

## INSPECTION REPORT

**ASTON AND COTE C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Aston

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123106

Headteacher: Mrs. A. North

Reporting inspector: Elizabeth Camplin

3586

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 248426

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Cote Road Aston Bampton Oxfordshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. K. Jones
Date of previous inspection:	2 <sup>nd</sup> February 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3586	E. Camplin	Registered inspector	<p>Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage</p> <p>History</p> <p>Religious education</p> <p>Provision for pupils with English as an additional language</p>	<p>Information about the school</p> <p>The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well the school is led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
8937	H. Allen	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion	<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
25577	W. Jefferson	Team inspector	<p>Mathematics</p> <p>Science</p> <p>Information and communication technology</p> <p>Design and technology</p>	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
22157	M. Roussel	Team inspector	<p>English</p> <p>Art and design</p> <p>Geography</p> <p>Music</p> <p>Physical education</p> <p>Provision for pupils with special educational needs</p>	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Aston and Cote is a small primary school controlled by the Church of England. It has close links with the parish church of St. James and the local community. Most pupils come from very advantaged backgrounds. They live in, or near, the village of Aston, a prosperous rural area on the outskirts of Witney, Oxfordshire. Children are admitted part-time in the term in which they have their fifth birthday. At present, there are nine children in reception out of a total full-time roll of 110. They are taught in a class with eight pupils from Year 1. Most children attend a playgroup and they enter reception achieving, on average, standards well above expectations for the age group in social and communication skills, literacy and mathematical development. Less than two per cent of pupils qualify for free school meals; which is lower than the national average. Twelve per cent of pupils have special educational needs, such as difficulties with speech, hearing loss or for emotional and behavioural needs, including Aspergers' Syndrome. One pupil has a statement and another is expected to receive one soon. The percentage in need of special support is lower than the national average. There are no pupils with English as an additional language.

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

This successful and improving school offers pupils a good quality of education. Standards in Year 6 are well above average and at least as high as they should be in speaking and listening, reading, mathematics and science. They are very good in art and design and good in history, geography, design and technology, religious education, information and communication technology (ICT), and most aspects of physical education. Standards in personal development are also high. Overall, pupils are taught effectively, though the quality is uneven, ranging from satisfactory in reception to very good in Years 3 to 6. The oldest pupils are achieving well but are, nonetheless, capable of attaining higher standards in writing. The headteacher provides very effective leadership. She is well supported by staff and a very good governing body. Value for money is securely satisfactory.

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

- Pupils achieve high standards in academic, creative and personal development by Year 6 due to very good teaching in junior classes and the good quality of the curriculum.
- Pupils behave very well and form excellent relationships. Their highly positive attitudes stem from the particularly effective way all members of the staff team promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher has a very clear vision of what she and the school needs to do to promote the school's motto for pupils to 'Achieve Success Through Opportunities and Nurturing'. (ASTON)
- Governors are skilled at managing resources to improve the school's effectiveness.

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

- Pupils' motivation to write imaginatively and present their work well.
- The way teachers ensure that from reception to Year 6 all pupils understand how well they are learning and what they can do to improve.
- The way the headteacher and governors enable teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the subjects or areas of learning for which they are responsible.

All issues are already included in the school's comprehensive plan for future development.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The previous inspection took place in 1998. Improvement has been good since then as a result of action to address the key issues. Schemes of work now provide teachers with a useful framework for planning a broad and stimulating curriculum across the school. Pupils have a better knowledge of ICT and how to use it since teachers have received special training and additional computers were purchased. There is a higher percentage of very good teaching. As a result, standards in most subjects are better now than they were four years ago. Progress in meeting the goal to provide clearer advice and support to teachers in planning for teaching and learning has been steady. Such improvements should remain a priority to ensure that all pupils, including children in reception, are served equally.

## 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	A	C	A	A
Mathematics	C	C	B	C
Science	A	B	C	C

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

Attainment is above average overall in the National Curriculum Tests and has kept pace with improvements seen nationally. Standards are very good in English and good overall compared with similar schools. Results reflect the headteacher's view that standards achieved in the past have been too low in mathematics, due to pupils' relatively poor performance when they were tested at the end of Year 2. Junior pupils have had a lot of catching up to do. Levels of attainment seen during the inspection were better in mathematics and science than those achieved in the tests this year. Extra support for slower learners has helped to raise standards in numeracy. Pupils in Year 6 are well on course to meet the school's targets for even higher standards in English, mathematics and science in 2003. In 2002, test results in Year 2 were high in mathematics and good overall, though more able pupils should have achieved much better outcomes in writing. Standards seen in Year 2 were well above average in mathematics, above average in English and science and good in art and design, geography, history, physical and religious education. In all other subjects, by the end of Year 2, standards match those typical of pupils of their age. No judgement was made for music in either Year 2 or 6, due to lack of sufficient evidence. Children in reception make sound progress. They are likely to do better than most children of their age in most of their work by summer 2003. They are capable of better standards in forming letters and numbers.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils throughout the school are keen to attend.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. From reception to Year 6 boys and girls nearly all conduct themselves and treat others in a mature and responsible manner.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are honest, sensible and trustworthy. They take responsibility willingly. They are capable of exercising greater initiative but to do so need more opportunities for personal choice in lessons.
Attendance	Satisfactory, though too many pupils take holidays in term time.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teaching is good overall and enables pupils to make good progress between reception and Year 6. The very good quality of teaching and rapid learning in the junior years makes up for a slower pace of learning that is predominant in the lower two classes containing pupils from reception, Years 1 and 2. In the best lessons, teachers have a clear idea of what they want pupils to learn, particularly in English, mathematics, science, history and art and design. They use a broad range of methods to encourage effort, concentration, and co-operation and to promote the use of literacy and numeracy through all subjects. In these ways they develop pupils' interest in learning and usually ensure that pupils use their time and skills effectively. In the less than good lessons, though relationships are very positive, and dialogue is often productive as lessons begin, expectations are sometimes either too low or not made clear to pupils. This is reflected in weaknesses in pupils' handwriting and care in setting out their work. Some marking lacks rigour and there are not enough opportunities for pupils of all ages to learn to write imaginatively and collaboratively. More able pupils are not sufficiently involved in deciding how to tackle problems or present information.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Its depth and relevance has improved since the last inspection. It is enhanced through interesting educational visits and visitors and very good relationships with other schools. Provision for children in reception and for more able pupils is sound yet has potential to be better.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Work is usually matched to the needs of pupils in class, and very good additional support is given to pupils who need it.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Pupils are taught to distinguish between right and wrong and to respect rules that protect themselves and others. Teachers encourage pupils to co-operate but could provide a wider range of opportunities for pupils to write sensitively about the lives of others and to take decisions.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Procedures for promoting good behaviour and eliminating acts of aggression are highly effective. There are features of assessment, such as annual reports for parents, which have scope to improve.
How well the school works in partnership with parents.	The partnership with parents is good. Parents make a significant contribution to the quality of learning. Consultation is appropriately taking place to make it even more effective.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher is very effective. She leads by example, teaching mathematics for a part of every day. Teachers with curriculum responsibility manage their roles soundly, but lack experience of evaluating the impact of teaching on standards achieved.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors work in close partnership with staff and understand how to manage change. They are making constructive use of performance management to make sure all members of staff have the skills they need to improve the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. This is a school that knows how well it is doing. There is a clear emphasis on raising standards. The school development and improvement plan is thorough, but does not focus quite enough on improving the work of the youngest children.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Governors plan well ahead to achieve improvements in staffing levels and professional development. They make very effective use of grants for improving the attainment of pupils, new technology resources and indoor and outdoor learning facilities. Overall, staffing levels, accommodation and the range of learning resources are good. Principles of best value are applied well in the interest of giving all pupils a fair deal at school.

## 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>• The welcome pupils receive each day.</li><li>• The good quality of teaching.</li><li>• The curriculum, with its strong focus on the arts and personal development as well as literacy and numeracy.</li><li>• Individual and team effort is encouraged and rewarded.</li><li>• The school listens to their concerns.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The quality of information about what their children are learning and why, their progress and how they can support children at home.</li><li>• The introduction of a break for children in reception to enjoy a drink.</li><li>• The variety of learning opportunities outside of lessons.</li></ul>

Inspectors agreed with parents' positive views and with their aspirations for a better quality of information. They found that the variety of additional opportunities for learning were good. All pupils also have access to drinking water in the classroom.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Children enter school attaining high standards for their age, especially in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Overall, they make satisfactory progress during their time in reception. Almost all of the children who have just moved out of the reception group exceeded the learning goals that are set for children of their age. It was only a very small number with very specific special educational needs who did not and their achievement, like their peers, was sound. Those children who are in the current reception group are likely to reach above average standards too, by summer 2003. Children are, however, capable of making more rapid progress in developing hand-control, letter and number formation, and an awareness of writing for a variety of purposes. More rigorous teaching is needed to achieve this but another equally important factor is the length of time they spend in reception.

2. Traditionally, depending on the term in which they attain their fifth birthday, children have attended school full-time for a maximum of two-and-a-half terms and for a minimum of a term part-time. This is the policy of the local education authority. The very big difference in the amount of time in reception rightly concerns the headteacher and governors. They have noted the impact the shorter time has on younger children's readiness to transfer to Year 1 at the end of the academic year. Some of these younger pupils still need, and respond best, to learning through structured play activities. After consultation with parents and leaders of local playgroups, governors have recently amended the admission policy. This will enable the youngest children to attend full-time between Whitsun and the summer holidays, 2003. The school intends to find out whether this change will help children to make better progress before entering the next key stage, and whether it is worth making further changes in the longer term so that there can be a class for reception only.

3. Overall, in 2002, results of national tests by pupils in Year 2 were above average compared with all schools and average compared with similar schools. (That is, those schools who have between zero to eight per cent of pupils who are known to be entitled to free school meals.) These results do not vary significantly from the trend which, since 1999, has been consistently above to well above average overall. As in previous years, pupils did well in reading but their best performance was in mathematics and science where results were high, even when compared with similar schools. The percentage at Level 3 in both subjects was in the top five per cent nationally and better than comparable schools. This means that in mathematics, reading, and science, the whole group in Year 2 achieved as well as could be expected of them, given their high standards of attainment on entry to the school. There were no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls, with the exception of the results of teacher assessment in science, when none of the girls achieved Level 3. The school attributes this to a tendency for boys to dominate girls when they are working in mixed gender groups. It is trying to find out whether organising practical investigations in single sex groups will enhance the performance of girls in 2003.

4. Writing was the significant weakness in results in Year 2 and since 1998 has always been the most volatile outcome of tests. Compared with good to very good standards of attainment on entry to school, standards achieved were far too low; a fact fully acknowledged by the school in its own evaluation of its performance. Teachers concede that they need to do a better job of motivating pupils, in order to raise standards in handwriting, spelling and creative writing by the end of Year 2.

5. Inspection findings are that pupils in Year 2 have good skills in speaking, listening, and reading. They are articulate and confident as they exchange ideas and they read with expression and understanding. Frequent practice at home extends their interest and competence in these aspects of English. Pupils are not, however, as consistently competent in their handwriting and spelling as they should be. They are careless, rather than lacking in ability to do well in both. The work on display shows that, when they are motivated, they are tidy and accurate in what they produce. Pupils have a good understanding of number and calculate quickly both mentally and on paper. They explain clearly how they arrive at answers. They have particular strengths in their knowledge of the language of science and appreciation of the value of practical investigations.

6. On the basis of national tests in Year 6, in 2002, standards were also above average overall and satisfactory compared with similar schools. When the results of this group are compared with those achieved by pupils of the same age in 1998, the time of the previous inspection, there is very little difference. The school has sustained good standards during that time. In 2002, the school exceeded its published targets for English by two per cent but failed to match a very challenging target for 88 per cent to reach Level 4 or higher in mathematics. Half of the pupils obtained an overall Level 5 in English, due to very high standards in reading. Indeed, the majority of pupils who had poor scores in reading when they were in Year 2 made considerable progress. In science, the performance of pupils who have been at the school for some time was equally good, as half the group gained Level 5 in national tests. Pupils' performance in mathematics was even better because the percentage reaching Level 5 represented a significant increase over previous years and was favourable compared with similar schools. In fact, pupils in Year 6 achieved considerably higher standards than might have been expected of them in English and mathematics compared with their attainment when they were in Year 2 and taking the very special educational needs of two pupils into account.

7. The school uses optional tests to evaluate standards and progress in Years 3, 4 and 5. The results of these tests in 2002 were very favourable. They indicate that the school should reach its increasingly challenging targets for Level 4 and Level 5 in 2003 and 2004. They reflect inspection findings that standards in junior classes are high and rising. They are as high as they are because the headteacher is setting higher expectations and teaching has improved considerably since the appointment of two newly qualified teachers in September 2001. The setting of individual and group targets is used particularly effectively in Years 3 to 6 to show pupils what they should be aiming for. This is helping pupils to reach their best potential, especially in mathematics. It is also assisting pupils' progress in handwriting, spelling and creative writing.

8. Teachers throughout the school are providing increasingly good opportunities for pupils to use literacy, numeracy and ICT to support their other work. Pupils apply their advanced speaking and listening, reading, number and computer skills well, when given the opportunities, in foundation subjects, such as history, geography and religious education. For example, they discuss moral issues at length and compare orally and in writing the key beliefs and customs of different world religions. They write accounts of practical activities in science, and convey information through graphs and formulas when it makes more sense to communicate in these ways, than by writing. There is little time planned, however, for pupils to write for extended periods in a manner that challenges their imagination and individual flair. Until this term, there was inadequate practise of handwriting. The school knows this. In fact, regular handwriting practice is now a feature of the timetable and is already making a difference to pupils' skills. The headteacher has plans well in hand to provide even better opportunities for writing from the start of the spring term. This will be by making some adjustments to the timetable and deploying a part-time teacher to provide extra support to colleagues.

9. With the exception of music where no judgement was made, standards have improved in all subjects in both key stages since the previous inspection and particularly in ICT and art and design by Year 6. Underachievement amongst higher attainers, a significant issue a couple of years ago, is being successfully addressed. Standards achieved are at least satisfactory for the age group by the end of Year 2. Pupils, including the small percentage with special educational needs, achieve well by the end of Year 6. The increased involvement of staff in devising the school development and improvement plan has been a crucial factor in raising standards. The school is well placed to raise standards further by continuing with its programme of development and monitoring, especially if it places a higher priority on improving the pace of progress during the reception year.

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

10. The high standards in pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils' response to the school's expectations of them, including that of the children in reception, is impressive. Pupils form excellent relationships in classrooms and get along very well together when mixing in the playground, in clubs and special events. They have a strong sense of community spirit that is developed through belonging to one of four school teams. Parents and teachers are proud of pupils' conduct when they are in a public forum.

11. Inspectors found that pupils unanimously agree they like school. When asked what they liked best many pupils, from the youngest to the oldest, replied "lessons" and happily described the aspects of art and design, history, mathematics and English they particularly enjoyed. In nearly all cases pupils, including those with special educational needs, begin lessons wanting to learn and determined to do well. They respond very well to enthusiastic teachers and are eager to answer questions. They are generally able to sustain concentration very well even when lessons are less interesting than normal. Pupils help one another when working as part of a group and support each other when they find work difficult. A little girl in Year 1, for example, is very good at encouraging a friend, who has a target to improve listening, to sit quietly beside her. Pupils also show consideration for others when moving around the school, for example, when going to the hall for physical education. They move quietly so as not to disturb lessons in progress. Older pupils are not compliant, however. They need to appreciate the purpose of an activity before they will exert themselves, but when they do, they work very hard.

12. Both by observation and in discussions with pupils, it is obvious that they have a very clear understanding of right from wrong. They consider it important to take account of the feelings of others. This is reflected in sustained co-operative behaviour in classrooms, at break times and in the dining areas. Even during periods of bad weather, when pupils have to remain indoors for wet play, they are reliable and enjoy each other's company. For example, they co-operate very well to construct models and to play games, including draughts, chess and battleships.

13. Pupils are helpful in class. They hand out and collect up items such as drawing paper and scissors, for example, when asked to do so by teachers and learning support assistants. Pupils try hard to gain points for effort and good work on behalf of their teams, yet they are happy for their friends, which ever team wins each week. Most of the pupils in the top class enjoy extra responsibilities, such as being in charge of music or the overhead projector during assemblies. They are all confident and well able to manage roles as spokesperson and group leader, and that is why they look forward to the setting up of the school council next term. They see its potential to give them more opportunities for sharing points of view about things that affect them, such as taking decisions about improvements to the building or places to visit on educational outings. Pupils' social skills are well developed. They display

great courtesy to each other and staff, to any parents who are around at the start and end of day and to any visitors to the school. Pupils conduct themselves very well when mixing with pupils from other schools, such as when they attend music festivals and inter-school swimming galas.

14. Pupils come to school regularly and on time. Most absence is due to pupils being taken out of schools for family holidays, despite the school's efforts to encourage parents not to go away in term time. Teachers make the best of this situation. They ensure everyone benefits when pupils who miss school to visit places such as Australia, South Africa and Kenya share these experience with other pupils in the form of photos or talks when they return.

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

15. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the classes containing the two youngest year groups. After that, learning accelerates, until in Years 3 to 6 it is very good. This accounts for the good all round progress pupils make between entering the school and transferring to high school. Almost half of lessons observed were impressive whilst all but one of the remainder was at least satisfactory. Two lessons in the two middle junior classes, one in English and another in art and design, were exemplary due to a sustained emphasis on extending skills through challenging and worthwhile activities. They led to very effective learning as pupils analysed the writing style of a famous Greek poet, for example, and made papier-mâché pots similar in design to those made by Ancient Greeks. Pupils were fascinated and highly motivated throughout these lessons. They made supreme efforts to concentrate and give of their best.

16. Several features of teaching are very good throughout the school. First amongst these is the way in which teachers and their assistants manage behaviour and promote a cheerful climate for learning in each classroom. Pupils follow adults' positive example of how to keep calm and work in harmony. This means that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, learn to listen and participate constructively in discussions and practical activities. In particular, pupils in Year 6 respect the need for quiet and sustained concentration in some parts of lessons and try hard not to disturb each other. In the class containing the youngest children, pupils in Year 1 listened patiently as new classmates made their contributions. They applauded the younger ones when they did well, such as when two boys counted successfully to 30.

17. Teachers' assistants provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs and less able groups. They lead extra lessons, called booster groups, in literacy and mathematics, making use of a variety of practical activities. This is enabling pupils to improve basic skills, such as learning to read new words, spelling and mental calculations. The care and sensitivity with which two members of staff helps a pupil in Year 2 with a statement of special educational needs to make progress is very good. This is seen in the pupil's rapidly improving attitudes and work-rate and the high quality of the exchange of written information between the school and the parent about progress with targets to improve concentration and behaviour. Teachers' assistants also provide good pastoral support for children in the reception year. When they are working with this group, children participate well and achieve more than they do in craft activities, for example, than when left to their own devices.

18. The organisation of pupils into year groups for lessons in mathematics from Year 4 onwards, and grouping girls together for science in Year 2, is having a positive impact upon the pace of pupils' learning. This is evident both from lessons observed and a scrutiny of wide-ranging exercises in books. In particular, the headteacher's involvement in teaching pupils in Year 4 has improved the pupil:teacher ratio and the quality of planning for Years 3 to

6. This new strategy of teaching each junior year group separately is leading to a more rigorous focus on challenging mathematical activities and a better match between the targets set and the quality of pupils' work.

19. The use of stimulating resources aids pupils' interest and concentration in the better lessons. They support the development of questioning, observation and investigative skills from the reception year onwards, in such lessons as science, art and design and technology. Year 2 girls, for example, made effective use of plastic bottle and scissors to make their own sieves when learning to separate gravel into sand and stones. Year 1 and reception children thoroughly enjoyed studying a portrait of the conspirators in the gunpowder plot when making puppets of Guy Fawkes. Having the right kind of resources available lead to discussion and debate, good writing and art and design as pupils move through the junior stage. This cannot be better exemplified than in the breadth and depth of cross-curricular work about the Ancient Greeks in Years 4 and 5.

20. All teachers provide an interesting range of homework tasks that enable all pupils to do well. In reception and Year 1, for example, the use of a home reading diary prompts children and parents to regularly enjoy a book together. In Years 2 and 3, when thinking about how to portray characters in stories, pupils were encouraged to write a list of useful adjectives to describe their Mum and Dad! They also kept a food diary for a week, faithfully recording on a grid what they ate for each meal in order to find out at school whether all have a healthy diet. Such tasks are enjoyed by everyone, including parents, and make a difference to all pupils' attitudes to learning. There remains scope, however, for the most able oldest pupils to undertake extended projects of their own devising that really make demands on their skills in ICT, literacy and numeracy.

21. In Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers' subject knowledge is predominantly good. This expertise made a significant difference to the quality of teaching and learning in a lesson in the mixed classes of pupils from Years 1 and 2 and Years 2 and 3. In the first, pupils were taught to create interesting musical patterns using the computer. In the second, they developed a sequence of movements representing those of cats, rather in the style of the musical by Andrew Lloyd-Webber. In English, teachers lead by example to place appropriate emphasis on good use of speech, punctuation and grammar. This means progress in these aspects of learning is good. In mathematics, there is a good balance of methods for promoting mental calculations and learning how to recognise and measure things of different shape, volume or area. In science, practical investigation is encouraged. Pupils are taught a wide range of strategies for solving problems. These include developing sound hypotheses, testing them and evaluating the success of methods used. They then amend and refine them next time they apply them in a new context.

22. Teachers in junior classes have effective methods for finding out how well pupils are learning. They review progress during lessons, by asking pupils to share what they have done so far, both to recognise and praise good progress and to sort out misunderstanding. They use the last part of the lesson well to summarise what has been achieved and these strategies aid pupils' good understanding of their learning. The teacher in Year 6 is very well organised and manages time very well; whilst teachers in Classes 3 and 4 are especially imaginative and enthusiastic. They inspire pupils to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of literacy, numeracy, history, geography, drama and arts. Teachers throughout the school make effective use of display to celebrate achievement and some use it just as effectively to encourage pupils to find new information independently.



23. There are some features of teaching that are not strong. They are seen more in classes for pupils between the ages of five and seven than higher up the school. In the context of mixed aged classes, learning objectives for pupils of different age and capability are not described clearly enough in some lesson plans. Insufficient emphasis on sharing intentions for learning or the use of a confusing activity sheet results in some confusion about how to proceed with tasks. This happened when pupils in Years 1 and 2 were trying to make lists about the personal qualities of three fictitious friends from the aquatic world. Weaker lessons are also characterised by a failure to use the right kind of resources, as teachers are the first to acknowledge when reviewing their lessons. A short writing session for a group of pupils in Year 1 was unsatisfactory. It was undemanding and did not extend their awareness of sentence structure and vocabulary. In a sound lesson in Year 6 about measuring a variety of shapes, the use of an overhead projector would have made all the difference when the teacher tried to explain the difference between the technical terms, intersect and bisect.

24. Planning for the development of basic skills is weak in the reception class. Insufficient emphasis is given to demonstrating a correct pencil grip and reinforcing letter and number formation. The teacher sometimes relies too heavily on a teacher assistant and does not brief her well enough in how to ensure children develop the right habits and high enough expectations of themselves to present work well. The outcome is that children do not achieve as well as they could.

25. There can be some lack of rigour in marking and praise, such as 'brilliant' is sometimes too effusive. Throughout the school, comments do not all link with individual learning targets, whether for lower or higher attainers. This means pupils do not gain a sufficient knowledge of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Some of their work contains recurring errors and pupils appear to lack the inclination to check the accuracy and quality of their writing. It also reflects inconsistencies in the extent to which teachers set high enough expectations of pupils to organise and set out their work as neatly as they are able. Some teachers set an excellent example in the quality of captions on displays, or in the books they produce with their class. Others set an inferior example in the standard of the class books they produce as a record of special events. Lastly, some teaching is too prescriptive, especially in Year 6. It rarely allows pupils to make their own decisions about how to extend knowledge, understanding and skills. Insufficient thought is given to planning activities that enable all pupils to collaborate with writing and that fully extend more able pupils.

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

26. The quality and range of opportunities for learning are good and are better planned than at the time of the previous inspection. The school provides soundly for all of its children in reception and well for all subjects of the National Curriculum. Provision for religious education also meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Teachers include all pupils fairly in curriculum activities. They identify gifted and talented pupils from Year 3 onwards, and ensure that they are catered for appropriately through, for example, extra instrumental tuition and challenging opportunities in art and design. They respect the needs and feelings of pupils whose parents exercise their right to withdraw them from religious education. These pupils feel fully included in the life of the school. The completion of new schemes of work since September 2000 has contributed to rising standards in science and most other subjects. The extended absence of the class teacher, however, has delayed the completion of detailed long-term plans for children in reception.

27. The implementation of the national strategy for numeracy has made a considerable difference to the quality of learning across the school. Numeracy is often well supported by links with other areas of the curriculum. For example, in science lessons in Years 5 and 6, pupils investigate and evaluate a range of pizzas. At the same time, in their lessons in design and technology, mathematical skills are developed well when pupils plan and draw to a scale to construct boxes to carry their pizzas. This is very good curriculum planning. However, opportunities to include ICT across the curriculum are not always taken. For example, when these same pupils develop data handling skills in mathematics, they are not sufficiently encouraged to input data to a computer, in order to generate a variety of graphs.

28. The literacy strategy has been implemented successfully too. It has helped to develop pupils' understanding of speech and writing for different purposes. There are also many good links between literacy other subjects, such as history and science. The work in Class 4, with Years 4 and 5, about theatre and drama at the time of the Ancient Greeks shows excellent use of literacy. However, natural links are not always identified, which means that pupils in Year 6 do not study metaphors in English at the same time as studying their use in the Holy Bible in lessons in religious education. The school has also identified that to enable pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 to reach higher standards, some teachers still need to raise their expectations of pupils when planning tasks for writing. This is an appropriate priority in the school's plan for future improvement.

29. Very good provision is made for personal, social and health education. This includes advice about the misuse of drugs and the side effects of alcohol and tobacco. Pupils throughout the school are encouraged to explore and debate the importance of a healthy lifestyle and a moral code. Visits and visitors contribute significantly to how well pupils learn. For example, the school funds a two-day visit of a mobile classroom where pupils find out about basic first aid and how to avoid hazards and dangers.

30. The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs. There are no difficulties over missing out on parts of lessons, as most support is provided in classrooms or staggered so that no lessons are missed regularly. Teachers in Year 2 are actively trying to promote the better progress of girls because they did not achieve as well as boys in science tests in 2002. This is very good use of assessment. The school is committed to ensuring that no particular groups are disadvantaged. That is why it is lengthening time in reception and aiming to work more closely with playgroups. All are in agreement that children deserve as good a chance as possible of continuous learning when they transfer from one place of early learning to the next.

31. Inspectors found that, despite the negative view of some parents, that there is a good range of extra-curricular activities for sport and music available to pupils as they progress through the school. They are well attended and the school is always keen to expand them. During the period of inspection, for example, a parent offered to start an art club and the opportunity was immediately accepted. The organisation of an 'Arts Week' and regular educational visits, support the curriculum well. For example, older pupils spend a residential week at Yenworthy in Devon. This is very good provision. There are also extensive links with the community that adds significantly to pupils' knowledge of different subjects, such as history and science. Three generations of one family come to school, for example, to support younger pupils' understanding of the stages of human development. The pastor talks to pupils on the subject of Aston in the past. Pupils' social and personal development is enhanced when staff and pupils decorate a float for the annual Village Fete, and when the 'Friends of Aston and Cote School' run fund-raising stalls. Very good relationships also exist with other places of education. Future teachers from the high school, for example, come to discuss particular needs of individual pupils with their current teacher. Teacher training students from a local university gain valuable work experience from working alongside staff.

These links enable teachers to share ideas and improve their understanding of how well they cater for their pupils.

32. Planning for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins all the work of the school. Each month one value, such as 'co-operation', is highlighted and introduced in assembly. The value is displayed in prominent positions around the school and in classrooms. Pupils' awareness of spirituality is enhanced by the popular regular visits by the Vicar of St James' Church who leads assemblies on Friday and is involved with classes in their study of the Christian Church. Teachers also take advantage of spontaneous opportunities to acknowledge feelings and self-knowledge, such as when a teacher was seen to pause, when reading a story, to say that it can be very comforting to give someone a gentle squeeze of the arm when they are upset.

33. Teachers are good role models and are sensitive in the way they develop pupils' awareness of the difference between right and wrong. They do not label pupils, concentrating instead on helping them to see where actions may be hurtful or thoughtless. Pupils are encouraged to integrate well, both at work and at play. The school promotes pupils' appreciation of their place in the local and wider world too. They are encouraged to organise collections in aid of charity or to raise money to support a village in Gambia, for example. They contribute articles to the village magazine. The residential visits to Yenworthy lodge in North Devon and Little Canada on the Isle of Wight give pupils valuable experience of learning to live in a social environment other than their own home.

34. Cultural development is very well integrated into the curriculum. The recent 'Arts Week' was a focus for the study of music, art and craft from all around the world. It was described as, 'astonishingly worthwhile', when governors discussed it with an inspector. The headteacher and teachers are now actively trying to do even more to extend pupils' understanding of the diversity of British society. They are committed to doing all they can to prepare pupils to take their place in the world in which they live.

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

35. The school has a common approach to creating an atmosphere of warmth, security and well being where pupils feel safe and valued. It has maintained its good practice since the previous inspection. High priority is given to pupils' physical and emotional well being. All members of staff know pupils well and this enables their personal development to be monitored effectively. Pupils feel valued and understand they can talk to any member of staff if they have a problem or are upset for any reason. Senior pupils are encouraged to support and look out for younger pupils and do this very well. For example, older pupils look after and organise younger ones in their teams during sports days.

36. Procedures for child protection are secure. All staff have a clear understanding of the need to report any concerns about pupils' welfare to the headteacher. There is an adequate number of staff trained in first aid and all members of staff are aware of, and conform to, procedures for recording incidents.

37. The school is very effective in its methods for promoting good behaviour and positive pupil attitudes in order to create the right atmosphere for learning. Whole school rules are supplemented by classrules that are discussed and agreed by pupils. This helps pupils develop a good understanding of right from wrong and the value of tolerance towards others. As a result of good practice, incidents of bullying are very rare. Pupils are positively encouraged to devise targets for personal development that they will work towards during the term. One pupil, for example, spoke very articulately about how she intends to be more assertive during group discussions.

38. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress are predominantly good. Reading records are well maintained and reading diaries are shared purposefully with parents. Each teacher sets and checks progress with class targets in literacy and numeracy and this practice is increasingly effective in junior classes. The headteacher undertakes a thorough analysis of pupils' performance in all assessment tasks and tests. Underachievement is immediately addressed and targets for attainment are based on detailed knowledge of each pupil, from Year 1 onwards. Results are used to plan new work for pupils who are not performing up to the standard expected in relation to their prior levels of attainment.

39. The headteacher, as the co-ordinator for special educational needs, ensures their support is organised in accordance with recent legislation. She and the governors have carefully managed school funds to appoint sufficient learning support assistants to support needy pupils in every class. The headteacher is well aware of barriers to learning and is determined to remove them. She has a very good knowledge of how well different groups of pupils are learning, except, perhaps, of children in the reception class because she has not monitored that age group as closely as those from Years 1 to 6. There is, in fact, limited use of information about what children already knew and could do before entering the school.

40. Reports to parents provide sound information about strengths and weaknesses in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects, they summarise learning and include suggestions about how pupils can improve in the year ahead. Step-by-step objectives for pupils with special educational needs are realistic and achievable. They are known to teachers, teachers' assistants, and parents and are regularly reviewed and updated.

41. The school is not complacent. It plans to develop the thinking skills of its most able and gifted pupils so that they achieve to capacity. It also knows it can do even more to enable pupils to manage responsibilities and to encourage them to check how well they are progressing. Plans are already in motion to make improvements in the use of assessment information when planning what will be learned and to provide better information to parents about their children's progress. These should be sustained.

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

42. The partnership with parents is good and based upon principles of mutual respect and support. Parents make a significant contribution to the quality of learning. A number help in the classroom, particularly in the foundation class, and parents also support classes on school visits. Many collaborate with children when they do homework tasks and this helps to motivate them. Parents support school functions diligently, such as class assemblies and performances at Christmas and this encourages pupils to perform well. The 'Friends of Aston and Cote School' Association raises funds to enable the school to buy additional resources that broaden pupils' opportunities for learning, such as large apparatus for children in reception. The school values and acknowledges parents' support and the good contribution they make to raise standards. That is why it has recently consulted parents by way of a questionnaire to find out how it can build further on their support and goodwill.

43. Parents appreciate the opportunities they have to talk to teachers informally at the beginning and end of the day and the organised meetings with teachers each term. They are also pleased that they can arrange to see a classteacher or the headteacher at any time if they have any particular concern. Meetings with parents of children with special educational needs are very carefully managed in cases where needs have recently been

identified. They reassure parents and gain their help in setting achievable targets for improvement.

44. The information the school provides for parents is of variable quality. The prospectus is brief and omits significant information that can be of benefit to parents, for example, what the school does to support children with special educational needs. A number of newsletters are sent home each term that keep parents informed of forthcoming events or celebrate some of the achievements of the school. These are brief and lack details of class activities that parents might find interesting. The school provides curriculum information each term informing parents of work that will be covered. However, parents do not consider this to be in a format that can best help them support their children's learning or gain some indication of the progress their children are making at school. The quality of annual reports about progress is sound. They include targets for English, mathematics and personal development that pupils need to concentrate on. These enable parents to support their children's future development.

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

45. This is an improving school with a good capacity to improve further over the next three years. It is ably led and managed by a very effective headteacher who has a thorough grasp of what the school does well, how it needs to improve, and how to manage change. She sets high standards for her colleagues, skilfully teaching Year 4 for mathematics every day, in addition to carrying out her management and pastoral duties. Her idea to split classes into year groups for numeracy lessons is already raising standards. A hardworking staff team and governing body supports the headteacher. They are united in their aims to provide the best possible education for pupils and to helping them to reach the highest standards of which they are capable. Teachers with curriculum responsibility manage their roles competently, especially as two are recent entrants to the profession and do not yet have much experience of managing a subject. Their induction has been excellent and they are looking forward to developing their leadership skills with the support of the headteacher and longer-serving colleagues.

46. The chair of governors is an effective leader who ensures that the governing body is well organised and fulfils its responsibilities very well despite half having been in office for less than three years. He works in close partnership with the headteacher, supporting her, for example, in making desirable changes to the admissions policy. Other members of the governing body liaise regularly with staff. They observe lessons, hold meetings with teachers and receive written or oral reports about progress with the school development and improvement plan. They analyse the results of statutory tests to be satisfied that they are adding value and not neglecting any particular group or groups. These practices keep them up-to-date with how well pupils are learning and where they need to invest more resources.

47. Governors have devised a very good policy for managing the professional development of the headteacher and staff. It is based upon the principle that every teacher has a right to a stimulating programme of support and advice. They are budgeting effectively for this. Teachers and their assistants feel that there are purposeful links between individual needs and the priorities in the school development and improvement plan. One such priority is to provide better support for lower-attaining and more able pupils, at the same time as maintaining good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Having saved funds for two years governors have built up a reserve that has enabled them to appoint a teacher part-time to concentrate on taking extra classes in literacy and numeracy. These are for pupils on the dividing line between one level of attainment and another. This strategy is working but needs to continue because standards are not as high as they can be. To achieve this end governors have released the headteacher from sharing responsibility for a class so that she

can devote her time to co-ordinating plans for improvement. They have also financed training for teachers' assistants whose expertise and effectiveness has grown as a result.

48. The school's evaluation of its performance is good. Governors knew exactly what qualities and skills they needed from the leading professional when they appointed the new headteacher in the summer of 2000. They realised that the school was in danger of coasting and this did not satisfy them. They aspired to a better performing school and a headteacher who could deliver it. They negotiated targets for year-on-year improvement in national test results between 2000 and 2004 whilst at the same time maintaining the school's considerable strengths, recognised in the previous inspection report. The strategies to bring about improvement are working, particularly to raise the quality of teaching. Two new teachers, recruited straight from college in 2001, have had a significant impact on the quality of learning in Years 2 to 4. Parents as well as governors are very pleased with the skill and enthusiasm they have brought to the school, and how well they have fitted into the team.

49. The school development and improvement plan is thorough and has a strong focus on raising standards. It includes plans to improve every area for development identified by the inspection team. There were no surprises resulting from this external audit. It just confirmed governors' view that time has to be allocated to release teachers from class duties on a regular basis so that they can concentrate on keeping abreast of standards in their subjects. That is why they have asked the headteacher to be the person who provides the cover and at the same time adds to her own knowledge of pupils and their needs. The school also recognises that it has not given high enough priority to the future development of the reception class. It intends to redress the balance after concentrating on the higher two key stages in the past couple of years.

50. The school is well placed to continue to provide a good quality of education for pupils. Staffing levels are good and teachers share expertise effectively. Teachers' assistants provide good support, especially for the pupil with a statement of educational needs and other pupils who have their own small learning goals. The bursar, appointed soon after the headteacher, works closely with her and has done much to improve office and administrative procedures. Both are working hard to develop communication between home and school; an area they know needs to improve. Accommodation and learning resources are more than adequate to meet the demands of the curriculum. Principles of best value are understood well. They underpin the school's plans for future improvement, such as to invest in training teachers to improve the way they lead and manage their subjects. They aim to enable teachers to be even more successful in helping pupils to attain high standards than they are currently. Governors also plan well ahead to achieve improvements in staffing and to make very effective use of grants for purchasing new technology resources. Staff work well as a team and plans for deployment in the future are even better.

51. The values of the school embrace inclusion. They are reflected in the curriculum, conduct of staff, governors and pupils and efforts to improve the partnership with parents. The school now needs to sustain its programme of development and make sure it communicates its progress towards excellence to parents.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. In order to raise standards further the school should sustain and monitor plans to:

- (1) Motivate pupils to write imaginatively and present their work well by:-
  - Ensuring that all teachers consistently set high standards of writing and presentation for pupils to imitate;
  - Providing interesting resources, such as photographs, pictures and paintings, to generate ideas for writing;
  - Providing infants with useful frameworks that help them to start, develop and finish their stories;
  - Giving older pupils more opportunities to choose the focus for writing;
  - Providing more opportunities for pupils to share ideas and draft stories and playscripts collaboratively.  
(Paragraphs 13, 20, 23, 25, 28, 75, 76, 122, 129, 154)
  
- (2) Ensure that from reception to Year 6 all pupils understand how well they are learning and what they can do to improve by:
  - Making sure that targets for improvement are specific, easy to measure and changed often enough to spur pupils on;
  - Always checking that pupils know what to do when they work independently of the teacher;
  - Providing adequate time at the end of each lesson for pupils to review what they have learnt and what they are ready to try next;
  - Developing guidelines for marking work that build on the effective methods already used by some teachers.  
(Paragraphs 24, 25, 41, 65, 75, 91, 122, 129, 155)
  
- (3) Help teachers to be more effective in managing change in the subjects or areas of learning for which they are responsible. by:
  - Making sure the curriculum for children under six and every subject is supported by a practical plan of action to supplement the school development and improvement plan;
  - Maintaining the programme of professional development to build confidence and skill in checking on the quality of teaching and learning and assessing standards achieved.
  - Identifying as many opportunities as possible for pupils to use skills in ICT in all subjects.  
(Paragraphs: 44, 47, 49, 50, 64, 66, 78, 110, 116, 123, 130, 139, 155)

### Minor issues

- Governors may wish to include in the action plan details of their plans to improve communication with parents.  
(Paragraphs 45, 51, 66)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	29
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	12	8	6	1	0	0
Percentage	7	41	28	21	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.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	110
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	14

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.90

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.40



National comparative data	5.40
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National comparative data	0.50
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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)

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

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	12	13	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (100)	93 (100)	93 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	12	13	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (100)	93 (100)	100 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

Where the numbers of boys and girls are ten or fewer the individual results are not reported.

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

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

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	17	16	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (75)	80 (70)	90 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	13	15	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	65 (70)	75 (70)	85 (100)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

*Where the number of boys and girls are ten or fewer the individual results are not reported.*

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

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	112	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Average class size	23

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

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	274 127
Total expenditure	267 772
Expenditure per pupil	2 177
Balance brought forward from previous year	31 146
Balance carried forward to next year	31 146

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

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	94
Number of questionnaires returned	57

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	33	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	60	0	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	72	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	52	11	5	7
The teaching is good.	49	46	0	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	19	51	21	4	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	35	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	42	2	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	23	54	12	4	7
The school is well led and managed.	44	44	4	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	44	2	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	46	15	2	9

## **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**

53. Despite the marked variation in the time of entry, nearly all children are likely to attain higher standards than those expected of the age group, in all six areas of learning, by the end of the academic year. They have good personal and social skills and a good understanding of number. They communicate orally very well but their skills in writing are not as good as they should be. Children have a positive outlook to learning that serves them well in all classroom and school activities. Their progress in creative and physical areas and in acquiring knowledge and understanding of the world around them is securely sound.

54. Overall, children's achievement is satisfactory. They benefit from at least a sound quality of teaching in all areas of learning. There are many good features in provision, whilst most aspects that need improving are already included in the school development and improvement plan.

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

55. The school enables children to build well on a successful start in this area of learning. Nearly all children transfer from a playgroup situated adjacent to the school site, having already, judging from its recent inspection report, made good progress in this and all areas of learning. Relationships between school staff and leaders and adult helpers in the playgroup are cordial and constructive, stemming from regular contact and liaison between adults in the two settings. Older children from the playgroup enjoy the experience, for example, of attending assembly once each week with children already in reception and Years 1 and 2. They readily join in discussion and sing familiar songs and rhymes. With this experience behind them, they quickly make new friends or renew old friendships. They soon settle into classroom routines and parents say they are just as happy in school as they were in the playgroup.

56. Parents are very appreciative of the way all members of staff make sure children, including those with special educational needs and minority ethnic backgrounds, feel fully included in the school community. They acknowledge that the headteacher, the teacher and other adults in reception place a high priority on welcoming children and ensuring that they feel safe and secure. A partnership between home and school is actively promoted. Parents appreciate, for example, opportunities to join in the first play activities at the start of the morning session. They feel comfortable to approach staff to ask questions and volunteer their help in school. Already eight parents regularly support learning activities, such as reading. They also help to arrange educational visits and this aids children's learning well.

57. Good teaching and learning in the area of personal, social and emotional development underpins all other areas of learning. The atmosphere in the classroom is always good. Children mix together well as they learn with pupils from Year 1. Boys and girls, including those with special educational needs and from different ethnic minority backgrounds, enjoy each other's company and conform to the few simple rules adults teach them to maintain positive relationships. They understand what is right and wrong in behaviour and actions, and are quick to apologise if they upset anyone inadvertently. Already, children work effectively in small groups and they are always willing to help each other, such as when one small girl helped a friend to put on his coat prior to going outside to play with building blocks.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

58. Teaching and learning in communication, language and literacy is sound. Children benefit most from a good range of opportunities to speak and listen and extend their vocabulary as they participate in literacy, numeracy and a variety of other play activities. Adults encourage children to participate in discussion and this gives them confidence. Their ability to communicate is good for their age and they are also developing a secure knowledge and appreciation of books of different kinds. For example, children concentrated exceptionally well when listening to a story about the park. They made spontaneous comments as the story progressed, often commenting on words they recognised. When the teacher asked questions of the class to probe their understanding some volunteered ideas to explain a shark fin-like shape sticking up from the pond. One small boy suggested, very imaginatively, that the black shape could be a snorkel emerging above the water. He thought that the swimmer could not be seen because he was hidden under the water.

### **Mathematical development**

59. Teaching in mathematical development is also sound, with some good features. Adults are good at promoting children's curiosity about numbers and patterns, weight, measure and shapes. Children know far more than might be expected for so early in the academic year. They join in counting forward and backwards to 20 with their classmates from Year 1 and they are almost as accurate and confident as the youngest pupils in Year 1 who are only just beginning their second term in school. In a numeracy lesson, for example, two boys volunteered to stand at the front and attempted to count in tens to 100. As the teacher carefully explained that once you knew the pattern of ten you could go on for ever, a swift and apt reply came back from one little boy in the reception group, "Yes, you can go on to infinity!"

60. Teachers make good use of the outdoor environment to promote finding out about mathematical ideas through activities involving other areas of learning. Teaching assistants, for example, are skilled at explaining the purpose of play activities, such as hopscotch, that develop children's ability to count forwards and backwards quickly. They are good at asking questions and at encouraging children to co-operate to build towers with large bricks. On one occasion children were observed working purposefully at this kind of construction activity. They maintained concentration really well as they joined the bricks together and discussed the height and shape of the building. They were delighted when it became even taller than the adult who was supervising them. They eagerly explained to an inspector how they had achieved this when they re-joined Year 1 pupils in the classroom.

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

61. Insufficient direct teaching was observed in this area of learning to be able to make a reliable judgement about its quality. Children enter reception, however, with a good understanding for their age of how to use a computer. Their enthusiasm and interest is sustained in reception by easy access to programs that are pitched at the right level to stimulate further learning. Children sit in small groups of two or three, engrossed by tasks, such as matching objects and numbers to 10, or in identifying the starting letters for the names of familiar things. Teachers provide a sound variety of construction toys to encourage children to co-operate and create miniature real life settings, such as a village or zoo. Boys and girls enjoy making such models and concentrate for sustained periods until they have built what they set out to achieve. Children were heard discussing in animated voices, figures they were making of Guy Fawkes. They had clearly grasped key facts about this character from the past, and were well informed about the gunpowder plot and how it had failed.



## **Physical development**

62. Teaching is sound overall, and better in the way that it that promotes children's effective use of outdoor equipment than their control of small things, such as pencils and crayons. Children gain poise and skill as they run, jump, climb and balance. They make good use, for example, of the big rubber tyres and were seen to exercise initiative in organising their own play with this equipment. One little boy decided he would re-arrange the tyres into a zigzag pattern. He had had enough of crossing them in a straight line and his verdict was, "I want to make this harder." These kinds of opportunities ensure that children make good progress in learning to develop good control of their movement.

## **Creative development**

63. There were few opportunities to directly observe learning in this area. Based on evidence from display, a good dance lesson in the hall for the youngest pupils in Year 1, and the brief glimpse at the Guy Fawkes making activity, however, teaching and learning is good. The dance lesson showed that children respond creatively and enthusiastically to enjoyable opportunities for listening to music and dancing in response to it. These pupils, so recently part of reception, especially the girls, moved lightly on their feet. Most of the group was good at imitating the shapes and movements of a puppet on a string. The teacher generated enthusiasm for dance, mimicking some of the movements herself. She also fostered self-esteem and better control by choosing children to demonstrate and inspire their friends. She was patient and calm as she gave instructions and managed, with the support of an assistant, the behaviour of a child who found it difficult to behave as well as the rest of the class. With the adults' encouragement, this child was able to perform some of the simpler actions by copying his friends.

## **Areas for development**

64. The teacher in reception has recently returned from maternity leave. In partnership with two assistants she is sharing her vision for future improvement. There are sound ideas emerging about how to improve the quality of planning and procedures for checking and recording children's progress. These ideas have yet, however, to be worked out in detail so that they clearly show how objectives in the school development plan can be achieved over the next few terms.

65. There is some evidence that teachers take inadequate account of what children learn to do in playgroups. They do not, for example, give enough time to teaching children to improve their skills in writing their names so that they practise surnames as well as first names. Work in children's books, shows that adults could do more to help sort out errors, such as reversed letters and figures. Sometimes mistakes are marked as correct, such as 1 + 9 makes 01. Similarly, reversals in the 'c' for cat, and in 2 and 7 were overlooked in lessons, rather than used as a teaching opportunity and for some children, very little guidance was given on how to hold and use a pencil correctly. This denied children an opportunity to understand what they were already doing well and what they needed to practice to achieve success. Sometimes it is unclear what the teacher intends children in reception to learn as intentions for them are not explained separately from those for pupils in Year 1.

66. The school knows it could do more to promote parents' understanding of the new curriculum for this age group. For example, due to temporary teaching arrangements, it did not publish a booklet this year about the way children are taught in reception. A newsletter about the term's plans lacked examples of how they would be organised and was therefore not particularly useful for parents. The school has many photographs that show children engaged in a whole host of interesting activities, such as making models and puppets. These

are not used at present to celebrate and explain the skills, knowledge and understanding children are acquiring through play. Reports at the end of the school year are also rather short and contain very few points for development. There is considerable potential, therefore, for the school to collaborate more closely with playgroup leaders so that the change from one place of learning to the next is seamless. The new school development and improvement plan already contains an objective to forge an even more effective partnership with parents. Success with this initiative will help the school to accelerate children's pace of progress.

## **ENGLISH**

67. The school is pleased with the results achieved by pupils in Year 6 this year. They are much higher than those achieved in most primary schools and are better than reported at the time of the previous inspection. Strengths in speaking and listening have been sustained and reading has improved to above the national average by the end of Year 2 and well above by the end of Year 6. Standards in writing are broadly similar to those reported previously. It means that pupils' achievement is satisfactory at the end of Year 2 and good by Year 6. Evidence from lessons confirms the results of the national tests in 2002 and interviews with pupils give some clues to explain why this is the case. Their ambivalent attitudes to writing are a significant factor. Infants in particular say they prefer to read or discuss their learning rather than write for imaginative purposes. It was observed that, because some tasks are uninteresting or explained inadequately, pupils do not concentrate as well on writing as they do when discussing or re-telling stories. Then they struggle to present their work well. Even the oldest pupils can be reluctant writers when they think that they have too little time to think through ideas. These are issues of planning and lesson management that teachers are trying to address through their programme of professional development.

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

68. There is some very good teaching and learning in English, especially in Years 2 to 6 where all features of the subject are planned creatively to capture pupils' interest. Overall, teaching is good, though occasionally rather ordinary in lessons for younger pupils. By the end of Year 2, pupils are quite confident to express themselves orally. Most are good readers who are quick to grasp the meaning of the books they share as a class and in groups. They make good progress in speaking, listening and reading. In one very good lesson, for example, pupils were inspired by the good modelling of reading given by the teacher of the book 'Three Friends Together'. They were engaged in some challenging oral work when they had to reflect on a character from the story. They were asked to make a list of words to describe each friend's personality and in addition, think of connecting words and phrases they could use. Most pupils were very involved in the tasks and completed a substantial amount of writing. Some of the pupils, when they were asked what they had achieved, were very articulate. They were able to clearly explain what they had written. Able pupils use dictionaries very well to find new words. Pupils assessed as average and above average respond equally well to fiction and non-fiction, knowing the difference between the two. They usually read a variety of texts accurately and fluently. They are keen to talk about their favourite books, describing with clarity the title, author, the content and why they like them. Most pupils take books home regularly in order to practice reading and this is enhanced by the support of their parents in listening to them read.

69. In junior classes, teachers show a good understanding and knowledge of the subject. They inspire pupils through a brisk delivery and challenging questions and know what their pupils can do and ought to be able to do. Motivated by the better teaching, pupils work with high levels of understanding, interest and enthusiasm. Due to the high expectations teachers have of pupils they make very good progress in speaking for a range of purposes, such as exploring an author's style, performing drama and making impromptu speeches. In Year 3, for example, pupils were sharing the text of 'The Old Sea Dog'. There followed a very good

discussion of the main character and vocabulary used to describe it. Pupils were very interested in this and demonstrated a very good knowledge and understanding of the text. Teachers in Classes 3 and 4 who teach eight to ten-year-olds encourage pupils to make decisions about their learning activities. One example from Years 4 and 5 was when one able group of pupils from Year 4 were given a box of poetry books from which to choose and read poems. They were invited to tell the class later why they had chosen one particular poem. These pupils rose well to the challenge.

70. By Year 6, most pupils read fluently with good expression and understanding. Most of the oldest pupils know how to scan text quickly to glean its main points. They make productive use of indexes, contents lists and glossaries in non-fiction books to obtain information. Pupils frequently use dictionaries to improve their work and to find the meaning of new words. They benefit from access to a good range of dictionaries in their classrooms.

71. When pupils enter the junior classes they become more enthusiastic about writing, and take care with it, provided they think the task is worthwhile. In Class 3, for example, pupils engaged in writing a book about Mr Gumpy, making the book to share with younger pupils. These pupils wrote with due attention to plot, setting and characterisation. In Years 5 and 6 pupils compiled their own anthology of poems, entitled 'Through the Garden Gate'. These are written in a thoughtful and imaginative style that demonstrates how creative pupils can be when inspired. Pupils are also encouraged to explore the work of famous authors, such as, Roald Dahl, J.K. Rowling and Michael Morpurgo and to critically evaluate their style of writing. They enjoy this kind of work as pupils from Years 5 and 6 explained when they showed inspectors writing arising from their research about a favourite writer. They made good use of the Internet to learn about their chosen author's background. They also designed, to a high standard, their own copies of the front covers of carefully selected titles and wrote their own 'blurb'. These tasks were very good examples of teachers' effort to challenge pupils to write for different reasons.

72. Pupils have a very good understanding of the many purposes of writing. Often, their written work in other subjects is thoughtful and well planned. They write appropriately, for instance, when reporting on geographical, historical and scientific investigations, to draw comparisons between one place and another and to make brief notes and jottings in mathematics. Pupils throughout the school write prayers, including some for grace so that they may take turns to read them before lunch. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 write letters of invitation to special events, such as Harvest and they regularly write interesting articles for the village magazine. They were engaged on this during the week of inspection. In all these respects English makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

73. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good. Younger pupils in Year 1 who are not confident of letter sounds or how to construct and read unfamiliar words receive additional help from teachers' support assistants. This helps them make good progress with their individual targets. By Year 2 they make good progress in reading though a small minority is still insecure in building up longer words they do not know. The school has also given priority to helping pupils to raise the standard of their writing by increasing its staffing this term especially to provide extra support. It is employing a part-time teacher for one additional day per week and this is beginning to have the desired effect in Years 2 and 3.

74. The use of assessment information to guide teachers' planning is generally effective. Work for pupils who need extra support in English is planned carefully so each pupil works at the right level. Junior pupils know what they need to do to improve their work and do their best. They meet and often do better than expected and are ready to tackle even more demanding work.

***What could be improved***

75. The quality of work in exercise books is sometimes disappointing. In the class of pupils from Years 1 and 2, much of it is not presented very well and is difficult to read. It reflects a weaker standard of marking and shows clearly that some pupils are not learning from their mistakes. Punctuation, such as capital letters and full stops, spelling and handwriting is erratic. The headteacher has identified that handwriting is developed too slowly and is generally unsatisfactory across the school. The subject co-ordinator has worked hard to address this during this academic year. A published handwriting scheme has been purchased with the express intent of improving letter formation and a comfortable cursive script. Already evidence can be seen of improvement in writing. There are many examples on display in junior classes of well-formed, neat handwriting. Nonetheless, there are a significant number of pupils whose achievement in writing and spelling is below that of which they are capable because they have too few opportunities for pupils to review their work, correct their mistakes, and to present it in an improved form.

76. In some lessons, teachers do not use a sufficient range of resources to prompt interest in writing. A lesson in Year 1, for example, failed to result in new learning about how to construct an interesting sentence because the one example they were given, 'I can see a - ----' lacked challenge. In a sound lesson with another group of pupils in Year 1, the worksheet was confusing, rather than helpful. Pupils needed a better framework to organise their writing about the best and worst qualities they had previously identified in discussions about three aquatic characters in the story, 'The Three Friends'.

77. There is insufficient use of ICT to plan and draft writing. (a strategy that can support pupils in writing when they have difficulties in the formation of letters and words manually) The school has arranged to provide more opportunities for pupils to practise this skill electronically in the near future.

78. The management of English is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has overseen the successful adoption of the National Literacy Strategy to support the delivery of the subject across the school. She has a good overview of planning and has begun to work with teachers to moderate samples of work. The co-ordinator teaches full time, however, and as yet has had very few opportunities to observe teaching and learning in the classroom. This is why governors are budgeting to provide cover for teachers to undertake this important part of their work this academic year.

**MATHEMATICS**

79. Inspection findings support the headteacher's and teachers' view that mathematics is now a strength of the school. Current standards are well above average in Year 2 and in Year 6. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection. Given that pupils sustain high levels of attainment between starting school and Year 6, their achievement is good overall.

***What the school does well***

80. Pupils throughout the school are achieving high standards because they are highly motivated to succeed in mathematics. Most pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen learners. When talking to pupils, some list mathematics among their favourite subjects. During

lessons they are very well behaved, co-operating well in discussion and in sharing resources. They listen well, and they all concentrate hard when working orally or when undertaking investigations and recording their findings. Mathematics supports their personal and social development well.

81. Work presented in an interesting way invariably leads to good, and more often very good, learning. Less able pupils in both the infants and junior are already working at an average standard and those of middle and higher ability are working at levels well above the average. Both Year 2 and Year 6 are on course to improve on the results achieved by the oldest pupils in both key stages in 2002. The current Years 4 and 5 are likely to perform even better still. In fact, the pupils in Year 6 in 2002 did better than results appear to show. One pupil had special educational needs related specifically to mathematics. Another was a very new pupil to the school from Year 7 who has subsequently received a statement for special educational needs. As two pupils represent 10 per cent of the year group this had a significant impact on achievement in mathematics overall. The current Year 6 group is mathematically strong and achieving well.

82. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. At the age of seven, average and above average pupils understand place value. They order numbers up to one hundred and identify the value of the digits in 999. This enables them to solve money problems up to £1. They make predictions when they evaluate pattern in number and solve tens and units problems involving the use of brackets. Most pupils double and halve tens and units totals with confidence. Only a small number of pupils cannot work out  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  of countable objects in practical situations. Most pupils, when they measure, successfully estimate objects to be greater/less than one metre and measure straight lines in centimetres. All pupils use the mathematical names for common two and three-dimensional shapes and recognise them from different perspectives. Most boys and girls draw accurately to match over a line of reflective symmetry.

83. Good progress is sustained through Years 3 to 6. By eleven, pupils are keen mathematicians and have covered a wide range of work, including multiplication and division using a range of methods. They work comfortably with place value to seven figures. They work with decimals to three places and plot positive and negative numbers in four quadrants. All pupils work accurately with the relationship of decimals, fractions and percentages. They show good understanding of a wide variety of shapes and define them using, angle and adjacent and parallel sides. All pupils work with fractions, decimal fractions and percentages. They understand that these ideas are related. Pupils have a very good understanding of different shapes. For example, they can draw and identify different angles. They can classify quadrilaterals, related to sides and angle of intersection. Most describe the properties of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes and can sort the latter, according to the number of faces, edges and vertices. When investigating pizzas, pupils measured very accurately when they made container boxes of very good quality. They are good at interpreting data and producing their own frequency charts. Within a topic called 'Ourselves', for example, they developed a database of limb measurements, before drawing graphs of their findings. However, they were not seen to use ICT to generate a wider variety of graphs.

84. The overall quality of teaching is good and well matched to pupils' capability. Very thorough planning and high expectations of work rate and behaviour ensures very good learning, particularly in junior classes, but also in Years 1 and 2. The best lessons were characterised by ideas being presented in a clear manner from a practical basis. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, for example, learnt a lot about repeating and symmetrical patterns as they experimented with unifix and wooden rods made in multiples of one centimetre. They ended the lesson able to explain the meaning of ascending and descending order and with a better understanding of how to sort and classify using a range of criteria, such as size, colour,

shape and number. Pupils in Year 5 significantly extended their understanding of the properties of shape as they passed around and discussed the distinguishing characteristics of a variety of rectangles. Questioning was used very effectively to assess individual progress as the lesson developed. What pupils were expected to learn was shared with the pupils and then re-visited during the final part of the lesson. Very good and excellent teacher:pupil relationships, with much praise and encouragement, ensured all pupils learned well.

85. There is thorough coverage of the whole curriculum. Very good use of the national numeracy strategy accounts for the good improvement in planning since the previous inspection. The organisation of pupils into year groups for lessons in Years 4 to 6 has also improved the relevance and challenge of targets for pupils of different ability. Numeracy links are carefully woven into the work that pupils do in other subjects, so that they can appreciate the contribution made by mathematics in history and every day life today. In Year 1, for example, pupils sort and classify materials when considering waterproofing and make simple picture graphs to represent their findings. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 found out about Greek number systems and pupils in Year 6 communicated many of their findings about packaging for pizzas, using the language and symbols of weight, shape and measure.

86. Where lessons are good or better, group tasks are set to include and challenge all levels of ability. Class management skills are very well developed. Most teachers evaluate lessons effectively as they proceed, by identifying those pupils who are experiencing difficulty and giving immediate support. There is no over-reliance on worksheets.

87. The quality of marking is very good overall. In most classes it is undertaken in a positive, encouraging style and identifies how individual pupils might improve. Pupil performance is assessed well with end of topic tests and non-compulsory testing at the end of Years 3, 4 and 5. Extra lessons called 'Booster' and 'Springboard' takes place with trained assistants for those who are assessed to be in need of more help. These represent very positive initiatives. The school makes imaginative use of homework to inspire and motivate pupils and to make good links with literacy. Many of these tasks are open-ended and encourage initiative and good presentation. In Year 5, for example, pupils were encouraged to look at a recent football league table in the newspaper to answer such questions as, "Are the teams who score the most goals always at the top of the table? If not, why not? Remember to answer in full sentences!"

88. Resources for mathematics are very good and used very effectively in the best lessons.

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

89. In a small number of lessons, teaching had a balance of strengths and weaknesses and reflected opportunities for further development and improvement. In one such lesson with Year 6 pupils, a good, purposeful, mental/oral starter developed pupils' understanding of the properties of regular and irregular quadrilaterals. Good subject knowledge supported the learning of average and above average pupils. However, the introduction of the concept of intersecting and bisecting lines was unclear. Blackboard presentation to highlight difference of respective properties was insufficiently used and a good opportunity to use the available overhead projector was missed. The pace of the lesson slowed and a considerable part of the lesson passed before the penny dropped for most pupils. During an otherwise satisfactory lesson with Year 1, a good opportunity was missed to correct misconceptions, when individual pupils wrote numbers in reversed form on the board.

90. Clear intentions for learning are consistently shared with the pupils at the beginning of the lesson but, in a small number of lessons, they are not always revisited at the end of the period, to identify the learning that has taken place. The start of lessons is well used to develop the pupils' speed and accuracy in calculating mentally. In some lessons, however, insufficient attention is paid to varying questions to extend pupils of all abilities. Though individual targets have been introduced, in some classes they are too general. For pupils in Year 6, for example, they are all the same and there is no challenge for more able boys and girls. There are also inconsistencies in the extent to which teachers make effective use of ICT to develop knowledge, skills and understanding. In some classes the good quality computer is insufficiently used to support learning, particularly for data handling.

91. The quality of leadership and management is good. The co-ordinator monitors teaching and learning, by examining planning and looking at pupils' workbooks. This has enabled the school to have a clear understanding of gaps in pupils' learning and to improve the quality of planning, to cover such things as probability, for example. The co-ordinator sets realistic targets for her own and pupils' development. Though she is not a subject specialist she has attended a good number of courses to support her subject expertise. She is keen to lead the subject forward.

## **SCIENCE**

92. There has been a good improvement in standards achieved by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 during the time between this and the previous inspection.

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

93. The current Year 6 contains a good proportion of pupils who work at a level well above the national average whilst Year 2 are also attaining above the average standard. Other pupils all work at appropriate levels of achievement and all make good progress because the quality of teaching is good and often very good. This results in pupils developing very positive attitudes to science lessons and they use their time purposely and with evident satisfaction and pleasure.

94. The science curriculum is good, with a clear emphasis on practical investigation. Resources to support the teaching of science are also very good and add significantly to the quality of learning. The nationally recognised scheme of work is used well to support a very good scheme, developed by the local authority. Very good links are regularly made with other subjects. The previous inspection identified a serious lack of support for teachers' planning but this has been overcome with the implementation of this new guidance. Assessment is used positively to guide planning. For example, scrutiny of results in this year's national tests for seven-year-olds identified underachievement by the girls. Current Year 2 girls work in single gender groups and are encouraged to work independently as a group. Their progress is being monitored for improvement. This is very good use of assessment.

95. Scrutiny of teachers' planning, related to the overall scheme of work, identifies that pupils have many opportunities to carry out science investigations in all aspects of the subject. This is very good provision. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 learn about living things and are able to see three generations of the same family, who are invited to the lesson related to human stages of development. They later investigate sound when they study physical processes that affect their lives. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 make in-depth studies of plants, to find how growth, nutrition and reproduction are common to them all. Very good personal and social development takes place when plants, dug up for investigation of root systems, are replanted and growth continues. This topic is developed in studies in Years 4 and 5. Pupils dissect plants to identify their various parts before pressing, mounting and making effective displays. Pupils use large hoops to make Venn diagrams that show how different materials

can be sorted. To support aspects of study in design and technology pupils make simple models incorporating switches and batteries during lessons related to physical processes.

96. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 investigate using scientific terminology to record hypothesis, method, results and conclusions. Working with materials, they study reversible and non-reversible change and investigate limitations related to the mass of solid that can be dissolved in a liquid. They further investigate the principle that the limit is different for varying solids. In their study of forces, pupils learn how balanced forces make objects float and they use force meters to measure up-thrust. They use sand trays and a variety of balls to investigate differences in crater-size when meteorites hit the ground. This work also develops knowledge and understanding of gravitational pull.

97. Teaching and learning is good. In a very good investigative lesson with Year 4 and 5 pupils, the teacher's wide subject knowledge and very good class management skills ensure that all pupils make very good progress in their understanding of the way in which sounds travel. A very positive learning environment is the result of excellent relationships, based upon high quality social and moral development. Previous knowledge is used and built upon successfully, so that pupils understand that vibrations are not always visible. Very good progress is made as a result of pupils working without direct supervision, at very good pace in four very well resourced groups.

98. In a very good Year 2 lesson, clear planning and provision of good resources enable pupils to work on three different investigative tasks related to the concept of 'waterproof'. The teacher strongly emphasises the importance of a fair test before pupils use pipettes, to drip equal measures of water onto a variety of materials. All pupils are fully involved in practical work and make very good predictions. A group of able girls are fully involved in discussion, before developing their investigative skills to prove that shiny-surfaced materials are more waterproof than others are. Pupils with special educational needs are well managed to ensure that they are included and fully involved in all aspects of the lesson.

99. Marking of pupils' work is of a consistently high quality in all classes. Pupils respond to supportive comments by taking pride in the way they present their work. The high expectations teachers have of pupils to work well in pairs and in small groups and to share ideas and resources effectively support pupils' personal development very well.

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

100. Though ICT is increasingly being used to support learning, opportunities have been restricted until recently by a lack of access to computers. A whole class has been unable, for example, to work all at once to investigate databases or to present information graphically. The school is aware there is a need to develop further the use of ICT, to support even higher standards.

101. The co-ordinator lacks experience of managing a subject having only recently taken on a leadership role. She is very keen to develop even higher pupil achievement in science. She is well supported by the headteacher when monitoring medium-term planning and is involved in using assessment results to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance.



## ART AND DESIGN

102. Teaching and learning in art and design has improved a lot since the previous inspection and is a strength of the school by Year 6. Standard in art and design are above that typical of pupils of a similar age by the age of seven and well above by the age of eleven.

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

103. The school places a high degree of emphasis on developing all pupils' appreciation and enjoyment of art and design. It is well planned and organised to appeal to boys and girls of all ages and aptitude, to make the most of their interest and skills. A good balance is achieved between developing skills, gaining experience of different media, and finding out about the work of different artists from around the world. This very good curriculum enables all pupils to make very good progress and achieve very well by the end of Year 6.

104. A good source of evidence on the development of art and design was gained from the scrutiny of the sketch-books, displays around the school, photographic evidence and in talking to pupils. For example, the younger pupils have been exploring the medium of paint and learning to mix and use it for different purposes. They have produced self-portraits, stemming from observational sketches. They have painted imaginative pictures inspired from looking at photographs. They make good use of three-dimensional materials, such as clay, to make houses that had been fired in the local village potter's kiln. Pupils in Year 2 have drawn good illustrations to the books they have written about Mr. Gumpy and on display is some excellent computer art where the pupils designed leaves. In an observed lesson, pupils were learning about silhouettes and linking this theme to what they see in autumn. The teacher prepared well for this and projected ideas on the overhead projector of trees bending in the wind with flying hats and scarves to stimulate pupils' own ideas. This inspired pupils to work carefully and imaginatively.

105. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 extend their skills further through sketching still-life using wildlife themes. Very purposeful use is made of links with history to stimulate pupils. They visited the Asmodean museum, for example, to build up their own collection of sketches of pottery for use in their historical topics. They are now carefully crafting Greek shaped pots out of papier-mâché and plan to make clay tiles of Greek scenes. Good use is made of the Internet to find Greek patterns for ideas for their own design.

106. In Years 5 and 6, pupils work to a very high standard. Pupils' observational drawings of shells, after studying the work of Odilon Redon, are detailed and striking. They discussed and sketched them, then completed them carefully in pastels. The work reflects advanced skills in drawing from different perspectives and in shading techniques. Further first-hand observational sketches were seen in a lesson where pupils were studying a range of fruit, discussing their shape, texture and colour before using them to design shapes to press into polystyrene. These were then used to print in one colour, using printing inks. Their aim was to build up these prints with other coloured inks to eventually achieve a multi-coloured print.

107. Overall, from the evidence available, the quality of teaching for Years 1 and 2 is good and very good for pupils in Years 3 to 6. All teachers form very good relationships with pupils and encourage them to work well together. Their skilled management results in pupils' very positive attitudes and high standards of behaviour in lessons. Teachers also encourage self-assessment. Good opportunities are interwoven during and at the end of lessons, when pupils share their work and discuss the techniques that they have used. Pupils are mature in the way they critically evaluate their success and identify how they can improve their work.

108. The subject contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and to pupils' experience of ICT. A highpoint of the year was in June when the

school held an Arts Week. During this week pupils had a wide range of creative arts activities they could take part in as well as demonstrations. These included, Aboriginal art, landscapes in watercolour, tie and dye, drawing, printing, clay tiles, batik, jewellery making, Salsa art and sculpture. For example, the sculpture activity involved covering the parts of the body with 'modroc' to gain the shapes and then creating a very tall alien! A report of this week was published in the Witney Gazette, much to the pride of parents as well as staff and pupils.

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

109. The subject is led and managed soundly. The co-ordinator has some very perceptive ideas for future developments. Though her ideas are not yet written down, they reflect a commitment to improving the quality of provision. They include aims to improve assessment by creating an art portfolio of samples of assessed work, and access to better resources, such as pictures of famous artists and their work. She could also consider further links with literature so that art and design can be used when appropriate as a stimulus for imaginative writing.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

110. It was not possible to inspect lessons in design and technology because it is taught in blocks of time, alternating with art and design. The judgement of standards is made from access to other evidence, particularly scrutiny of teachers' planning, displays of work and by talking to pupils from Year 6. Standards in Year 2 are sound and typical of most seven-year-olds whilst they are good by Year 6. This is an improvement since the last inspection when they were judged to be average at both stages. All pupils enjoy practical work and working collaboratively. This leads to them making constructive use of time and skills. They make good progress to achieve well in the subject.

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

111. The school adopts a nationally recognised scheme of work that ensures very good links with many other subjects. Teachers provide pupils with a broad and stimulating range of experiences that result in them acquiring a good knowledge and understanding of the design process and good practical skills, using a range of different materials. Pupils in Year 1, for example, are imaginative and careful as they design, make and evaluate a puppet. In food technology they look at a recipe from 'long ago' and evaluate hygiene aspects of the study. In Year 2, pupils make purposeful use of a visit to the nearby public playground to investigate the fixed play equipment. Here, they draw designs to take back to school. They discuss modelling that is used by designers to test their products. In groups they then design and construct the swing, slide or roundabout of their choice. They are encouraged to check for strength, safety and stability before explaining their work to the other groups. Discussion takes place related to how well they were made and how they could be improved. This is all good practice that develops pupils' awareness of how things can be made to last.

112. Pupils in the mixed class for Years 2 and 3 extend their skills by engaging in interesting homework activities that involve independent research and finding different ways to communicate findings. For example, they each maintain a diary of what they eat over a period of one week before discussing what forms a balanced diet. They sample a range of commercially produced sandwiches and discuss taste, appearance and texture before graphing class preferences.

113. The significance of sharing views about products and how to improve them is well taught in Years 5 and 6. Pupils evaluate pizzas, for example, according to the characteristics of smell, texture, appearance, shape and personal preference. They design a 'take-home' container after evaluating the properties of commercial examples. Front and side elevations are drawn to develop the design concept. They then design appropriate nets to scale before making boxes out of card. They are made to a very good standard and are evaluated critically. When extra adult help is available, pupils make and cook a pizza of their choice to take home for the family meal. This proves to be an enjoyable experience from which all pupils gain pride and satisfaction.

114. Overall leadership and management of the subject is sound. The co-ordinator is very interested in the subject and has a good knowledge base from which to advise colleagues. She designed the curriculum to support teachers' planning and adapted the nationally recognised scheme of work to match the needs of pupils. She managed the blocking together of sections of work to improve standards and pruned down the assessment procedures to make them more manageable. The quality and number of resources is satisfactory.

***What could be improved***

115. The co-ordinator has identified the need to monitor standards achieved by observing lessons whenever she can. She also intends to develop a portfolio of assessed work to include samples from pupils of different capability. This is appropriate and would help to ensure that all tasks are pitched at levels that challenge all pupils. There is also potential to develop closer links with control technology in ICT. This would support pupils' ability to generate designs.

**GEOGRAPHY**

116. No teaching was seen in the inspection and therefore it is not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching. Judgements about provision and standards are based on scrutiny of teachers' planning, pupils' work, classroom displays and discussion with pupils.

117. Standards are better than reported at the time of the last inspection. Standards are now above national expectations. The rising standards are largely due to improvements in the planned scheme of work that is being consistently taught throughout the school. Pupils all make good progress and achieve well for their age in both key stages.

***What the school does well***

118. Pupils develop a good knowledge of maps and how to interpret them. They distinguish between different kinds of settlements as they progress through the school. They explain how and why they grow and decline. Pupils in the infants are engaged, for example, in a local study of Aston and its place on a map of Great Britain. They have identified and marked Aston within the county of Oxfordshire and the position of London in relation to Aston. They have also drawn a plan of where they live in relation to the school and marked significant landmarks, such as the church, stores, school, village hall and the position of 'my house'. A good study of the human use of land in the locality is seen in a plan where pupils identified roads, buildings, farming and shops, with a coloured key to indicate each area. Displays in the classrooms support the work pupils have been engaged in. For example, in one class an interactive display of a large street plan of Aston challenged pupils to find out where other pupils live. Another display had a world map, a local area map and a selection of globes that encourages pupils to find oceans, seas and mountain ranges. In addition, as further challenges, pupils were able to solve and build puzzles of the British Isles and Europe.

119. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a more comprehensive understanding of the special features of different landscapes and have a sound awareness of environmental issues, such as conservation and sustainability. This is developed through, for example, a study of coasts and coastlines. Each pupil completed a map of Great Britain on which they marked the position of various coastal towns and they created a key to identify each place on their map. They drew and labelled diagrams of caves, arches and stacks and talk confidently about how these are formed, using accurate geographical terms such as 'erosion'. They consider why coastlines need to be managed. For example, they looked at coastal defenses and debated the advantages and disadvantages, taking in the views of environmentalists, local residents and the impact on tourism and the local economy. This work is linked to studying a contrasting locality in the United Kingdom. The forthcoming residential trip to Yenworthy in North Devon in mid-November will enable pupils to compare the differences with their own area. In their preparation, pupils develop their mapping skills meaningfully by using atlases and ordnance survey maps to plan the best route to Yenworthy. They are measuring the distance, compass directions, co-ordinates and the various towns they will pass on their journey.

120. The use of educational visits and access to a good range of resources adds to the good quality of provision and to pupils' enthusiasm for the subject. For example, as well as the trip to Yenworthy, other younger pupils visit Gloucester Docks, the National Waterways Museum and Newbury Rainforest Centre. Pupils enjoy finding out about places near and far, and studying their similarities and differences. They also enjoy the many opportunities for investigations and discovery, so that geography makes a significant contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

121. Plans for each term are well constructed and the overall marking in books is satisfactory. Nonetheless, there is some inconsistency in the quality and usefulness of marking across the school. Some work is well presented with careful sketching and labelled diagrams, showing that pupils are interested and take a pride in their work. However, this is not the case with all the work seen. Presentation, especially written work is not always up to the standard of the other examples. It appears that pupils have good skills in artwork and invariably the standard in the books is significantly higher in their sketchwork than in written work.

122. The present co-ordinator for the subject took over post one year ago. The subject policies have been recently reviewed and the scheme of work is now fully in place. However, the subject co-ordinator has not undertaken any monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, but has recently started to collect samples of pupils' work. At the present time assessment procedures have concentrated on pupils completing a worksheet which tests them on the work they had completed at the end of each unit of work. A specific weakness however, is that the subject co-ordinator does not receive the results of these tests and so does not monitor standards as effectively as she could. She does not find out, for example, the extent to which all pupils, but especially the most able, are working to the best of their ability. Therefore, high on the priority for development is an objective to develop effective procedures for monitoring standards throughout the school.

## **HISTORY**

123. Standards have risen since the previous inspection. At the end of Years 2 and 6 pupils attain good standards for their age. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in learning about famous people and events from the past and in understanding that things change as time passes. A good example is the depth of information acquired by pupils in Year 1 as they learn out about the gunpowder plot. Another, are the details two pupils who

have just entered Year 3 recalled about Amy Johnson and her contribution to aviation. Pupils were also highly positive about how much they had gained from visiting the National Waterways Transport Museum. They knew a lot about canals and life and work on board a barge as a result of this shared experience. Junior pupils make good progress in understanding the elements of historical enquiry and interpretation. They know more than might be expected about different periods in British and European history. They identify, with reasonable accuracy, relevant centuries and decades when the Romans invaded Britain and when the Greek Civilisation flourished and declined. They empathise with the impact of the German invasion on children in Britain in the 1940's. Two pupils in Year 5, for example, discussed the Second World War confidently with an inspector. They understood about the importance of obtaining reliable evidence about its cause and effect. One spoke at length about how the diary of Anne Frank gave insight into what it was like to be a Jewish victim of Germany's policy of discrimination. Her partner elaborated on this by explaining that one of the reasons for exterminating Jews was Hitler's desire to create a pure Caucasian race. Their thoughtful responses reflect the extent of pupils' interest in the subject, and the significant contribution it makes to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

124. The quality of the lesson observed, work in books, and display around the school, indicates that teaching is predominantly good throughout the school, though better in junior than in infant year groups. All teachers make resources available to stimulate pupils' interest in studying the past. The subject receives a fair share of curriculum time. It is also planned imaginatively by teachers to cover the syllabus and take full advantage of cross-curricular links with other subjects. These include design and technology and literacy in the infants and music, art and design and literacy in the juniors.

125. The requirement to teach pupils in the lower key stage about famous people and events was interpreted creatively, for example, by the teacher in the class for reception and Year 1. A topic about Guy Fawkes has successfully captured pupils' imagination. The teacher made effective use of costume and drama to establish how many pupils just entering Year 1 knew about the reason for celebrating Bonfire Night. She dressed up as Guy Fawkes and told his story well. She made good use of pictures and posters to retain pupils' interest and as a focus for questions and discussion. Pupils made good progress in learning about why the conspirators wanted to get rid of King James as they listened carefully to the teacher. Later, they consolidated this new knowledge as they studied an etching of the plotters to design and make a puppet of Guy Fawkes.

126. In Years 3 to 6, teaching can be very impressive and promotes rapid learning. Teachers amply demonstrate this in a display of work of high quality in Years 4 and 5 about life and times in Ancient Greece. Pupils have studied a map that shows where key historical landmarks and Greek cities were situated. They have considered, in depth, whether they would have preferred to live near the sea in Athens, or in inward-looking, land-locked Sparta. They have written reasons for their choice and conducted a survey to find out which place was most popular. They have studied Greek literature, art and crafts. This led to pupils sharing ideas to write playscripts about Greek Gods and Goddesses, in interesting and exciting language. In art and design, pupils produced some intricate and colourful paintings of Greek vases. The teacher inspired pupils' creativity and fostered concentration very successfully by encouraging them to listen to a tape of Greek folk music as they worked.

127. Pupils throughout the school say how much they enjoy lessons, Certainly, in the lessons seen their attitudes, behaviour and eagerness to work constructively together was very good. Their positive response added considerably to the quality of learning and the way they managed their time.

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

128. Some work in books and folders indicates that some teachers could set higher expectations of pupils in the way they organise their work. Pupils' lack of care in writing as neatly as they are able detracts in Year 1 and 2, from the overall quality of the finished product. Teachers should continue to praise effort but also make better use of their knowledge of each pupil's capability when writing comments about progress. They are not as effective as they could be in promoting high standards of work. For example, photographs were used effectively as a stimulus for recording memories of a day at the National Waterways Museum in March. The opportunity was missed, however, to enhance its value by adding 'contents' and 'contributors' pages and commentary to explain the purpose and outcomes of the visit.

129. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily by a part-time teacher who has, in recent months, completed a sound scheme of work. This scheme is helping teachers with their planning for each year group. It is comprehensive enough to ensure that teachers add progressively to pupils' growing knowledge, understanding and appreciation of history. Sound support is provided for colleagues, by, for example, advising them where to find appropriate resources for a special project. The co-ordinator has very little experience of observing the quality of teaching and learning and of checking standards by the end of Year 6. She is keen to find more effective ways of doing this.

130. It will help the school if the co-ordinator now concentrates on promoting teaching and learning of a consistently high quality in every class. She should produce a realistic action plan setting out the things that need to be done quickly and things that will need to be improved over a longer period of time.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

131. Standards in ICT are average in Year 2 and above average by Year 6. All pupils make good progress. Standards have improved well since the time of the last inspection.

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

132. Due to the current, limited accommodation within the school, an ICT suite is not an option. However, after the previous inspection the school produced a comprehensive development plan for the subject. It continues to keep this up-to-date and well focussed on improving access to good resources that will help to raise standards. The availability of computers within the classroom is already much better than a year or two ago and the quality and quantity are about to further improve. Teachers also nurture parental support effectively to practice ICT in a very large proportion of homes.

133. During the inspection some good examples of the use of computers was identified. In the very good lesson observed in the mixed class of pupils in Year 1 and 2 they created simple, musical phrases using the computer. Pupils played a good variety of instruments after making hand-clapping rhythms. Good spiritual development took place when the teacher asked the pupils to discuss other ways of playing and hearing music. A teacher's assistant programmed a musical phrase on the computer and, on a cue, started the music. All pupils showed their absolute amazement and delight. While whole-class activity related to making and hearing music proceeded, pupils in pairs of mixed ability worked independently from their teacher to produce a variety of musical phrases. The lesson was very well managed and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, were included and made very good progress. It gave pupils a clear message about the wider applications of technology. Pupils used icons correctly, showed good mouse control and selected accurately from a menu. The classteacher's subject knowledge was good.

134. Displays of work from pupils in Years 2 and 3 demonstrate very good use of a colour programme to practise skills in art and design. Drawings of a variety of leaves, made on a computer, supported their science topic well. Pupils use the same programme to produce high quality, reflective, symmetrical patterns, using a good variety of 2-dimensional shapes. During geography lessons, these pupils use a programmable vehicle called a 'Roamer' to support knowledge of points of the compass in a motivating and practical manner. Data handling skills are very well promoted in Years 4 and 5 when pupils use a commercial programme to generate frequency charts, bar lines and block graphs. Pupils word-process their writing for various purposes, such as the composition of poems and posters, using a variety of font sizes and styles.

135. A developing portfolio of work includes images generated by electronic microscope to highlight advertisements for the school 'Art Week' and 'Harvest Time'. 'The Best Ever Guide to Aston and Cote School 2002', created with imported pictures by three boys and one girl is a credit to those pupils.

136. Boys and girls in Year 6 confidently describe their use of ICT in a variety of ways. They develop their own files on computers and describe how they open them to continue work on web pages. They e-mail relatives and friends in different parts of the country and evaluate the pros and cons of electronic mail compared to surface mail. They discuss effective use of ICT outside school in banks, hospitals and shops. They regularly use the Internet to download information and are very much aware of the dangers for young people in uncontrolled access. They use a variety of software, including games, and some use their computer to print 'teeshirt' designs.

137. The co-ordinator has only recently taken over responsibility for the subject. Already she has implemented a development plan and a portfolio of levelled pupils' work. She has clear ideas as to the way ICT can be taken forward, through a designated 'ICT Week' and by the building of a school web-site. All but the two more recently appointed teachers have undertaken courses to develop their understanding and confidence in using computers, as a tool to support the curriculum as a whole.

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

138. The co-ordinator is aware that in some classes, curriculum progress is not being sufficiently supported by ICT. There is very good capacity for further improvement when the laptop, portable computer suite is in place. Plans are advanced to enable this new co-ordinator to receive training in how to manage the subject's development and plan for the further development of pupils modelling and control skills.

## **MUSIC**

139. During the inspection, it was not possible to make reliable judgements about the quality of teaching and learning, and standards achieved across the school, because only one lesson was seen. However, a scrutiny of teachers' plans shows that many interesting experiences are provided to help pupils learn well.

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

140. From second-hand sources of evidence it appears highly likely that the good provision and standards reported in the previous inspection have been maintained. Pupils are regularly involved in concerts and festivals that reflect the high priority the school gives to providing a rich experience of music outside in the community. For example, Year 2 and Year 6 performed to parents in Wood Green and also as part of the Oxfordshire Festival of Voices at Dorchester Abbey in June. Pupils also take part in Harvest Festival and Christmas

performances and the school choir sing to the local senior citizens. These opportunities add creatively and enjoyably to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

141. The school makes full use of the expertise and support of peripatetic teachers and volunteers to add to the quality of provision. The visiting teachers for piano, violin and flute enable pupils with special talents to undertake weekly tuition. As one girl in Year 6 explained, this does much to sustain their high levels of enthusiasm and promotes their future improvement. A music specialist takes each class for music for two terms out of three. These lessons are well planned and thorough. Pupils engage in a balanced range of activities that develop their listening, composing and performing skills. For example, they learn the musical elements of pitch, duration, timbre, tempo dynamics and texture as they listen to the works of 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic composers, such as Brahms, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky and Grieg. Other pupils study the works of English composers such as, Holst, Britten and Walton. When pupils enter assembly there is always a piece of music to enjoy and encourage quiet reflection. In the good lesson seen, pupils make good use of ICT to record their work and then they play it back to discuss and evaluate their own performances. Pupils who go on the Yenworthy residential trip think about ideas for a composition about their experiences.

142. Resources are good and are sufficient to teach music across the school. There are some good musical interactive displays in the school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

143. By the age of seven and eleven pupils' attainment is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when it was sound. It is not possible to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching because only two lessons were seen and both were with younger pupils. However, in these two lessons the quality of teaching was good and very good. Evidence gained from a scrutiny of the planning for physical education, talking with the subject co-ordinator, photographic evidence and discussion with pupils, made it possible to make a judgement on attainment.

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

144. Swimming has a high profile in the school. Provision is made for Years 3 to 6 and all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make good progress over time. They all gain achievement awards and most can already swim 25 metres. The school's teams compete in local galas and recently won the cup in the first Witney Schools Swimming Gala.

145. The lessons planned for pupils in Years 1 and 2 include gymnastics. There is appropriate attention to working with a partner to develop body shapes through stretching and learning terms such as 'long/thin shape' and 'small shapes and curled shapes'. Pupils learn to travel on feet and hands in different directions whilst developing an awareness of space around them. Further work with their partners include, throwing, catching and bouncing balls, using hoops, bat and ball work whilst travelling across the hall. Observation of the two lessons seen showed that pupils were well aware of the importance of warm-ups and cool-down and that of safety as demonstrated by the teachers' questioning and pupils' responses.

146. As pupils move through the school they develop good skills in travelling using space at different levels as they invent complex sequences of movement using the floor and apparatus. They learn to express feelings and ideas well through dance. The dance lesson seen in Years 2 and 3 concentrated on the theme 'Cats' with music from the musical. Here the pupils were moving freely to develop their performances of 'cool cats, scared cats and posh cats'. This was a very good lesson in which every pupil was completely involved in interpreting the cat characters. They were well supported by their teacher who fully involved



herself in the dance.

147. Lessons are well planned, and the monitoring of the teaching and learning is sound. Relationships are good and teachers, as seen in the lessons, set a good example by joining in with the activities. This adds to the sense of enjoyment, ensuring that pupils think physical exercise is worthwhile. Teachers expect good standards of work and behaviour and are rarely disappointed. Appropriate use is made of the available equipment to stimulate and sustain interest in physical exercise.

148. The subject is well managed and based on national guidance and a published scheme of work. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the subject and it makes a very good contribution to their personal development, linking as it does to many community and inter-school events. For example, the school sports day is very popular with parents and children alike. There are good opportunities for outside field sports in the school grounds and pupils take part in football, netball, athletics and cricket, with a visiting coach taking the cricket. As a further stimulus, a trip to the Netball International was arranged where parents accompanied the pupils as well.

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

149. The subject co-ordinator has highlighted the need to update the physical education policy and is just about to focus on developing the quality of teaching and learning in gymnastics, as the school's own review of practice has identified the need for improvement in some aspects of work on apparatus. However, this need was not identified through this inspection as insufficient work on apparatus was observed.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

150. Good standards in the subject have been maintained at the end of Year 6 since the previous inspection, and there has been sound progress in raising standards in Year 2. Now, at the end of both years, pupils attain standards above the level expected of pupils of their age in the targets described in the Agreed Syllabus for Oxfordshire. Throughout the school, pupils make satisfactory progress in learning *about* religions and good progress in learning *from* religion. Their achievement is satisfactory overall. All teachers implement the scheme of work appropriately and allocate sufficient time to the subject. This means that by Year 2 pupils know as much as they should for their age about Christian, Muslim and Jewish traditions and customs. In Year 6, pupils have a much deeper understanding of the significance of a religious faith. They make reference to the similarities and differences in the teaching of religions, and discuss the ways in which the same religion can be interpreted and practised in different ways. They understand that religious artefacts are sacred and that all religions have special rituals, such as baptism and marriage ceremonies. Pupils use their thinking skills well to justify points of view about things that happen in the name of religion that they think to be right and wrong.

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

151. Work in books indicates that teaching is consistently satisfactory for pupils in Year 1 and good for pupils from Years 2 to 6. All teachers are effective in promoting discussion both with the whole class and in small groups and pairs. They work hard to make the focus of lessons interesting and succeed in gaining pupils attention and interest. This means that pupils gain a lot both from listening to teachers and from sharing ideas with each other. They are particularly good at making links between the values of the home and school with religious values. In Year 2, for example, pupils devised rules for a happy life. These are based on their understanding of the Five Pillars of Islam as well as their understanding of the expectations of Jesus that people should love and care for one another. Teaching and learning in the class containing pupils in Years 2 and 3 is impressive for the way pupils

respond to encouragement to communicate ideas in ways that suit their learning styles and strengths. For example, an able girl in Year 3 found five different ways of beginning written rules for a happy life, whilst a less able boy from Year 2 expressed ideas visually through a sequence of pictures, and a few simple labels.

152. Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and enjoy lessons. They find them especially stimulating when they have opportunities to watch videos, look at interesting artefacts or books, or visit churches and other religious buildings. Behaviour in Year 6, in the only lesson observed, was exemplary. Pupils in this class co-operate very well and value each other's opinions. They respect the particular customs and practices of one of their number who is of a different faith. The whole-class group reflected carefully on the meaning of Biblical verses, such as 'I am the vine', in the Gospel of St. John. They listened intently to each other as they considered why Jesus had written metaphorically rather than literally. By the end of the lesson they had a much greater understanding of how stories can be a powerful medium for promoting a moral code and spreading a spiritual message. This lesson alone, and a half-hour dialogue with a few pupils, was ample evidence of the way in which this subject contributes very successfully to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

***What could be improved***

153. In some lessons pupils, particularly the more able, do not make sufficient use of their skills in writing to explore and justify ideas and feelings about religion. Sometimes the content of lessons is basically the same for all pupils. This restricts choice about how to record what pupils are learning. For example, in the class containing pupils from Year 1 and Year 2, all pupils wrote exactly the same sentence about the special Jewish festival of Sukkot. The teacher had the same expectation of all pupils instead of challenging the significant percentage of older pupils who are capable of devising sentences of their own. The same thing happened in one lesson in Year 6 when all the pupils wrote exactly the same thing about Muslim Prayer.

154. The co-ordinator has considerable expertise in the subject and supports colleagues well with their planning. She has a good understanding of standards achieved in junior classes because she teaches in Years 5 and 6. She is not as well-informed as she would like to be about standards in infant year groups. There is a sound action plan for future development, and a good start has been made on promoting the subject through displays of work, such as that about world religions in the school foyer. The co-ordinator's vision for development is good but there has been no time allocated specifically for finding out how well pupils are learning. Not enough has been done to find out about the quality of work in books. There has been no evaluation of the usefulness of marking for praising effort and progress or giving pupils ideas for future improvement.

155. The co-ordinator now needs to concentrate on addressing the reasons for weaknesses in learning. If all lessons are taught to the high standard of the best, there is no reason why pupils should not achieve even higher standards in the future.