt a good strategy of asking pupils to explain their mental methods and this helps to increase learning. Pupils consolidate their knowledge and understanding in final class discussions that are organised well.
20. Classroom management skills are satisfactory overall and teachers use an appropriate range of strategies to interest pupils. They usually control pupils well and deploy support staff appropriately to work with individuals and offer clear guidance and encouragement to them. Most lessons move along at a reasonable pace and teachers change activities frequently to gain and maintain pupils' interest and attention. However, homework is not given consistently to help raise standards nor marked effectively to provide enough guidance for pupils; teachers' written comments are often too brief to help pupils improve their work and assessment is not used consistently to help raise standards in English.
21. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. It is very good when pupils are withdrawn from classes to work with the co-ordinator in small groups. The specialist teacher provides well-paced lessons that engage pupils' interest and enables them to learn new words and construct complex sentences. Pupils are all included in oral work; for example, in Year 2 when they are asked to suggest ways of making numbers using any of the four rules of number. Teaching assistants support pupils well and liaise closely with class teachers. Lesson planning takes into account the needs of all the ability groups and teachers make sound use of computers and good use of word games to develop the lowest-attaining pupils' self-esteem.

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

22. At the last inspection the curriculum provision was judged as broad and balanced and supported well by a range of curriculum policies, schemes of work, and through long-, medium-, and short term planning. However, there was generally a lack of clarity in what pupils were to learn in lessons, although in music, intentions for learning were very clear. There were areas for development identified in the key issue raised then, to ensure a strong emphasis on the progression of skills in learning, and planning work to match pupils' needs, especially for more able pupils. These have been addressed in part by the school to a satisfactory level. The school has tackled the key issue by developing a curriculum framework, which is appropriately supported by national guidance. This is effective in supporting planned progression and continuity, provides a two-year programme to accommodate the classes of two-year groups throughout the school and ensures that the expected elements of the National Curriculum and religious education are covered. The curriculum is less successful in meeting the needs of all pupils, especially the more capable. The curriculum for the children in the Foundation Stage of learning covers the six areas of learning. Opportunities for personal, social and emotional development are good. The staff provide many opportunities for the children to become independent and develop positive dispositions towards learning, as well as to increase their knowledge and understanding of the world. The provision for creative development is designed to help the children use their own imaginative ideas and to represent what they observe, hear and feel, in imaginative play, art and music.
23. The school is implementing the National Numeracy Strategy well by using setting arrangements for

teaching pupils in groups according to their ability. The good level of support from teaching assistants enhances the pupils' learning, especially for the more capable. This has had a positive impact on standards, and overall, the curriculum provided for mathematics is good. The curriculum for music and art and design is also a strong aspect of the school's work. The National Literacy Strategy has been introduced satisfactorily but its use is inconsistent in lessons because tasks are often not matched well enough to the pupils abilities.

24. The school makes good provision for personal, social and health education, which includes sex education and drugs awareness. For example, the school nurse talks to pupils in Years 5 and 6 about personal and health matters. The programme for raising drugs awareness and the 'Drugs Bus' is used effectively to support this work.
25. The school ethos makes a positive impact on equality of access to and opportunity within the whole curriculum, but summer-born children leave the Nursery without spending time in the Reception class and transfer straight to Year 1. This means that, although they have made good progress in the Nursery, they may not have achieved the Early Learning Goals in the Foundation Stage of learning before they commence work on the National Curriculum. The staff are very aware significance of this for the children's learning and in the past have offered a slightly modified curriculum to meet their needs at the beginning of Year 1 but the children are still disadvantaged as they have not spent time in the Reception year.
26. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The pupils with special educational needs enjoy full access to the curriculum as a result of good planning for their particular needs and the good support that is given by teaching assistants.
27. The school has good links with the local community and business links in the area. There are educational visits to local churches, Banbury Mosque and the local newspaper office. The school also has a parent and toddler group, which is run by a member of the governing body. It is well attended, and the positive links in the community mean that the nearby church has offered the use of their hall so that the group can continue to meet there, during the school's building work. The good links with other primary schools in the local partnership contribute positively to the quality of the curriculum and its development. Links with the secondary school aid the smooth transition between the phases, for instance, the 'buddy' system between the pupils is effective. The school also has good links with Brooke's University for initial teacher training.
28. The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is very good; the pupils attend clubs regularly, there are some clubs offered to the younger pupils in the school. The clubs include sports, three football and two cricket clubs, as well as art, craft, music, drama, French, gardening, guitar, netball, philosophy, recorders and rounders; there are residential trips for Year 6. Overall, the curriculum in the school is satisfactory, with strengths in extra-curricular activities and also links within the community with businesses, local groups and other schools. However, there are weaknesses which have yet to be addressed, especially in challenging more capable pupils.
29. Very good provision is made for pupils' cultural development, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Good provision is made for their spiritual, moral and social development, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Teachers are generally successful in creating a calm, peaceful atmosphere in their classrooms in which pupils can grow and flourish. Religious education lessons, circle times and opportunities for reflection within the curriculum effectively support pupils' spiritual development. Some thoughtful work in English, history and information and communication technology on display shows evidence of this provision. A pupil wrote after the class trip to Coventry Cathedral:

'These windows have a secret meaning,  
Not quite sure what it is,  
Peace and happiness,  
Secretive and meaningful'.

Opportunities for listening, composing and making music together and for reflecting on the works of different artists add a further valuable dimension to pupils' spiritual development.

30. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong effectively. They are expected to show a high degree of respect for the differences between people, and for their values and beliefs. The good relationships and the very good example set by all the staff who work in the school strongly support pupils' moral development, which is underpinned by the school's aims, mission statement and Christian values. The importance of truth and justice is communicated by the school's evident concern for these qualities. The good behaviour policy is generally consistently applied in lessons and throughout the school. Good behaviour is appropriately rewarded through the Star Award system, and pupils are aware of sanctions for inappropriate behaviour. A sense of citizenship is developed through opportunities to care for the school through the 'Garden Project', for example, and for the local environment through a recycling scheme. Visits by the school nurse and the 'Life Education Bus' are well used to support drugs awareness and sex education. Parents agree that this area of pupils' development is well supported by the school.
31. Good social skills are actively encouraged. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to take responsibility within the school. Older pupils acting as 'Buddies' to younger pupils are very caring in their response to the needs of their charges. Members of the School Council are encouraged to use their initiative and to contribute ideas and suggestions about how to improve the profile of the school. In lessons, pupils are encouraged to work together and are given many opportunities to enjoy each other's company in extra-curricular activities. They are also given many opportunities to contribute to the local community through taking part in sporting and musical events, and displaying tapestries in local venues, for example. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to the wider community through collecting for charities such as Barnardo's, Poppy Appeal and Red Nose Day for children in need. The social development of pupils in Years 5 and 6 is further enhanced through annual residential trips.
32. Cultural opportunities are well represented in the school's planning. Well-planned visits such as those to churches, cathedrals, mosques, gurdwaras, as well as museum and canal trips, enrich the curriculum and pupils' understanding of British customs and a range of other cultures. The school very effectively prepares pupils for life in a multicultural society by celebrating the range of cultures present in the school and by promoting religious and racial tolerance. Parents are very happy with this aspect of the school's provision and some have said that that is why they choose to send their children to St Mary's. Pupils have many opportunities to study art, literature and music from a wide range of cultures. Year 6 pupils, for example, are working on a range of aboriginal art and music for their end-of-year exhibition in their local church. Religious education lessons are well used to further develop pupils' understanding of the richness and diversity of a range of cultures.

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

33. The provision for pupils' welfare and wellbeing is good, complemented by the good arrangements for child protection, which ensures that the school community learns in a safe, secure, friendly and welcoming environment. A designated teacher oversees the arrangements for child protection and the school makes effective use of specialist agencies when appropriate. The educational welfare officer and health officers provide good levels of support and guidance to staff, and new teachers are given suitable information and training.
34. The effective procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development supports pupils' welfare and wellbeing. The headteacher, senior management team, governors and staff work in an effective and purposeful manner to provide good levels of individual support and guidance. Teachers use registration time, assemblies, extra-curricular activities, lessons in personal, social and health education and organised play activities to create a warm and friendly environment for learning. Most staff are ready and willing to provide information, support and guidance, helping pupils to approach learning constructively and raising their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils from different racial and cultural backgrounds value the ethos in which they learn.
35. Teachers listen and respond constructively to pupils' individual concerns. Teachers and most lunchtime supervisors provide appropriate supervision during break and lunchtimes. They investigate pupils' concerns, often ensuring an objective and purposeful solution to pupils' problems in the playground. However, occasionally some lunchtime supervisors do not deal with pupils' inappropriate behaviour effectively or listen to their concerns.
36. The overall provision for health and safety is good and also contributes to pupils' welfare. Some supervising lunchtime staff have successfully achieved training in first aid. There are regular checks on fire and safety equipment and pupils are aware of the evacuation arrangements. Health workers and the education welfare officer support pupils' welfare and wellbeing. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle for the school community and gives good levels of personal and social education that ensures safety and security, and discourages use of drugs and other illegal substances. Parents appreciate this provision.
37. The strategies for recording and monitoring pupils' attendance and time keeping are satisfactory. The information is used efficiently to investigate, record, monitor and report all absences and reward good and improved attendance. The impact of this programme is limited by the lack of support from a significant minority of parents who do not consistently support the school's efforts. The school is aware that existing standards of attendance could be further improved by developing the system of rewards for pupils and by further discouraging extended family holidays during term time.
38. Procedures for monitoring and promoting positive behaviour are good. The existing policies on behaviour and equal opportunities are clear and informative. They are consistently implemented by caring staff and use constructive and purposeful strategies to recognise pupils' achievements and reward pupils in their care, both inside and outside of the classroom. This motivates pupils' learning and promotes good attitudes, behaviour and constructive relationships.
39. The school is also committed to equal opportunities and this is reinforced by the effective procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour, which work well. School documents indicate that any incidents of inappropriate behaviour, including racism, are appropriately challenged, investigated, reported and monitored. The existing strategies and action enable the school community to learn in a tolerant environment.
40. Since the last inspection the school community has sustained its caring ethos overall. However, it has not developed the provision sufficiently for extending pupils' personal study skills. Assessment procedures are generally satisfactory and staff record what the pupils have learned. For example, in mathematics and science, the records for pupils in Years 5 and 6 are comprehensive and attainment is measured against the National Curriculum level descriptors. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school. The general lack of use of assessment information to help raise standards impedes pupils' progress, particularly in English. In addition, teachers' marking does not provide enough guidance for pupils because written comments are often too brief to help pupils



improve their work.

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

41. Since the last inspection the school has sustained its productive and purposeful relationship with its parents and continues to provide effective communication between the home and school.
42. Parents value the positive ethos of the school, good teaching, behaviour of most pupils and the efforts of the teachers, who ensure that pupils are well cared for, supported and valued as individuals. This enables pupils to become responsible, mature and caring members of the school and wider community and this pleases parents. Parents also value the good and efficient leadership and management of the school, which ensures that parents' concerns are addressed and pupils' achievements are celebrated. Inspectors support parents' constructive comments and many of their positive views were evident during the inspection. However, some parents have expressed concerns about the provision of homework, how the school reports progress of pupils and the relationship between parents and the school. Inspection evidence indicates that the present provision for homework is unsatisfactory as it is given irregularly and does not provide enough challenge or interest for pupils. It is evident that the school works hard to ensure parents know what is taught and parents are informed of pupils' progress via termly consultation meetings and the end-of-year reports. However, whilst the provision is satisfactory, some of the language used in the annual reports is ambiguous; some subjects consist of technical language which is confusing to some parents and the targets set for improvement are sometimes too broad. Consequently, this affects some aspects of communication between parents and staff, although the overall relationship between most parents and the school is purposeful and productive.
43. The quality of information provided by the school is good. All new parents are provided with an informative school prospectus which enables prospective parents to make informed choices about the nursery and the school, and also provides information about the teaching of pupils requiring special education and English as an additional language, as well as the guidance on how to ensure regular attendance and time keeping. Regular and good quality newsletters and the communication through the Family Literacy project further enhance effective levels of communication between school and home. Parents with English as an additional language value the school's efforts. The governors' report is also well written and clearly illustrates the school commitment to the wider community. Parents from ethnic minority communities have equal access to staff and trained translators from the local authority.
44. Parental comments indicate that they are welcome when visiting the school. This effectively contributes to the support parents provide in the school, classroom and at home. Many offer good levels of support and guidance for their children's education and this supports learning at home. A significant number of parents are actively encouraged to become involved in school and several help by listening to readers, supporting teachers on education visits to places such as the local mosque and gudwara and by supporting activities in lessons and around the school. The purposeful and effective partnership between parents and school continues to significantly contribute to teaching and learning and helps to build the confidence and self-esteem of pupils, both inside and outside of the classroom.
45. Some parents of the school and the wider community actively support the Parents Association, which raises significant funds for the school. For example, the school recently used funds and labour provided by parents to build a nature garden, which is used to support teaching and learning and the personal and social development of pupils, especially those who have no gardens at home. According to pupils and other inspection evidence, most parents ensure their children attend school regularly and on time, as well as supporting their homework at home. This partnership is valued by both the parents and school. However, a small minority, whilst valuing the education of their children, tend to take extended family holidays abroad and this disrupts the education of the children and can contribute to a less-than-fruitful relationship between some parents and the school.

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

46. The leadership of the school by the headteacher and staff is good. The previous inspection report

noted a shared vision apparent which supported the life and work of the school and referred to a caring environment as a feature where all pupils are equally valued. This is still the case: the caring and sharing elements of the school's atmosphere contribute greatly to its individuality.

47. The school's management of co-ordinating core subject provision in the curriculum shows that improvement has occurred in the monitoring of both teaching and learning but too little emphasis is given to raising standards of attainment, particularly in English, where literacy skills are not sufficiently developed. The school development plan addresses this need but it does not prioritise its arrangements suitably for the teaching of more capable pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 generally. Standards for all pupils require improvement in English and science.
48. There are clear co-ordinator job descriptions that follow 'Investor in People' guidelines and the school has recently renewed its accreditation. Co-ordinators' roles in the core subjects enable them to spend time to monitor the work. This does happen, and evidence shows that an impact is being made through staff consultation and discussion with co-ordinators, and written reports enable the headteacher's overview to be more focused.
49. The governing body is also involved in a co-ordinating role. Governors take the opportunity to visit lessons and make brief written comments, which they find helpful in gaining an understanding of the teachers' role and of the provision made for the pupils. Significant governor monitoring includes religious education and information and communication technology. The Chair of Governors undertakes curriculum visits in addition.
50. The monitoring of subjects by co-ordinators and school governors is a good feature of school management, which is proving effective and assists the school management in planning for improving future standards generally. A policy for the induction of newly qualified teachers has been described as helpful and informative.
51. The school development plan is comprehensive and results from consultation between the headteacher, staff and governing body. The Governors have a clear view of finance and best value practice. They have a good knowledge of the work of the school and the issues raised in the previous inspection report and how the management has addressed them. Governors hold a clear view of the socio-economic make-up of the locality. They recognise the need to raise standards of achievement. Governors assist in promoting family and local links with the school, particularly relating to religious education, multi-faith provision and other community initiatives.
52. Full governors' meetings are held at least termly and committees convene regularly to plan and discuss finance, premises and staffing matters. A useful induction pack for governors is available and they are involved in training for school development planning. Governors have a clear vision of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and their support for the school is good.
53. School leadership is embedded throughout the school community and is not confined solely to the most senior staff. Together, the school management team is successful in creating a comfortable climate for learning. Co-ordinators in particular provide good role models for other staff and pupils. Strategic planning reflects the school's ambitions, particularly in seeking to provide an inclusive school where each individual matters. Effective performance management procedures are in place.
54. Financial planning is sound. Approaches to financial and resource management assist the school in achieving its aims, which are stated clearly in the school documentation. Day-to-day funds are managed carefully and specific grants are used well; for example, the money obtained from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant and for booster classes is targeted well. The governors have accurate budgetary knowledge of the school's finances and they apply best value principles suitably to ensure that sound value for money is given.
55. The overall staffing provision is good. Staff are appropriately qualified and committed to meeting the needs of pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language. The match of teaching staff and teaching assistants to curriculum provision is good and support staff are deployed well. The seemingly high staff turnover has not been significant because it involved the re-appointment of temporary staff and maternity cover.

56. The school makes efficient use of its accommodation, which is notably good for mathematics and information and communication technology. However, accommodation is unsatisfactory overall; the lack of storage space and limited resources for subjects such as physical education, music, geography and history adversely affect teaching and learning. Eating arrangements are also affected, owing to the shortage of a purpose-built dining area; although this affects pupils' welfare and wellbeing, the negative impact is limited by the efficient use of staff and classroom space.
57. The resources for teaching and learning are generally satisfactory and are supported by a good selection of multi-educational resources provided by the Family Literacy Project. The good range of computers is used effectively and a sound range of story books and bi-lingual texts is available.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. The headteacher, staff and governors should:

1. raise the standards of attainment in aspects of English and science by:

- making sure that all lessons are planned effectively to include work that is suitably matched to pupils' prior attainment;
- planning more challenging activities to extend the most capable pupils\*; and
- extending the use of literacy skills across the curriculum.

*(Paragraphs: 1 - 7, 67 - 76 and 83 - 87)*

2. address the inconsistencies in teaching by:

- raising teachers' expectations of their pupils in the infant classes;
- referring more closely to assessment information to guide teachers' planning\*;
- making better use of homework; and
- increasing the opportunities for independent study.

*(Paragraphs: 15 - 21)*

3. improve the provision for the children in the Foundation Stage by:

- making sure that all children have equal access to an appropriate reception year and a curriculum that enables them to work towards the Early Learning Goals.

*(Paragraphs: 59 - 66)*

*(\*denotes areas that were identified for improvement during the last inspection, but have not been sufficiently developed and are included appropriately in the school improvement plan)*

In addition, there is a minor area for improvement. This is noted in paragraph 35, and relates to pupils' reports.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	1	3	29	28	2	0	0
Percentage	2	5	46	44	3	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	22	251
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	38

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	51

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	37

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	12	12	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	9	9
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	18	19	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75 (87)	79 (87)	79 (96)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	11	12
	Girls	10	11	12
	Total	20	22	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (91)	92 (96)	100 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	9	16	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	2	2	5
	Girls	13	13	14
	Total	15	15	19
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	60 (84)	60 (74)	76 (84)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	2	2	5
	Girls	13	12	16
	Total	15	15	21
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	60 (65)	60 (74)	84 (81)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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





### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

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

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
193	0	0
0	0	0
9	0	0
4	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
8	0	0
4	0	0
19	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.5
Average class size	26

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

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	179.5

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.5
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	37
Number of pupils per FTE adult	7.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	658,546
Total expenditure	672,971
Expenditure per pupil	2,274
Balance brought forward from previous year	44,806
Balance carried forward to next year	30,381

***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5.2

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	273
Number of questionnaires returned	59

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	36	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	46	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	56	3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	46	24	0	3
The teaching is good.	61	32	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	44	17	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	22	2	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	29	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	39	46	14	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	75	19	5	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	36	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	56	25	7	3	8

### **Other issues raised by parents**

Inconsistent homework.

## **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**

59. The children come into the Nursery with levels of attainment that are well below the expected stage for this age group. By the time they leave the Foundation Stage of learning they have made satisfactory progress, combined with good progress in the Nursery, but they have still generally not achieved the Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning. The Reception class is accommodated in the main building at present; when the new building work is complete there will be a Reception class located near to the Nursery. The Nursery is housed in attractive chalet-style accommodation with its own outdoor area. This area is also used by the Reception children. Children transfer from the Nursery in the term after they have had their fifth birthday. However, the youngest summer-born children do not have a reception year but move straight into Year 1 after spending four terms in the Nursery. This is unsatisfactory because it means that these children do not have equal access to an appropriate Foundation Stage curriculum and, although they make good progress in the Nursery, they do not achieve the Early Learning Goals before they commence work on the National Curriculum in Year 1.
60. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory overall; they are good in the Nursery and satisfactory in the Reception class. The staff have a secure understanding of the curriculum for young children and plan appropriately. When planning is good, there is a clear indication of what the children are to learn from the different activities and there is a good match of different tasks, depending on their abilities. There is good management of the children, and support staff and resources are generally used well. Overall, methods of presenting and organising activities are satisfactory, with a reasonable balance of work the children select for themselves and those activities which are directed by an adult. The procedures for assessing what the children are learning are satisfactory; they are used well in the Nursery, with comprehensive learning stories about what the children are achieving at particular tasks. Assessment in the Reception class covers a new profile from the local authority and is still at a developmental phase. Reports for parents and carers are comprehensive and informative and cover the six areas of learning. There is a good partnership with the parents and carers; they receive informative guidance about the curriculum and about activities, such as sharing books, which they can do at home.

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

61. The overall good teaching in personal, social and emotional development is having a positive impact on the children's learning. Many children come into the Nursery with very limited skills in their personal and social development. Initial assessments when the children first start in the Nursery confirm this. By the time they leave the Foundation Stage of learning, some have achieved the Early Learning Goals, but many are still learning to be independent and to use their initiative, and do not achieve the expected standards. However, the good teaching they receive, especially in the Nursery, enables them to develop their confidence and self-esteem, and they are constantly praised for their efforts and achievements. In both classes the children usually work and play together co-operatively, although some children in the Nursery can be rather boisterous. The children in the Reception class are still learning to deal with their strong impulses and emotions, but any disruptive behaviour is dealt with effectively by the staff. However, they have good opportunities to practise being still, listening and concentrating, and in the Nursery they are enthusiastic about their learning. The staff, including teaching assistants, present positive role-models to the children; they treat the children and each other with respect and understanding. The staff are sensitive and sympathetic to the children's differing needs and support those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language well. Positive images of different languages are presented to the children, and the expertise of the staff is used effectively to promote an awareness of a variety of cultures and backgrounds. Also in the Nursery, the story of 'Noah's Ark' was used very well to reinforce the connections between religions, linking this to the story about 'Nuh' in the Koran. The staff provide many opportunities for the children to become more independent, especially in the Nursery, by ensuring implements and resources are easily accessible.

## **Communication, language and literacy**

62. The children are making satisfactory progress overall in their learning in communication, language and literacy, although most do not achieve the expected goals by the time they leave the reception year. They make good progress in the Nursery; many have poor skills in listening and communicating when they first start, but the good teaching they receive, especially in nurturing these skills at 'circle' time, when they share ideas and respond to instructions, benefits their learning. In the Reception class, the staff build on these skills, and although there is satisfactory progress, sometimes the lack of specific planning impedes more rapid learning, especially for the more capable children. The Nursery provides the children with good opportunities to develop their imaginative ideas in role-play. For example, during the inspection the topic of 'water' was used well and the 'Canal Café', combined with the enthusiastic support from a teaching assistant, was used effectively by the children to develop their ideas and stories. In the Reception class there is also an area for imaginative role-play. At the moment this is a 'travel agent' but although appropriately equipped, some resources are rather shabby and sometimes role-play lacks structure. However, in both classes there are regular and planned opportunities for the children to share books with adults and discuss the pictures and the meaning of words. Books are taken home regularly by children to share with their parents and carers. In the Nursery there are frequent opportunities for the children to recognise their own names, for instance, when they come in at the beginning of the session and when they find their own labelled drink at snack time. The children's attempts at early writing are valued and they have opportunities to practise these. This is particularly good in the Nursery where the children jot down 'memos' for the staff. However, despite their satisfactory progress overall, the children's emerging writing is still below average by the time they leave the Reception class.

## **Mathematics**

63. In their mathematical development the children are making satisfactory progress overall in their learning. They come into the Nursery with a limited understanding of numbers, but make good progress as many of the activities the staff provide offer good opportunities to count, compare and handle two- and three-dimensional shapes. This area of learning is well taught in the nursery class and satisfactory in Reception but, despite the satisfactory progress the children make overall, many do not achieve the Early Learning Goals. However, the more capable children in Reception can count accurately to ten and some can count to 20; they recognise that numerals can be put in order. A few recognise that two and one more makes three, and the staff are observant and reinforce these mathematical ideas. The more capable children make mathematical patterns using two colours to make a repeating sequence. An appropriate range of learning opportunities is provided for the children to practise their skills in counting, but sometimes there is a lack of underlying structure to some activities.

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

64. Teaching and learning in knowledge and understanding of the world are satisfactory overall. The programme of activities provides good experiences for the children to develop their awareness of their environment, as many have a very limited understanding of the world around them. The staff are keen for the children to become observant and provide a range of activities to promote this. For example, in the nursery the children handle a range of tactile materials to stimulate their thinking and encourage them to look closely. They grow their own plants and flowers and observe change in living things. The children are learning to find their way about their classrooms and in school from an early age. They consider their own experiences and make comparisons about what they could and could not do when they were very little, which gives them a sense of time and space. In both classes the children have access to a range of tools and materials to use when they make models and designs. There is also opportunity for them to use the computers to support their learning, although even by the time the children reach the Reception class their skills are still not well developed and they do not achieve the expected standards. However, they have a good range of experiences to observe and consider other cultures, backgrounds and traditions and to acknowledge the cultural diversity in society.

## **Physical development**

65. In physical development the children make satisfactory progress and have a varied programme of activities. The children in the Reception class use the outdoor area in the Nursery on a regular basis. Particularly at the moment, when the hall in the school is out of action, this is offering the children useful opportunities to continue to use apparatus to climb, balance and jump. However, their skills in using small equipment such as footballs are weak and although teaching in this type of games lesson is satisfactory overall, insufficient match of tasks to their different abilities means the more able children do not have sufficient challenge to refine their techniques. Most do not achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year. Nevertheless, although hand control skills are weak, there is a wide range of activities to support and develop this aspect of the children's learning. They use paintbrushes, pencils, crayons and malleable materials to strengthen their hand muscles and develop manual dexterity. The children in the Reception class benefit from swimming sessions that help develop their co-ordination, control and confidence.

## **Creative development**

66. In their creative development the children are making good progress in the Nursery and are beginning to explore sound to accompany their singing and to respond to music. They start from a fairly low level of skills when they enter the Nursery and make satisfactory progress overall in the Reception class, although most do not achieve the expected goals. In the Nursery they make collages using different types of materials, using sequins, glitter and other tactile materials. They use paint to make their own observations and express their ideas. In the Nursery the staff's enthusiastic and imaginative input has a positive impact on the children's imaginative and creative work. For example, the topic on water includes the 'Canal Cafe', and the staff participate enthusiastically with the children at their play. The children love role-play, dress up and develop their ideas; for example, by collecting 'tickets' from an 'audience' who watch them dancing and singing.

## **ENGLISH**

67. Standards are below the national expectations by the end of Year 6, and pupils' progress is unsatisfactory overall because it falters in Years 1 and 2. Inspection findings indicate that the expectations of older junior pupils are generally higher than those for the pupils in the infant and lower junior sections of the school. There is some underachievement within Years 3 and 4 and with the most capable pupils in Year 6. Literacy skills require improvement across the curriculum.
68. Standards in speaking and listening are satisfactory. Pupils throughout the school are able and ready to talk about the work they are engaged in. In class discussion sessions all pupils are encouraged to join in and most of them contribute freely. Their contributions are respected and appreciated by other pupils. Talk is a planned feature in most lessons in all subject areas within the school curriculum. In art and design activities, pupils are confident in explaining what they are doing and how they are managing the task. A particular example of good teaching observed in English and literacy sessions is where pupils are actively encouraged to respond with extended explanations and responses to teachers' questions. Sound speaking and listening skills are similarly apparent in the quality of some older pupils' written dialogue work. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6, for example, gain useful experience when reporting back to the whole class in a literacy session, and younger pupils are encouraged to talk about and discuss aspects of the lesson with a partner, the whole group, and their teacher.
69. In general, pupils' achievement in reading in Year 1 and Year 2 is below nationally expected standards with a significant minority achieving satisfactory levels for their age. All pupils spoken to individually said they liked reading and the daily provision made for this activity by teachers is a significant part of the school's improvement strategy in evidence during inspection. It is effective in providing quiet opportunities for pupils to gain more reading experience. Teachers' planning for lessons focuses upon the need to extend reading skills - noticeably in poetry appreciation during literacy sessions - where partner work is successful in encouraging pupils to consider and analyse sounds and use of language. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are gradually becoming more able to read accurately and with greater fluency. Increasing knowledge of punctuation - the function of question marks and commas, for example - is helping pupils to read with more expression.

70. Pupils' use of flipcharts and individual whiteboards in Year 2 is effective in teaching alliteration sounds and spellings of words such as 'slimy', 'slippery' and 'sloppy' and in recording interesting words and adjectives. Pupils enjoy the quickness and variety of this learning opportunity and it enables them to memorise words and to develop their skills in self-correction. The pace of these opportunities is sometimes too slow in infant classes and affects pupil enjoyment and participation. Standards of reading in junior classes are approaching a satisfactory standard overall within a wide range of pupil ability, from skills below expectations, to above expectations in a small number of Year 6 pupils. Pupils are mostly able to read with fluency and clarity, paying close attention to punctuation, with expression. Pupils with higher level reading skills offer information about the books they are reading without being prompted and show enthusiasm for reading as an enjoyable activity. Two higher attaining pupils engaged in conversation with the inspector for several minutes about the context of their books and the author's other achievements. The humour in one story was portrayed infectiously by the reader. Most junior class pupils demonstrate reading skills expected for their age and they demonstrate a reasonable background phonic knowledge. Their basic skills, knowledge and ability require more opportunities for frequent practice, which the school provides, but with more rigour and pace to enable significant progress to be made, particularly in lower junior classes.
71. Achievement in writing is below national expectations across the school but standards have improved for seven and eleven year old pupils during the current school year. Classroom material and work samples show that the school's new planning for literacy is having an impact in raising the standard of work within the upper junior stage. Individual and groups of pupils are identified by teachers within their planning for the teaching and learning of writing and appropriate differentiated work is being undertaken within classrooms. Lower attaining pupils receive useful help and guidance from learning support assistants throughout the school. Such help is well directed and has a positive impact on individual pupil progress. The learning assistants are friendly and efficient. Older pupils in junior classes experience a wider range of purposes for their writing, including formal and informal letters, summaries of work undertaken in design planning, lists and creative story writing. Sound use is generally made by older pupils of paragraphing, punctuation and legibly joined handwriting. Teachers' marking is helpful in encouraging pupils to develop their writing ability. Younger pupils would benefit from similar experiences in predicting and descriptive writing with more time made available for reflective and extended work. Their handwriting and presentation, which are lower than expectation at times, are of better quality when pupils are expected to produce longer tasks. There is evidence of pupils throughout the school who are ready to show appreciation for others' efforts. Presentational skills are often under-developed, however, and more practice is needed for pupils to produce 'best' work, as they do more readily in art and design and model making, for example. Within the teachers' portfolios and work sampling are examples of quality presentation which all pupils would benefit from looking at and discussing as to why they are best pieces.
72. Teaching and learning are mainly good in the junior classes, notably in Years 5 and 6. They are satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, although the overall provision for both reading and writing is limited and restricted because most of these pupils need to be prepared earlier for higher level practice to enable the school to address the learning requirements for lower attainers adequately. Younger pupils receive appropriate teaching of basic literacy skills but it is not extended quickly enough. A sound feature of teachers' planning and lesson structure evident throughout the school is the help pupils receive from their individual literacy target cards which reminds them of skills relevant to them personally; for example, the use of commas; remembering capital letters and checking spellings with dictionaries. In literacy sessions where the pace is brisk, there are more opportunities for pupils to appreciate a wider range of examples of text. This briskness is the exception but a significant way in which literacy skills show improvement across the whole curriculum. Lessons in Years 3 and 4 often lack pace and inhibit pupils' attainment. Teachers frequently use comments with tips for future work when marking. These are clearly explained and give praise frequently for effort. Basic work in sentence construction is identified well by teachers. Short diary and story writing predominates but there are too few opportunities for pupils to undertake extended work.
73. Basic skills are taught with emphasis in the infant classes but there is a need for pupils to 'move on' at the earliest opportunity. Most pupils understand what is expected of them. Teachers' expectations are too low in Years 1 and 2. Nevertheless, all staff deal sensitively with pupils who have special educational needs. The curriculum is wholly inclusive and matters of equal opportunities and

special needs are dealt with by the school in a way which clearly shows that all pupils are valued. Teachers employ a selection of classroom management techniques, lesson presentations and teaching methods to ensure that the school day is pleasurable. Teaching assistants' efforts are unobtrusive yet efficient and their expertise is well developed. Questioning techniques are used well and are particularly effective when used to encourage pupils to give extended and more comprehensive responses to further their speaking skills.

74. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented satisfactorily although its use has not had enough effect on raising standards, especially in writing. Planning fulfils requirements and teachers follow the framework with care. In consultation with the staff, the co-ordinator has devised a new programme, now in use, which involves monitoring of literacy throughout the school. This has been in consultation with a literacy consultant from the local education authority. Issues raised during the school's last inspection have been included. The co-ordinator undertakes lesson observations in all classes and written feedback is shared with teachers and the headteacher.
75. The new literacy co-ordinator manages the provision securely and with enthusiasm. She has produced informative evidence of national test results and identified potential weaknesses in teachers' planning. A school self-evaluation audit establishes priorities in both infant and junior classes. Teachers' planning clearly takes account of these priorities and the co-ordinator believes that national test results have not yet reflected the efforts teachers have made to improve literacy standards, particularly in junior classes. Inspection evidence of the subject suggests that these efforts will result in higher standards. The co-ordinator's new teaching system used internally also indicates this outcome.
76. Resources are adequate and well managed within the school. The co-ordinator is responsible for recommending and providing materials, pupils' books and teachers' reference books to support English and literacy. The library, mostly situated centrally and with some difficulty during current school building works, is adequate in providing both fiction and non-fiction books which are attractive and suitable for the whole primary phase of education. Languages other than English, including dual language books, are also included. The books available are either classified individually or contained in accessible boxes under topic headings; for example, poetry and rhyme, biblical stories, plays, fables, folk tales.

## **MATHEMATICS**

77. Standards are close to the national average at the end of Year 6, as they were at the time of the last inspection. However, they are below the national average at the end of Year 2, which shows a decline since the time of the last inspection when standards were in line with the national average. The school explains that this decline in standards is the result of an increase in the number of pupils with special educational and behavioural needs. However, teachers have not sufficiently adapted their teaching styles or the structure of lessons to provide for such changes in cohorts. Class teachers tend to keep the whole class on the carpet for too long, rather than using their knowledge of pupils' abilities to challenge and teach at different levels as pupils work on group tasks. As a result, the pace of learning slows and pupils become restless or waste time when working independently because they need more direct teaching to support their learning. Overall, standards in mathematical understanding are below average on entry to Year 1, and a significant number enter with standards that are well below average. Although they make satisfactory progress in lessons, a significant number of pupils are underachieving over time because the quality of teaching is not of the consistent high quality needed for them to reach expected or higher standards.
78. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. This is because teaching is mostly good or better, expectations of work and behaviour are high, good support is given to pupils with learning difficulties, pupils want to learn, and relationships between all adults and pupils are positive and make a significant impact upon learning. Setting arrangements in Years 3 to 6 allow pupils to be taught at appropriate levels and the school constantly monitors these arrangements to ensure that the needs of all pupils, including those of higher-attaining pupils, are met. The structure and content of the National Numeracy Strategy are well used and appropriately adapted to support learning, and many features, such as the mental sessions and the discussions of strategies, are securely embedded. An analysis of pupils' books shows that the programme of work in applying



mathematics, numeracy, algebra, data handling and shape, space and measure is covered systematically and thoroughly throughout the school. A special feature of the best lessons is the way in which teachers make links between different aspects of the subject to ensure that all are taught to sufficient depth. The main weakness in provision relates to an over-use of worksheets in Years 1 and 2 which results in pupils not presenting their work in an intelligible and organised way that allows them to explain their thinking and to gauge the progress they are making.

79. The strong emphasis throughout the school on mental computation means that pupils benefit from regular practice at the start of lessons, and their understanding of mental strategies is developing well. In the most successful lessons, teachers ensure that all pupils are fully involved in the mental sessions. The very good relationships that exist between all members of the school community give pupils of differing attainment the confidence to offer answers, knowing that they will be appreciated. Teachers use a good range of resources such as number lines, 100 squares, 'counting sticks', fraction wheels and whiteboards, to allow all pupils to answer, checking each answer quickly. In the best lessons, questions are carefully targeted to challenge all pupils. A good example of this was seen in a Year 3 and 4 lesson where the class teacher used questions effectively to ensure that all pupils were challenged at appropriate levels as they gained a good understanding that  $1 = \frac{5}{5} = \frac{4}{4}$  when working on equivalent fractions. As a result, all had to think hard and readily offered to answer questions. However, this is not always the case. In lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, teachers fail to question those who do not volunteer to answer, and some pupils play a passive role and contribute little during whole-class sessions. The overall provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who come from homes where English is an additional language is good. The support that these pupils receive is of good quality and this allows them to be fully included in lessons so that they make progress similar to that of their peers. Teachers generally ensure that boys and girls work together at all levels of attainment. This contributes well to pupils' social development as well as to their learning.
80. Most pupils by the end of Year 2 understand the place value of digits and sequence numbers to 100. They go on to apply their knowledge to solve money and measure problems using mental calculation, but because of below-average literacy skills, a significant number find it difficult to translate their thinking into words. Work shows that by the end of Year 6, most pupils make good use of their understanding of place value to multiply and divide whole numbers and decimals by 10, 100 and 1000. They calculate fractions and percentages of quantities and measures and they understand that  $0.75 = \frac{75}{100} = \frac{3}{4} = 75\%$ . They also gain a good understanding of negative numbers through interesting tasks such as measuring temperature. Throughout the school there is a consistent approach to teaching pupils the correct mathematical vocabulary, so that by the end of Year 6, pupils show they understand situations by describing them mathematically using symbols, words and diagrams. Pupils are taught to use formulae to find areas of squares, triangles and rectangles, and higher-attaining pupils are further challenged to devise algebraic problems using all four operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. This shows a good emphasis on developing the important skills of using and applying mathematics in a range of contexts. They are taught, for example, to use their knowledge that the sum of the angles of a triangle is 180 degrees to calculate a missing angle and to construct angles to the nearest degree.
81. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2; in Years 3 to 6, it is good. Teachers throughout the school have good knowledge of the subject and plan their lessons well, sharing learning objectives with pupils. The plenary sessions at the end of lessons are generally well used to give pupils an understanding of their own learning, but more thought needs to be given to these so that all pupils are actively involved. A common features of the good and very good lessons is the way in which teachers motivate all pupils to learn by structuring their lessons to ensure a good balance between direct teaching and independent learning. Inspired teaching in a Year 5 and 6 lesson, for example, resulted in enthusiasm for learning and pupils building on what they already knew to devise and explain patterns of numbers using simple formulae. Very high quality teaching by the class teacher, the teaching assistant and the teacher supporting pupils with English as an additional language, and the strong relationships established, resulted in excitement and joy in learning. In the good and better lessons, rigorous questioning is well used to challenge pupils' thinking and to deepen their understanding so that a good pace to learning is maintained. Computers are used well to support learning. For example, pupils in a Year 3 and 4 lesson use the 'Mad About Maths' program to consolidate their understanding of fractions, and pupils in Year 6 use their knowledge of right angles

to estimate the sizes of other angles. Other subjects such as science, geography and design and technology contribute well to mathematics as pupils measure length, weight, capacity and temperature accurately and present their findings graphically, often using computers to do so.

82. The subject is conscientiously led by a well-informed co-ordinator. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' plans to ensure coverage, and observes lessons to help ensure consistency of practice. National tests are closely analysed to identify any weaknesses in provision and to identify any groups of pupils who might be underachieving. This analysis has recently helped to improve pupils' data-handling and problem-solving skills, and has now identified division as a comparative weakness in their learning. There are good procedures in place for monitoring pupils' progress and for setting realistic but challenging targets for individual pupils. Although teachers check pupils' work regularly, the quality of marking is inconsistent; it does not always indicate to pupils how they might improve, and corrections are rarely followed up. Teaching assistants are well trained and provide good support for pupils.

## SCIENCE

83. Standards are currently below those expected by the end of Years 2 and 6, although the progress the pupils make is satisfactory. There has been a decline in standards since the previous inspection, but there are signs of improvement and a few pupils are attaining the levels expected for their age. Insecure skills in literacy, especially for the less capable pupils and those with special educational needs, impede their learning. Pupils learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.
84. In Years 5 and 6, the pupils are learning about food chains and different types of animals, such as 'omnivores, carnivores and herbivores'. They are developing a reasonable understanding of the appropriate scientific language to describe what they observe. More able pupils can investigate, contrast and compare independently different groups of animals, food chains and whether animals are 'consumers' or 'producers'. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils are studying habitats and different species, for example, the variety of bird species and how they behave and congregate. In Year 2 science lessons, the topic at present is about classifying living things and making detailed observations of what they notice. In Year 1, the pupils study the senses, materials and their properties, life cycles of frogs and tadpoles, and light sources such as natural light and that from batteries and light bulbs.
85. The teaching and learning in science are satisfactory overall, with examples of good teaching in Years 5 and 6. The staff have a secure understanding of the necessary elements of the science curriculum and teach appropriately the basic skills of investigation, prediction and hypothesis, based on the pupils' previous knowledge. Plans are fairly detailed and generally include a reasonable match of task to the pupils' abilities. When teaching is good, this match of activity is secure and the pupils, especially the more able pupils, achieve well, but this is not consistent across the school. Expectations for behaviour are good and in Years 5 and 6, expectations for what they are to achieve are high. In other classes, however, expectations although appropriate are not sufficiently challenging, especially to tax the more capable pupils. In lessons the teaching support assistants generally work well with pupils and support their learning, although opportunities for assessment observations to be noted, for instance, during introductory sessions, are sometimes missed. In a Year 3 and 4 lesson in science, the very good support from the teaching assistant promoted the pupils' learning very well and raised the level of progress overall. The methods the staff use and the management of the pupils are satisfactory in most classes and good in Years 5 and 6.
86. Overall the curriculum for science is appropriate and covers the expected elements of the National Curriculum. These include the study of life processes and living things, materials, physical processes and how to apply previous learning in science, such as how to set up a fair test. Resources are adequate and generally used well, but storage and retrieval of equipment is a problem for the school, especially at the moment because of the building works; this situation should soon be resolved. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and there is evidence of good methods in recording what the pupils have learned. For example, records in Years 5 and 6 are comprehensive and indicate pupils understanding against National Curriculum level descriptors, but this good practice and rigorous marking of work are not consistent across the school. Computers are used effectively to support the pupils' learning in science; for example, using control technology to measure

temperature, and spreadsheets to record observations.

87. The management of the subject is satisfactory. There has been some good monitoring of teaching and there is a clear understanding of the areas for development and raising standards. Plans and samples of the pupils' work are also scrutinised for coverage and progression. The school grounds are used effectively in science work; for example, there is a wildlife area, a garden with a butterfly area and the school is also close to the canal and the river, for observational work. There are trips to a wildlife park and museums in Oxford, particularly for natural history studies. Years 3 and 4 have also been involved in a science theatre workshop project to support their learning in the subject.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

88. Standards of work by the age of seven and by the age of eleven are good. There has been improvement since the last inspection when work throughout the school was satisfactory. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 produce attractive weaving showing contrast and range in colour. Their observational pencil sketches of leaves and plants are good examples of shading using a variety of techniques. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 use fabrics to make collage-style pictures and designs. They produce prints using blocks and weave with fabrics. Potato prints linked with marbling techniques are particularly attractively displayed. All pupils' work is of good quality.
89. Year 6 pupils' work features aspects of the current school building site, including sketches and photographs in their art books with a focus on rotational brick prints and photocopied images. An interesting and varied display of pupils' efforts in the computer suite includes a good display of Indian art with a selection of relevant books for reference. Lino prints are framed and of a good standard. Photographic work of David Hockney and building construction ideas are shown as a starting point for art activities: pupils in Years 1 and 2 have contributed to a collaborative collage and paintings showing a black and white contrast. A large collage picture of St Mary's School viewed from Southam Road, displayed with changed digital images from the computer, makes a striking display. Well-made large 'stained glass' effect patterns in two classrooms also reflect the school's commitment to art and design. Clay work models and examples of fired pottery show other aspects of art techniques with which pupils are involved.
90. All examples of pupils' art and design work are at least of the standard expected for their age, and there are several examples of work above expectation, noticeably the designing and making of African-style masks in Year 5 and Year 6, where a few pupils are able to analyse and comment in some detail on their own work and that of others. Other multi-cultural links with art and design are seen within the school.
91. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use introductory parts of lessons well to introduce pupils to new techniques and engage them in relevant discussion to help their practical work. Younger junior pupils draw and paint flowers after a visit to a local garden centre and are keen to talk about their work with visitors. Teaching in Year 1 shows good use of demonstration using pencil and pastel shading techniques and encourages pupils to make close observation of stones and shells as a particular activity. Eleven-year-old pupils are engaged in designing and making masks, linked with their sketchbooks. All pupils are included in art and design sessions and the progress made by all of them is noticeably good. Behaviour and attitudes of pupils in art and design lesson are good throughout the school. Pupils enjoy their work. A wide range of resources to support art and design is available to teachers, mostly in boxed form. They include watercolours, pastels, printing materials, sequins, straws, art papers and fabric samples.
92. The subject is co-ordinated well in the school. The school has received a Gold Artsmark Award this year and the co-ordinator has found this useful in helping to undertake an audit of provision for the subject. Assessment used in art and design is particularly useful in illustrating pupils' on going attainment. The youngest pupils draw a trainer or paint a flower and repeat the task in subsequent years. The examples are filed for reference and for discussion between teachers and pupils. Art is a priority focus within Banbury Partnership Schools and the co-ordinator has found the link to be helpful in supporting the role.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

93. Standards of work by the age of seven and by the age of eleven are good. Pupils enjoy practical and creative activities and achieve well. Their previous work shows that a good variety of activities is undertaken, and pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Sufficient time is given to the subject and there are significant links with other subjects and topic work.
94. Pupils' skills are developing well in both making and designing. Seven-year-olds express ideas and plan how to use materials and show confidence in cutting, joining and combining. They have an understanding of how their work can be adapted for improvement. Pupils in a Year 1 and Year 2 class make boats based on their own step-by-step plans. They are secure in knowing the order in which they do things. Safety rules for cutting are understood and followed carefully. Pupils in a lower junior class follow a food health and growth activity, designing methods for sandwich making and they discuss choices for filling them. This activity is enjoyed and promotes pupils' speaking skills when they discuss their work. Good ability in design and technology is a feature in pupils' work in Years 5 and 6, where masks are designed and assembled onto card frameworks. Good examples of moving toys designed and made by these are attractively displayed. Finished products are of good quality and demonstrate mechanisms to good effects.
95. Teaching and learning are good in both infant and junior classes. Teachers' use of questioning and demonstration at the start of lessons features well in infant classes, with adequate time allowed for pupils to tackle practical work. Junior pupils, particularly in older classes, benefit from good lesson planning where appropriate time is given for an activity. Talking and listening focuses clearly on their effort. This leads to pupils' good involvement in lessons, and they generally work well together, showing sustained interest and attention. They behave sensibly and work well with materials. As a result, work shows good progression; for example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 sew felt-fish and finger puppets, and devise waterproof lunches and magnetic fish tanks. In Years 3 to 6 they make clay pots and boats, experience weaving and sewing, produce wooden picture frames for batik work, measure equipment for river investigations, and complete tiles, pots and Greek-style papier-mâché plates.
96. The co-ordinator is effective in monitoring the work of pupils throughout the school and overseeing teachers' planning. He observes work in other classrooms, including the puppet-making activities in the infant classes. Half-termly plans are scrutinised and filed by the co-ordinator. The co-ordinator is currently working towards increasing the variety of opportunities in design and technology by requesting additional resources. The school arranges an after-school craft club that is well attended, and resources are frequently shared to support other areas of the school's work, including drama productions.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

97. The standards the majority of pupils achieve in geography are broadly in line with national expectations in Year 6 and below average in Year 2. All groups of pupils make satisfactory progress.
98. In Year 1 the work studied this term is about the seaside and making comparisons between the coastal environment and Banbury. The pupils have a reasonable understanding of the similarities and differences. They study a similar theme in Year 2 as part of the two-year programme designed to accommodate the classes of two year-groups in the school. In Year 3 and 4, as the current building work nears completion, the topic of study is the use of the school environment and how this can be improved. The pupils are designing their own ideas about how to develop the pond and garden. In Year 5 and 6 the pupils are studying the effects of rivers, that rivers have sources, channels, tributaries and mouths that they erode, transport and deposit the river bed and create features in the landscape.
99. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and in Years 5 and 6 it is good. The staff have a clear knowledge and understanding of the necessary skills the pupils need and they teach these basic skills of research, observations and deduction soundly. Teachers' plans are usually detailed, comprehensive and matched fairly well to the pupils' needs and abilities. Staff have good expectations of how pupils are to behave, and in Years 5 and 6 lessons are planned well to offer a good match of activity to the range of abilities in the class. However, sometimes the inadequate

quality of the resources used impedes learning. The staff manage the pupils appropriately in most classes and behaviour management and organisation are good in Years 5 and 6.

100. The subject is managed satisfactorily. Resources are adequate overall but there are some gaps for Years 1 and 2; for example, the current topic on the seaside is not particularly well resourced and there are not enough photographs and posters to support this work. The curriculum is appropriate, linked to national guidelines, and covers a range of topics. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but are not being used sufficiently to inform curricular planning and future teaching. Plans are monitored for coverage, but there is no formal observation of teaching. Data handling and the Internet are used well to promote learning.

## **HISTORY**

101. Standards are broadly in line with the national expectations in Year 6 but they are below the expected level in Year 2. However, all groups of the pupils make satisfactory progress overall.
102. In Year 5 and 6 this year the pupils have studied the Ancient Greeks, and last year the present Year 6 covered work on the Tudors and Great Britain in the 1930s. They have remembered this work well, and can give pertinent and accurate descriptions of what they learned about Henry VIII and his relationships with his children, Mary, Elizabeth and Edward. They also have a firm grasp of what life was like during World War II, can explain the purpose of ration books, why people had to wear gas masks and what it must have felt like to be an evacuee. Work for Years 3 and 4 covers the Romans and the Civil War, and in alternate years, Ancient Egypt. Years 1 and 2 cover a two-year programme of Myself, The Fire of London, transport and the seaside, and these last two also form part of the geography programme.
103. It was not possible to observe teaching directly during the inspection because, owing to the way in which the curriculum is organised, the subject is not taught this term. However, based on past work, displays and discussion with pupils, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have a secure understanding of the subject and teach basic skills of research, using primary and secondary sources of evidence satisfactorily. Teachers' plans are fairly detailed; long-term plans link to national guidance and there is a two-year programme of topics to accommodate the classes of two year groups in the school and to ensure appropriate coverage, continuity and progression. Resources are adequate, although limited, and information and communication technology is used well to extend pupils' research skills. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but are yet to be developed fully to inform curricular planning. Management is satisfactory. Teachers' plans are checked for coverage but only a limited amount of teaching and pupils' work is monitored. The good range of trips and visits supports the pupils' understanding and knowledge. These include a Year 5 and 6 visit to Sulgrave Manor, when studying the Tudors, Broughton Castle for Year 3 and 4 on the 'Civil War' and the pupils also visit Banbury Museum and the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

104. Standards meet the national expectation by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The school has successfully addressed the weaknesses relating to resources and the regular use of computers identified at the time of the last inspection. Standards are similar to those reported in the last inspection and the school has kept pace with national developments. This has been achieved through a number of contributory factors. The school has installed a well-designed computer suite and ensures that all teachers are confident in its use. All classes are timetabled there each week and there is a good planned scheme of work based on national guidance, with progressively developing skills to Year 6. The curriculum is planned well to give both coverage of topics each year and progression of skills through the school. The improvement in the subject has been promoted by the subject co-ordinator working closely with the headteacher, and by the good support of the governing body in considering the best design and equipment.
105. Pupils make good progress in learning key skills and applying them in lessons taught in the classroom, including literacy and numeracy. Pupils are successful in using computers to support their work in literacy. In word-processing, for example, Year 2 pupils, when entering a shopping list, make effective use of their knowledge of the keyboard to improve their spelling of words such as

*bread, milk, butter and cheese.* They make good progress in learning to save, retrieve and print their work. Pupils in Year 6 improve the quality of their written work by using a spell checker, centring and aligning text and changing font and style when, for example, writing a diary extract or letter, with an awareness of the expected audience. By the end of Year 6, pupils have been taught to refine their ideas by assembling, organising text, tables and images where appropriate. In using the Internet for research, pupils make good use of reading-reference skills to find key facts. Pupils apply their numeracy skills by creating their own databases, entering information accurately and using a program to compare the sizes of different angles, and describing them as *acute* or *obtuse*. Data handling skills are well supported by information and communication technology. There is no significant variation in learning or standards achieved by pupils according to gender, ability or ethnicity, because teachers and support staff ensure that all are fully included in lessons.

106. Pupils throughout the school are taught to use programs such as 'Colour Magic' to support their work in art. Pupils in a Year 3 and 4 lesson use this program to produce work in the style of George Pierre Seurat, which gives them a good understanding of his '*Pointillist*' style. Teachers' planning and pupils' completed work shows that by the end of Year 6, pupils use this program to design symmetrical patterns in the style of Escher, and to produce a 1970's album sleeve linked to their work in history and music. The good curricular links ensure that the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development. Pupils are also taught how to make, test, improve and refine sequences of instructions in order to make things happen or to monitor events. Pupils in a Year 5 and 6 lesson, for example, were well taught to devise a series of instruction to control a set of traffic lights using the 'Flowol 2' program. Although all aspects of the subject are given due attention, the school has plans to further develop opportunities for control technology.
107. The quality of teaching and learning in whole-class lessons seen in the suite, and where information and communication technology is used to support learning in other subjects in classrooms, is good overall. Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well and use appropriate questions to guide learning at a good pace. Use of a digital projector to demonstrate programs is assured and pupils generally watch carefully so that learning time is not lost and that they are ready to apply the taught skills when they work on the computers. Teachers and support staff manage pupils' behaviour well in lessons. This contributes well to the quality of learning, producing good attitudes amongst pupils. These good attitudes to the subject are reflected in the number of pupils who choose to spend their free time working on computers and the number who attend the popular computer club. This enthusiasm is a testimony to the good teaching and the good relationships that pupils enjoy with staff members and with each other.
108. The co-ordinator provides good and supportive leadership. An informative policy and scheme of work is in place and a clear action plan builds well on recent improvements. The school has adopted the local education authority's assessment procedures to ensure that skills, knowledge and understanding are progressively developed year-on-year. The school has appointed a technician so that computers are well maintained and always readily available to support teaching and learning. Pupils are justifiably proud of the good quality, award-winning website they have helped to set up. Opportunities such as these increase pupils' understanding of, and their interest in, the subject.

## MUSIC

109. Music is strength of the curriculum. Standards are in line with levels expected for pupils at the end of Year 2, and above those expected for pupils at the end of Year 6. These standards have been well maintained since the last inspection. Pupils benefit significantly from the expert knowledge and planning of the subject specialist, who teaches music to all classes at different times of the year. Although class teachers observe lessons given by the music specialist, this very good practice was not reflected in a whole Year 1 and Year 2 singing lesson taken by class teachers, where weak planning and an absence of an interesting range of teaching methods resulted in unsatisfactory learning. Because of the school's timetabling arrangements, this was the only lesson observed in this age group. Planning and records show that by the end of Year 2, pupils have been taught to use their voices expressively through speaking and singing songs, and to recall sounds with developing aural memory. In lessons, they have opportunities to use symbols to represents sounds and to understand how different moods and effects can be created by the elements of music.

110. The teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 are of very high quality, and occasionally excellent. As a result of skilful teaching, by the end of Year 6, pupils sing with clear diction, pitch control and a sense of both phrase and musical expression. They sing in unison, with a good awareness of other performers. The quality of pupils' singing and the joy with which they perform songs add a valuable dimension to their spiritual and cultural development. For example, songs such as *'Mother I Feel You Under My Feet'* and *'The River Is Flowing'* are sung well, and pupils listen with awe and accompany traditional tales such as *'The Rainmaker of Noongaburra'*.
111. Pupils are able to harmonise skilfully with controlled phrasing, and synchronise their voices to good effect to produce a very good standard of choral singing. The teacher gives due consideration to teaching the correct musical terms such as *tempo*, *pitch*, *dynamics*, *structure*, *timbre* and *texture*. In this respect, the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy skills. The subject also makes a strong contribution to pupils' social and cultural development, as well as their literacy skills, as they listen to and orally evaluate music from different eras and cultures in the musical project *'Expressing Faiths through the Arts'*. A special feature is how well pupils work together. For example, when a Year 3 and 4 class worked quickly towards a class ensemble, they collaborated well to add patterns on tuned and untuned instruments to songs such as *'Pots and Kettles to Mend'* and *'Do you know the Muffin Man?'* when learning traditional singing games for children.
112. Pupils enjoy music and get great pleasure from singing and playing together. The standard of behaviour and attitudes in lessons seen is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 but some pupils lose interest and concentration at times. Pupils' attitudes are very good in Years 3 to 6 because pupils are often highly motivated and inspired by the lively teaching approach and the very interesting range of teaching methods used. The school ensures that boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds play a full part in lessons and in extra-curricular activities, such as recorder groups, choir, and orchestra, which are open to all. These opportunities and events such as performing with local schools and regular school performances strongly support pupils' social development and allow pupils to celebrate their attainment in the subject with parents and members of the local community. The adequate range of tuned and untuned instruments is supplemented by the visiting teacher who brings additional instruments with her. However, there is no specialist accommodation at present, which means that the teacher must carry instruments from class to class. The school has plans to rectify this when the building works have been completed, and to increase resources when proper storage space is provided. The specialist teacher provides very good value for money and is highly valued by the school. Apart from pupils using computers to design a sleeve for a 1970s record linked to their work in history, there is little use of information and communication technology to support learning in music.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

113. Standards match those expected for pupils aged seven and eleven. By the end of Year 6, a significant number of pupils attain standards above those expected in games and swimming. Members of staff and visiting coaches provide a wide range of extra-curricular sports clubs, which are well attended by pupils and enhance their attainment in the subject. During this year it has not been possible to cover the gymnastics programme because of building works, and dance lessons have had to be taught in classrooms, which has resulted in limited opportunities for movement. This is the major reason why standards are not as good as they were at the time of the last inspection. However, teachers have worked hard under difficult circumstances to maintain a curriculum designed to promote pupils' physical development and social interaction.
114. Lessons in games and dance were observed during the inspection, together with extra-curricular provision in cricket and rounders. All pupils attend swimming lessons and records show that they make good progress because of the good quality teaching they receive. By the end of Year 6 a high number of pupils exceed the nationally expected standard of swimming. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are provided with opportunities for outdoor and adventurous activities during their annual residential trip. The school ensures that boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds have full and equal access to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.
115. Pupils enter Year 3 with a good basis for further development. They are developing good ball skills, and are applying these effectively in small-sided games. They practice and improve skills of sending,

receiving, striking and travelling with a ball. Pupils show an increasing ability to evaluate their performances. For example, in a Year 5/6 dance lesson, pupils were very effectively comparing and improving their performances and techniques when devising complex sequences in response to their visit to the River Cherwell. They considered how to *meander, flow, swirl, trickle, thunder* and *splash*. The class teacher challenged pupils to use skills such as the transference of weight and the effective moment of stillness, to improve the quality of their sequences. In this and other effective lessons, teachers make good use of demonstrations to help pupils share their ideas and evaluate each other's work. Planning shows that pupils are taught a range of recognised swimming strokes and personal survival skills.

116. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. In the best lessons, teachers plan their lessons with clear learning intentions. Lessons are well paced and structured to include warm-up and cool-down sessions. Pupils are well motivated by the teaching and are ambitious to succeed. Skills are progressively taught and teachers' high expectations ensure a sustained effort by pupils. A very good example of this was seen in an outdoor Year 2 dance lessons, where organisation, pace and expectation ensured very good progress in pupils' learning linked to their work in science on mini-beasts. They were successfully challenged to alter the rhythm, speed, level and direction of their movements to enhance the quality of their sequences. Planning shows that in games lessons, pupils develop elements of games play that include running, throwing, catching and control using hands and feet. In swimming, they are taught to move themselves in the water with confidence, using various swimming aids, arm and leg actions, and basic strokes. Teachers throughout the school ensure that pupils know how to exercise in safety, and that they can describe the effect on their bodies during different activities. Adults have developed positive relationships within their classes. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons, behave well and work together safely and co-operatively. They appreciate each other's efforts and recognise each other's achievements. Teachers are aware of the needs of less able pupils and this helps to ensure their learning and good progress. Assessment is used in most lessons to support the learning of pupils of different abilities.
117. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and effectively promotes the subject throughout the school. The limited but adequate range of equipment is readily accessible to pupils and the field is used well for lessons and extra-curricular activities. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social development and sense of achievement by the way in which the school takes part in many inter-school competitions. Teachers make effective use of digital cameras to record pupils' achievements and to celebrate their successes.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

118. Pupils at age seven and at age eleven attain well in relation to the Oxford Agreed Syllabus, which is used effectively throughout the school in lesson planning and teaching. The subject is taught well and used to make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and multi-cultural education. Pupils display a good knowledge of Christianity and a good appreciation of other faiths.
119. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have a clear understanding of why people pray, and this understanding is developed in a lower junior class. They consider how, where and what constitutes prayer in Christianity and in other religions. Pupils discuss prayer in groups in a way which allows lower-and higher-attaining members of the class to be able to participate and feel valued. Pupils in Year 6 considered ritual and symbolism in a lesson which had a strong links with a planned end-of-term drama, and with recent visits to a church and to a mosque. Pupils produce display sheets based on their research from books and visits. Significant learning gains are achieved through partner discussions. Pupils share knowledge of their study of Vikings, Sikh festivals and North American Indians when they report back to the whole class. Listening and presentation skills are notably developing well as a result of these lessons. In another lesson, pupils explored rituals and beliefs surrounding death in three focused cultures. Paired discussions centred upon pupils' personal beliefs, illustrating the inclusive culture of the school's efforts in teaching and learning. Teachers deal sensitively with topics such as death and belief. Pupils say that they understand and appreciate the value of their lessons.
120. There are other examples of teaching embracing other cultures throughout the school and of lessons planned and well structured to follow the Agreed Syllabus closely. In Year 3 pupils write about



themes such as a contemporary version of the Good Samaritan and discuss the moral implications reflected in this work. Good opportunities such as these help to deepen their understanding of moral issues.

121. The co-ordinator has produced a file of pupils' work and examples that include material to support the study of other religions, book lists and catalogues. Planning is discussed with all teachers at the start of the school year when aspects of Christianity, Islam and Sikhism are identified as main areas for study. The co-ordinator has observed lessons in two classes - one infant and one junior - during the current school year, and has planned to monitor and assess the pupils' work with the staff. She has developed teaching through workshops and staff meetings focusing on the progression of skills and planning. Resources are good and well used by pupils and staff. Strong links exist with the local church, used as a resource, and visits there and to a mosque have taken place. The vicar has an involvement in monitoring religious education work, and this is appreciated by the school. Pupils within the school, in Year 5 and 6, have been involved in talking about their faiths and communities. A lesson observed by the co-ordinator considered a mosque and a pupil member, and illustrated successful pupil involvement. Good coverage of religious education in classes is reflected in teachers' planning. The co-ordinator refers to copies of all medium-term plans throughout the school in arranging future work. This has resulted in focused and relevant plans shown in teachers' lesson notes.