

INSPECTION REPORT

**EWELME CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Ewelme, Wallingford

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123197

Headteacher: Mrs Wendy Jacobs

Reporting inspector: Mr Fred Riches
23235

Dates of inspection: 4 July and 7 to 8 July 2003

Inspection number: 248439

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

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4 – 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Burrows Hill
Ewelme
Wallingford

Postcode: OX10 6HU

Telephone number: 01491 839240

Fax number: 01491 833170

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Sarah Maine

Date of previous inspection: September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23235	Fred Riches	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage, English, music, geography, history, special educational needs and English as an additional language	The school's results and pupils' achievements, How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9528	Derek Bowers	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30618	Paul Story	Team inspector	Mathematics, design and technology, information and communication technology, physical education and equal opportunities.	How good are the other curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
31046	Chris Nuttall	Team inspector	Art and design and science	

The inspection contractor was:

PRIMARY FOCUS
10 Larkfield Avenue
Kenton
Harrow
Middlesex
HA3 8NF

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33 Kingsway
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School has 90 boys and girls on roll aged four to eleven, including 13 children in the reception year. All attend full time. The number on roll has increased considerably since the last inspection and is now 13 above its capacity. The gender balance is fairly even overall, but Year 5 has far more girls than boys and Year 3 far more boys than girls. Children live mainly in owner-occupied homes and come from Ewelme and surrounding villages. Pupils are almost all of white United Kingdom or European origin. The very small number of bilingual pupils are fluent in English and require no additional support. Attainment on entry to the school varies year on year from below to above average. In the current year it is above average. Seven per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is below average. The school has 16 per cent of pupils with identified special educational needs. This is below average. One pupil has a statement of special educational need.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Ewelme is a good school with many strengths, including outstanding international and local community links, excellent provision for pupils' cultural development and widely recognised successful work with gifted and talented pupils. It has a strong Christian ethos. Effective teaching ensures that pupils of all abilities achieve successfully. Standards in speaking and listening and art and design are particularly high. The headteacher and governing body provide a clear educational direction. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well in English, mathematics and science, with higher attainers learning very successfully as a result of imaginative teaching
- Standards in art and design and speaking and listening are very high
- International links and provision for pupils' cultural development are outstanding
- Staff offer a rich curriculum with stimulating additional activities, especially for older pupils
- The headteacher provides a clear lead and is very well supported by the governing body
- Excellent community links contribute very positively to pupils' personal development and to the school ethos

What could be improved

- Overuse of poorly-designed worksheets inhibits aspects of pupils' learning up to Year 3
- Younger pupils do insufficient purposeful writing
- The school development plan includes too many areas and these are not prioritised
- The frequency of formal opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since it was inspected in September 1997. It has raised expectations and achievement for higher attainers and addressed fully all of the key issues raised at the previous inspection, with particular success in developing curriculum planning and strategies for monitoring the curriculum and pupils' progress. It is in a good position to improve still further.

STANDARDS

The usual table showing comparisons with the national picture and similar schools is omitted in schools with very small numbers, as individual pupils may be identifiable. In schools like Ewelme, with a small number of pupils in each year group, standards in comparison with national statistics are useful only when considered in the light of knowledge of the individual pupils.

The school's tracking of individual pupils' progress year on year shows that pupils of all abilities achieve well. Pupils' work over the past year reflects good progress overall and very good progress by higher attainers in Years 4, 5 and 6. Standards at the end of the reception year are currently above average. At the end of Year 2 they are above average in reading, mathematics and science and average in writing. At the end of Year 6, in a year group of very mixed ability, they are average in English and mathematics and above average in science. In Years 4 and 5, however, standards are well above average in all three subjects. The variation in standards between year groups is related to the balance of pupils with special educational needs or particular gifts and talents in each year group.

Standards in speaking and listening, reading and art are high throughout the school, reflecting the school's positive emphasis and very good teaching in these areas. Standards in writing are high in Years 4 and 5 and more able pupils in Year 6 show very good writing skills. Several pupils in Years 2 and 3 also write well on occasion, but opportunities are limited, with too much emphasis on exercises rather than writing for a purpose, so younger pupils do not achieve as well in this aspect of English. Standards in other subjects throughout the school are average at ages seven and eleven. (It was not possible to judge standards in music or physical education.) No discernible pattern emerges from looking at results over recent years. The school is already adapting teaching styles to stimulate boys' learning and to improve writing standards among younger pupils. The school is meeting the targets set for pupils at age eleven and these are suitably challenging.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good in the main. Most pupils are enthusiastic about their work and enjoy school. A few need help with concentration.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. Many pupils exhibit very good behaviour in lessons and at lunch and play. A few need reminders on occasion.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils work and play successfully together, with many older pupils showing a mature understanding of different viewpoints. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good. Pupils readily accept responsibilities.
Attendance	Very good. Well above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall. It includes almost equal amounts of high quality and satisfactory teaching. One excellent lesson was observed. Satisfactory, good and high quality lessons were observed in all three key stages. The school implements the literacy and numeracy strategies successfully, adapting lesson structures imaginatively on occasion to stimulate and challenge pupils' thinking and develop both oral and written communication skills. Reading is taught very well. Overuse of unhelpful worksheets has a detrimental effect on younger pupils' writing development. This occurs in history, geography and science, as well as English, with opportunities for original writing missed. Examples of original writing from Year 2 onwards show very successful teaching and learning when pupils are challenged. English, mathematics and science are taught well overall, with good focus on mental recall in mathematics. Teachers prepare and plan very thoroughly. They organise groups and resources as well as they can, but cramped conditions in all but the Year 4/5/6 classroom restrict movement and result in too many sedentary activities for pupils from Years 1 to 3. Reception children have access to a small outdoor area and the teacher makes good use of this limited space. Teaching assistants are deployed well during group activities. Teachers throughout the school know their pupils well. Those with special educational needs are identified and receive very well organised support. Those with particular gifts and talents make very good progress, because their skills are recognised and tasks set challenge them very well, especially as they get older. The school offers equal access and opportunity to all. Boys and girls achieve equally well in most year groups. Where boys outnumber girls, as in Year 3, the school has taken steps to adapt the curriculum to promote more successful learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. Meets statutory requirements. Stimulating international links. Visits and visitors bring studies to life. Use of the local environment enriches art, history and geography. Satisfactory Foundation Stage, inhibited by space restrictions. Very good additional activities. Excellent community links.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Needs identified early. Very well organised individual plans shared with parents and pupils. Support enables pupils to work in a focused way towards their targets.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Outstanding provision for pupils' cultural development through links with European countries and Uganda. Very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good procedures for child protection, first aid and health and safety. All staff know pupils well and offer very good care. Assessment procedures are good. Systems for reviewing progress and sharing targets with parents are mainly informal.

The school's partnership with parents is very good. The Friends of Ewelme make an outstanding contribution to the work of the school. The school keeps parents fully informed about events and involves several parents in lessons and additional activities.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership and sound management. The headteacher sets a clear educational direction and has taken a strong lead in developing excellent international and community links. Performance management and a good programme of training are in place, with co-ordination roles developing well. The school has a positive Christian ethos.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body plays a very supportive role, helping plan and organise finance and weighing difficult organisational and staffing decisions linked to the growing school roll. It ensures the school meets statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The headteacher monitors pupils' progress carefully and reports year group issues to governors. Monitoring of work samples and teaching is partially effective. School improvement planning covers the full range of the school's work, but lacks clear priorities and focused plans of action.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Headteacher and governors make very effective use of financial resources. They apply the principles of best value well in all major spending decisions.

The school is well staffed and adequately resourced to meet National Curriculum requirements. Resources for the Foundation Stage are not adequate for children's physical development. Accommodation is cramped, especially for pupils in reception and Years 1 to 3. The number on roll is well above capacity. The current overcrowding inhibits teaching and learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. • Teaching is good. • Children are expected to do their best and make good progress. • Behaviour is good and the school helps children become mature. • The school is well led and managed. • Staff are approachable and the school works closely with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on how their children are getting on. • Homework • The range of additional activities

The inspection fully endorses the positive views expressed above by parents at the meeting and through questionnaire replies. It finds the range of additional activities surpasses most offered by small schools and that homework arrangements are clear and appropriate to pupils' ages. It agrees with parents who feel there is insufficient formal opportunity to review their children's progress. The school is already looking at offering more parent-teacher consultation during the year.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Improvement since the last inspection

1 Overall the school has made good improvement in its performance since the last inspection in 1997, when standards in English, mathematics and science were average at ages seven and eleven. The school's assessment sheets show pupils of all abilities making good progress in the main throughout the school. Care must be taken comparing results year on year in schools with small numbers of pupils in each year group. It is clear, however, that standards have been better in most years since 1997 in speaking and listening, in reading and in science. Standards remain better this year in these subject areas. The picture from both last year's national test results and this year's work shows that standards have been maintained in mathematics. Standards in writing are similar at ages seven and eleven, although they were lower last year at age seven. Standards in the current Years 4 and 5 show that the school is set to achieve high standards in all three subjects next year and the year after at the end of Key Stage 2.

Attainment on entry

2 Children's attainment on entry to the school, in the term in which they are five, is above average overall in most years, including the current year. All have previous experience of playgroup. They are articulate and show good personal, social and emotional development as a result of their home and pre-school experiences. Several children starting school have already reached the early learning goals*¹ set for children to achieve by the time they start Year 1. These children tackle work at the earliest stages of the National Curriculum. In all years there is a wide range of individual ability and the school is quick to identify children's varying skills, abilities and needs.

Attainment by the end of the Foundation Stage

3 All children achieve well in communication, language and literacy, in mathematical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They achieve satisfactorily in personal, social and emotional, creative and physical development. The current siting of the reception children in cramped conditions and the sharing of the room with Year 1 pupils following a National Curriculum timetable restricts the possibilities for children's development in the latter three areas of learning. The teacher creates some opportunities for children to have access to resources, develop role-play situations and use sand, water, construction kits and art materials, but opportunities to explore, investigate and experiment are curtailed by lack of space. Reception children follow a mainly Year 1 timetable, with some time for outdoor play and learning or indoor creative development opportunities supervised by the teaching assistant. No opportunity for physical development through use of wheeled vehicles or climbing frames was observed during the three days of the inspection.

4 Nevertheless, because of a mixture of home, school and pre-school learning, almost all children surpass the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy, in mathematical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world by the end of the reception year. They meet the goals in the other three areas. A very small number of

¹ Early Learning Goals are set for the six areas of learning covered in the Foundation Stage: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy, mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development and physical development. The goals are set for children to reach by the time they start Year 1.

children who do not start school until the summer term and have only one term in reception are still working towards some of the goals.

Attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 in English, mathematics and science

5 Pupils' attainment at age seven is well above average in speaking and listening and reading. It is above average in mathematics and science. It is average in writing. Pupils of all abilities achieve well overall in English, mathematics and science as a result of good teaching that is well planned and focuses on clear objectives. They achieve satisfactorily in writing. When given the opportunity and stimulus to tackle original writing tasks, those of average ability and above do well, but those of below average ability require more support to build their confidence and gain a sense of achievement. Pupils of all abilities spend too much time completing worksheets and exercises that do not advance their learning. Insufficient time is spent on pupils expressing themselves in their own writing.

6 Results from the previous year's national tests at age seven showed well above average attainment in reading and mathematics, but highlighted well below average attainment in writing. The year group (current Year 3) has an unusual gender imbalance, with eleven boys and two girls. The school has taken several steps to address the weakness in writing. It has changed the handwriting policy, to ensure that all pupils form letters correctly and develop a cursive style early. It involved headteacher, teachers and support staff in weekly training for two terms on raising boys' achievement in writing and it organised a series of writing lessons for the year group, taken by the special needs co-ordinator. These steps go some way to addressing the problem, but pupils' recorded work from reception to Year 3 shows too much emphasis on exercises and the completion of worksheets. For example, pupils spend too much time putting words into blank spaces and colouring in. They spend too little time expressing their own thoughts and ideas meaningfully by reporting their findings, and describing what they have done or seen.

Attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science

7 Pupils' attainment at age eleven is average overall in English and mathematics. It is above average in science. The current Year 6 has a very wide range of ability. It includes a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and a high proportion of more able pupils. Pupils of all abilities make good progress through Key Stage 2. Indeed, pupils of above average ability make very good progress in Years 4, 5 and 6. Their talents are recognised and the teaching challenges them to extend themselves. They respond well to high expectations and several, particularly in Years 4 and 5, achieve well beyond the levels expected for their ages in English, mathematics and science.

Attainment in other subjects

8 Standards in art and design are above average at age seven and well above average at age eleven. Pastel sketches of local houses and models of mythical Greek beasts show reflective design and artistic skills of high quality. Standards in all other subjects seen are average at ages seven and eleven. Standards in swimming are above average but it was not possible to judge standards in physical education, as no lessons were timetabled during the three days of the inspection. A few parents of boys expressed concern about the school's provision for physical education, feeling it is insufficient. The school makes similar provision to many small village schools with restricted facilities on site, organising weekly sessions in a local sports centre. It also involves parents in running after-school sporting activities and takes part in inter-school competitive games and area events. The use of the playing field is currently restricted because of rabbit and mole holes.

How well different groups of pupils achieve

9 Pupils with special educational needs, including the pupil with a statement, make similar progress to their peers. They work well towards the targets set on their individual education

plans. Pupils with particular gifts and talents are recognised and work set is matched to their ability throughout the school, except when they are involved in mundane colouring and low-level worksheet activities. In Years 4, 5 and 6 they achieve very well because they enjoy responding to the challenging work set and want to do their best. For the most part, boys and girls achieve equally well throughout the school. The difference in attainment between the genders tends to be associated with the higher proportion of pupils with special needs in one or other gender in each year group. However, the school has clearly identified some underachievement in boys' writing in their first few years at school. The inspection agrees with the school that there is a gender factor for Year 3 in particular, in addition to the special needs factors. As well as improving writing skills, there is a need to look at learning styles, self-esteem and the balance of sedentary and active learning for boys, particularly in this year group.

10 The school monitors results of tests and assessments to check that all groups of pupils perform equally well. Although there have been some differences in performance between boys and girls over the past three years in the Year 2 and Year 6 tests and assessments, with girls appearing to do better than boys, the small size of year groups and variations in their composition prevent meaningful comparison. Gifted and talented pupils make very good progress and achieve very well, particularly in English and mathematics, where challenging tasks are set. Two Year 6 pupils, for example, one girl and one boy, attained level 6 in mathematics in 2002.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Attitudes and behaviour

11 The school has maintained the positive attitudes to work and behaviour in lessons and throughout the school shown by pupils at the last inspection. Pupils' attitudes to their work are good overall in the younger classes and in the older classes they are very good. They settle quickly at the beginning of each lesson and show interest and enthusiasm during the discussions and individual or group work. They apply themselves well to their tasks and almost all maintain good concentration and motivation throughout group and individual activities. All pupils are keen to participate in discussions, singing and prayers in assemblies.

12 Pupils behave well overall in lessons and assemblies and this helps to create a good, calm learning environment. They know what is expected of them and respond accordingly. They can be trusted to get on with their work without constant close supervision. Occasionally chatter in the overcrowded Year 2/3 class raises the noise level too high for pupils to concentrate successfully, but pupils come to order in response to prompting. Behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes is generally good. There is a pleasant, positive atmosphere with pupils playing well together or talking contentedly in groups. The pupils are generally polite to staff and visitors and to each other. Occasionally pupils are slow to respond to the requests of lunchtime supervisory staff and a few show a lack of respect when lining up. Parents who accompany the children on school trips are very impressed by their good behaviour. Letters from coach companies congratulate the children on their very good behaviour on trips.

13 There was no evidence during the inspection that bullying is a problem. Unsatisfactory incidents between pupils are dealt with promptly and parents are informed if it is appropriate. No pupils have been excluded from the school and there is rarely any need to use even moderate sanctions for inappropriate behaviour.

Relationships and personal development

14 Relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils are very good. There is considerable help and respect for each other with the older pupils frequently helping or playing with the younger ones. In the celebration assembly during the inspection, pupils clearly showed their genuine appreciation of the achievements of those who received awards. The Christian ethos is very evident in relationships and the care and attention given to new pupils. Peer tutoring is well established. For example, older pupils assist younger ones when they are learning how to use new software. Pupils perform school duties well, including preparations for assemblies, ringing the school bell and other routine monitor roles. In lessons they are responsible for resources before and after lessons. At the end of a design and technology lesson observed, pupils cleared up the equipment and the waste from their model materials with impressive speed and rigour.

Attendance

15 Attendance is very good and last year there were no unauthorised absences. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their parents appreciate the importance of regular attendance and the disruption that would be caused by holidays during the term. Punctuality is very good so that the school day gets off to a good start. Registers are marked promptly and fully each day and the secretary follows up any absences during the morning. Most parents report absences early on the first morning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16 The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. It includes equal proportions of very good and satisfactory lessons. One excellent lesson was observed. Teachers know the pupils very well. The school has maintained the good quality of teaching found at the last inspection.

General points

17 Throughout the school teachers know their pupils well and have good relationships with them. Teachers look for links between subjects to help make learning more interesting and relevant. Pupils respond well to imaginative teaching. For example, in the excellent lesson observed, they rehearsed very good arguments against a visiting alien (their teacher), before presenting written arguments from various viewpoints as to why humans should not be treated like chickens for the consumption of the 'little green man'. In another very good English lesson, pupils in Year 1 responded very positively to their teacher's reading of a West African story. She used a drum and wore a headscarf to conjure up the storyteller's atmosphere and pupils sat on African matting as they eagerly suggested possible sequels to the events they had heard read, joining in the repeating phrases to the accompaniment of the drum. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 also learned very successfully as a result of a well-planned lesson, where the teacher provided a framework of introductory sentences to paragraphs, helping pupils use their imaginations as they retold the adventures of a hedgehog researching safe crossing places.

18 Pupils listen and focus well in the main, especially in the older classes. In the younger classes teachers occasionally allow noise to reach a level that affects pupils' concentration. The pace of lessons throughout the school is usually brisk. In class sessions, teachers hold pupils' attention well and involve them very successfully in answering questions and expressing their views. Pupils learn particularly successfully in Years 4, 5 and 6, where teaching expectations are consistently high and teaching assistance is deployed very effectively to support pupils with special educational needs. In the younger classes, the brisk pace and high expectations of the very good lessons contrasts with a slower pace, especially during recording activities that lack challenge. The daily, 30-minute, after-lunch session of reading and handwriting activities is less productive than it could be, if expectations and

structure were clearer. Pupils' books show an overuse of worksheet material that is not always well chosen for purpose. For example, colouring in the ancient Aztec leader and his Spanish visitor adds little to pupils' understanding of events.

Use of homework

19 Teachers throughout the school use homework well to promote pupils' basic skills in reading and mathematics. Older pupils develop research skills through the use of lengthier homework tasks. Parents give very good support in this area. Pupils who play musical instruments learn very successfully because of the very good mutual support of school and home.

Use of marking and assessment

20 Day-to-day assessment and marking is more effective in the older classes, where written comments clearly promote improvement. Teachers in younger classes have not agreed an effective approach for this age-group, where what is recorded in pupils' books does not reflect so well on the quality of teaching as that observed in teacher-pupil interactions in the classroom.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage

21 The particular strengths of teaching in the Foundation Stage are:

- Careful planning and organisation ensures well-focused learning and good use of time
- the thoughtful choice and expressive reading of texts promotes enjoyment of reading and good development of reading skills and strategies
- Very good use of questioning promotes very good listening, thinking and conversation.

22 The main areas for development are:

- the provision of opportunities for imaginative role play, creative activities and physical development for children in the Foundation Stage
- the careful selection of worksheet material to support or consolidate learning
- the development of the role of the teaching assistant (sometimes well deployed, but in whole class sessions sometimes underused).

Teaching in Years 1 to 3

23 The particular strengths of teaching in Years 1 to 3 are:

- Thorough planning, preparation and organisation of lessons
- Clear explanation of tasks and a good match of tasks to the pupils' abilities
- Very good teaching of reading and speaking and listening, through choice of texts, focus on letter sounds and word patterns and interesting question-and-answer sessions
- Occasional very well structured writing activities, especially in recent examples seen in Years 2 and 3

24 The main areas for development are:

- Consideration of the value of worksheets, colouring in, exercises unrelated to pupils' interests, and the time spent on these unproductive activities
- An increase in opportunities for pupils to write for a range of purposes and audiences, using 'writing frames' (framework suggestions to help pupils organise and sequence their thinking and writing) where necessary and just one or two short sentences to begin with
- The use of the after-lunch session
- The development of the assistants' roles during class lessons
- Ways of promoting improvement through day-to-day assessment comments and marking

Teaching in Years 4 to 6

25 The particular strengths in teaching in Years 4 to 6 are:

- The planning and organisation of literacy and numeracy,
- Very effective marking
- An exciting range of activities relevant to pupils' interest
- The deployment of teaching assistants to support pupils with special educational needs
- The exciting use of international links and the local environment to stimulate very good learning and produce work of a very high standard, especially in art
- The challenge to more able pupils results in their doing their best and reaching very high standards

26 The main area for improvement in Years 4 to 6 is:

- The development of a broader range of ICT skills and their use across a range of subjects

27 The teachers in Years 4 to 6 will also need to use their teaching skills and further apply the strategies introduced this year to promote enthusiasm for learning among boys currently in Year 3.

Teaching to ensure equality of access and opportunity

28 Teachers are careful to support boys and girls equally in their learning and there is no indication that either group is favoured in allocation of tasks, questioning or formation of groups. In English, mathematics and science teachers use ability grouping when planning and organising lessons to meet the needs of all pupils including those of different ages in the mixed age classes. Practical tasks in mathematics, science and other subjects provide further opportunities for pupils to work at their own level. At other times all pupils in the class may complete similar work and tasks achieving as much, and as well as they can, in the time available. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, supported by the very good leadership of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). Teachers work closely with the SENCO to devise tasks that will help pupils meet the targets in their individual education plans. Teaching assistants give good, and sometimes very good support to individuals and small groups of pupils. The school is particularly adept at recognising gifted and talented pupils. Teachers ensure that these pupils feel recognition and a sense of challenge. As a result, they achieve very successfully.

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

29 The school provides pupils in the Foundation Stage with a curriculum that is planned satisfactorily to reflect the areas of learning identified in national guidance for this age group. The cramped conditions in the classroom containing reception children restrict opportunities for free movement among activities and there is very limited space for setting these up. The outdoor area is also very small and there are few resources for outdoor physical activity. Nevertheless, the teacher makes satisfactory provision, organising activities and resources for the Foundation Stage alongside a timetable focused on the requirements of Year 1 pupils. A full-time assistant is deployed to support children's learning.

30 Overall the curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is broad, rich and relevant to their needs. It meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and places suitable emphasis on English and mathematics. Developments since the last inspection have taken account of changes in requirements and addressed fully the key issues relating to this area of their work. The school continues to enrich the curriculum and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding through after-school clubs, a wide range of visits and visitors and the very

good use it makes of its locality. Excellent links with both the local and wider communities support this further.

Development of the curriculum

31 Since the last inspection the school has successfully focused on the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies, introduced planning for the Foundation Stage based on the six areas of learning and adapted and developed its documentation for all other areas of the curriculum in the light of new requirements. It has selectively developed its own curricular documentation from guidance of the Curriculum and Qualifications Authority, local authority schemes and commercial packages to best suit the needs of its pupils. Teachers make good use of this documentation when planning their lessons. It is also shared and discussed with governors through their curriculum subcommittee meetings and during their regular visits to observe lessons.

32 Annual planning reviews take account of the needs of the pupils in the mixed-age classes for each subject. The needs and abilities of pupils in these classes are supported and addressed by the use of a two-year planning cycle in the Year 2/ 3 class and a three-year cycle in the Year 4/ 5/ 6 class. In English, mathematics and science the creation of a separate teaching group for Year 4 allows more focused delivery for the older pupils. This approach has addressed concerns raised in the last report about the allocation of time to subjects such as geography and history in Years 1 and 2 and design and technology in Years 3 to 6. However, the school still needs to be vigilant in ensuring that in these mixed-age classes sufficient time is given to all subjects during the course of the year and that pupils of all ages experience the expected programme of study in all subjects over their time in the school.

33 Good links are often made between subjects. Practical activities, visits or visitors are used well to excite pupils' interest and broaden their understanding. Examples include the project on St Tiggywinkles in Years 2 and 3 and the Strawberry Fayre in Years 4 to 6. Such activities are regular planned features of the curriculum and provide good reinforcement and extension of skills from a number of subject areas. Teachers are careful to ensure that individual subject skills are not lost when they do link subjects together under one theme. Although subjects may sometimes only be taught for short blocks of time, suitable emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' skills and understanding. This approach clearly makes learning fun and extends the good emphasis placed on using practical activities to support learning throughout the curriculum. The school has very good links with organisations and schools involved in the Uganda and European 'Comenius' projects. Pupils benefit from the greater understanding and awareness of their world that this provides. The very well planned annual European or international study weeks are good examples of this. This rich and stimulating range of opportunities is a strength of the school.

34 ICT is being used to support learning in other subjects, as for example older pupils researching ocean food webs in science and younger pupils practising counting in twos in mathematics. The school has plans to make wider use of ICT to support learning in other subjects consistently and systematically and overcome problems of computer access. Limited space also restricts the range of activities and equipment that can be used, particularly with older pupils, in design and technology and means that it is necessary for pupils to go off site for some physical education activities. The school works hard to overcome the limitations on physical education through use of the Abbey Sports Centre at Berinsfield for swimming, gymnastics and dance. It has also recognised the need to focus on boys' writing, particularly that of the younger ones, to ensure skills are suitably developed and to address the identified possibility of underachievement.

Strategies for teaching numeracy and literacy

35 In English and mathematics the clear detailed guidance of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy are being used well as the basis for planning work for pupils of different ages and abilities. Pupils often consolidate their numeracy and literacy skills as they employ them in accessing other tasks. Opportunities for this are often planned in other subjects, often in the context of work linked to one theme. Examples of this are the use of measurements and nets in design and technology and the linking of literacy texts to specific work in other subjects.

Equal opportunities

36 There is a very good commitment to equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by the teaching assistants and their teachers in accessing tasks and activities provided. Procedures for reviewing the provision for any pupils with statements of special educational need are fully in place. The process is very well organised. The school keeps careful note of pupils showing particular gifts and talents and ensures through review that these pupils are challenged suitably. Boys and girls have equal access to the full curriculum and to after-school activities.

Personal, social and health education

37 The school sees pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) as an important part of its work. A strong, existing programme of activities that includes work on diet, health, sex, drugs and personal safety is helping pupils develop a safe and healthy life style, gain confidence and interact with others. Good use is made of visits from the police and school nurse to support this work.

Extra-curricular and other activities including visits

38 Instructors, teachers and parent volunteers provide a good range of out-of-lesson clubs and activities in this small school. They include coaching in cricket and football, as well as tuition in piano, flute, clarinet and saxophone by visiting specialists. A good range of visits and visitors are used to enrich the curriculum. These have included local museums, an arboretum, theatre, poets, musicians and artists. An annual residential visit for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 provides good opportunities for outdoor and adventurous activities and work on history, geography and the environment at different venues each year. In the past there have also been overnight stays for pupils in Years 2 and 3.

Links with the community and partner institutions

39 Excellent links with both the local and wider communities support and enrich pupils' learning in an outstanding manner. Visitors from, and links with, a school in Uganda and through the Comenius Project provide unique opportunities for enriching pupils' learning, as does the acquisition of a temporary teacher from New Zealand. Pupils e-mail a questionnaire to peers in New Zealand, learn about Bethel School in Uganda and sample cooking from African and European countries. Businesses and the local community support the school and donate funds, further extending pupils' opportunities. Pupils and staff assist in hosting the Annual Strawberry Festival and other community events. The school fosters very close links with the church. During regular studies of the history of the village, surrounding buildings are utilised fully as an integral part of the planned curriculum.

40 Good links with local schools through the Icknield partnership and the local small schools' cluster extend the range of opportunities available to pupils. Pupils regularly mix with others at sporting fixtures and other events and teachers meet colleagues for training sessions. Although a number of different schools are involved, there is a programme of visits by staff, taster sessions, and exchange of information prior to pupils' transfer to secondary education.

Provision for pupils' personal development

41 The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This is a significant improvement on the provision reported at the time of the previous inspection, particularly for cultural development, when there were limited opportunities for multicultural awareness.

Provision for pupils' spiritual development

42 Pupils' spiritual development is very good. The overall provision reflects the school's Christian foundation and nurturing environment, and places pupils at the heart of the school's work. The caring ethos helps pupils to feel valued and to accept the ideas and values of others.

43 Spirituality is promoted very effectively through religious education and assemblies, some of which are taken by the rector of the church. In assemblies, pupils learn to reflect on their own feelings and behaviour, and this encourages them to think about the effect of their actions on others and how they might help them. For example, pupils annually participate in 'Operation Christmas Child' where they fill shoe boxes with toys and gifts for children less fortunate than themselves. This helps them to be more aware of how important their love can be to others. Opportunities are also taken for pupils to share in the wonder of nature and the world they live in during trips within the local area and a study in the school grounds. In art sessions, they develop views about the beauty of flowers and trees as they produce detailed observational drawings and paintings from within the school garden. Other opportunities provided in art and music encourage the appreciation of colour and form. This is particularly demonstrated in pupils' pictures of local houses, recreating the beauty of very old buildings. Teachers enable pupils to express their own feelings and emotions. As pupils entered the hall for an assembly, they listened with great admiration and appreciation to a Year 3 pupil playing 'Summertime' on her flute. This created a calm and reflective atmosphere for the start of the assembly.

Moral development

44 Moral development is fostered very well, with consistent guidance and example from adults about good behaviour and clear teaching of the principles of right and wrong. Expectations for pupils' moral development pervade much of the teaching and pupils know what is expected of them. As a result, they have a well-developed sense of right and wrong, which is consistently reinforced through support and encouragement.

45 Pupils' moral development is fostered through many areas of the curriculum and aspects of school life. Again, assemblies are used well to encourage pupils to consider moral issues, such as the importance of forgiveness. Pupils are expected to take responsibility for their actions and all understand the school's behaviour policy. From their behaviour towards each other, the respect they show for the feelings of others and the care they take of the school environment, pupils are clearly developing a good understanding of right and wrong.

Social development

46 A strong feature of the school's work is the way it fosters good relationships and very good social development. It offers pupils of all ages opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative within a setting where a good sense of community has developed. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to interact both in lessons and socially outside the classroom. Teachers ensure that groups maintain a good gender or ability mix. For example, in a Year 5 and 6 literacy session where the pupils had to work in groups to produce a radio broadcast set in the 1960's, the teacher made sure that less confident pupils were well supported by others. She discussed with the class how everyone should be involved to ensure that no-one dominated within a group. As a result, all pupils felt equally involved and valued for their input. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to take responsibility. All act as monitors within the classroom, returning the register and giving out

books for example. Older pupils look after younger ones and they also assist in assemblies to ensure that all runs smoothly.

47 During the highly successful field trip each year, older pupils develop their ability to overcome fear and extend their independence through activities like abseiling and canoeing. Social skills are developed further through activities demanding teamwork and individual pupils gain great self-esteem as they succeed with many new challenges.

Cultural development

48 The provision the school makes for the cultural development of the pupils is excellent. Visitors are frequently invited into the school to share their cultural traditions and customs. Through very strong international links the pupils at Ewelme have regular contact with schools in Sweden, Italy, Greece, Poland, Romania, Spain, New Zealand and Uganda. A new link with Japan has just been established and pupils are excited about their first Japanese visitor arriving soon. Pupils also develop their cultural awareness through events like the recent African drumming workshops and working with local artists studying African art before reproducing their own African masks. They have regular opportunities to gain awareness of their own cultural heritage through literature, music, art and crafts. A visit to the Arboretum gave pupils the opportunity to participate in willow weaving, a tradition of the local area. All pupils at Ewelme regularly celebrate the differences and similarities in cultures both in this country and around the world.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Health, Safety and Care of all pupils

49 The school makes very good provision for the care, health, safety and security of all pupils. The comprehensive health and safety policy provides a good framework and is supplemented well by detailed guidelines in specific areas such as educational visits. Equipment is tested regularly by experts from the parent company of the local Ewelme Trust. They also provide expert health and safety inspections each year and report their findings to the senior staff and governors. There are four trained first-aiders and any accidents are recorded fully.

Procedures for child protection

50 There is a good policy for child protection and clear procedures are in place. All staff are briefed fully and are always updated after the headteacher attends reviews of these procedures by the local authority. Staff have also received training in bereavement counselling. They all know, and have some teaching responsibility, for all children, so that pupils can talk to any member of teaching or support staff, and do so without embarrassment. The educational psychologist and local social services team work very effectively with the school.

Measures to promote good behaviour and personal development

51 There is a clear policy to help to ensure good behaviour throughout the school. The detailed procedures make clear the responsibilities of teachers and support staff in managing the pupils and dealing with the occasional incidents of unacceptable behaviour. The reward systems are popular with the children. The school's monitoring includes feedback on behaviour on school trips. Letters from local companies compliment the children on their behaviour on their coaches. The unacceptability of bullying has a high profile within the school. Any incidents between pupils are dealt with very quickly. The headteacher and parents are involved appropriately but usually these tend to be one-off incidents.

Measures to promote good attendance

52 Although attendance is very good the staff monitor absences very closely. There are frequent discussion and letters to parents from staff discouraging unauthorised absences and term-time holidays. The education welfare officer visits twice a term and gives very good support to school. Attendance is also monitored rigorously by the headteacher and she discusses with parents any long-term illnesses and requests for unauthorised absences or holidays in term-time.

Improvements in assessment since the last inspection

53 Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to review and develop effective and manageable assessment procedures. There is now a well-developed system of assessment in place. It includes regular formal assessments in English, mathematics and science and teachers' ongoing assessments in all subjects of the curriculum. Teachers conscientiously maintain good quality assessment records and make good use of these and their detailed knowledge of their pupils when planning for the next stages of their learning. Assessment information is used well to monitor the progress of year groups and particular groups of pupils and identify areas that may require attention. This information is regularly shared with governors. Assessment information is used well to complete comprehensive annual written reports. Overall, there has been considerable improvement since the last inspection, when no formal systems for assessing or recording pupils' attainment and progress were in place and governors were not involved in the process.

Developing manageable procedures

54 The headteacher has worked closely with teachers to develop and implement a good range of robust assessment procedures that provide the school with a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils and cohorts. A strong pattern of end-of-unit assessments and tests in English, mathematics and science is a central part of this process. This information is supplemented well by teachers' ongoing regular informal assessment of pupils through marking, discussion and observation. Assessment information is recorded on planning sheets, teacher records, pupils' individual record sheets and attainment profiles. Lesson and curricular plans contain detail of the assessment focus and possible assessment tasks. Assessments made during the Foundation Stage are carefully recorded and used as the basis for future predictions and comparisons of performance. Assessment data for English, mathematics and science is collated and presented in a clear format that allows tracking and comparison of pupils' progress over time. The school is now trying to ensure that all teachers have the same understanding of pupils' attainment levels in subjects such as ICT by developing a portfolio of pupils' work with examples for each level.

Use of assessment information

55 Good use is made of assessment data and national test results to identify and compare the performance of pupils with others both locally and nationally and to identify areas for development. A good example of this is the recent focus on boys' writing to address a possible area of underachievement and to raise standards. The school has plans to purchase a software package that would allow quicker, easier and more detailed analysis of assessment data. This would support the good systems already in place for generating target predictions and comparing them with actual outcomes. Data is used well to check whether pupils are doing as well as expected and whether differences between boys' and girls' attainment are linked to individual pupils' gifts, talents and special educational needs or whether there are factors to do with the school's teaching styles. All this information is being shared with governors and is helping to identify and inform the school's priorities for improvement.

56 Detailed annual reports provide good information for parents about how well pupils are doing and identify areas for improvement. Whilst parents appreciate the quality of these, a

significant number justifiably feel that an annual opportunity following receipt of these to discuss pupils' progress with their teacher does not keep them sufficiently well informed. Older pupils are involved in suggesting targets for improvement and teachers occasionally refer to pupils' targets in their marking of work. However, this process is still at an early stage of development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57 The school's partnership with parents is a strength and has developed well since the previous inspection.

Parents' views of the school

58 In a relatively high return of the questionnaires parents expressed considerable satisfaction in most areas of school provision and these positive views were reinforced at the parents' meeting. All parents feel that teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. Almost all feel that behaviour in the school is good, that their children like school and are making good progress and that the school expects their children to work hard and is helping them become more mature. They also feel that the school works closely with parents and most would feel comfortable approaching school. The evidence from the inspection strongly supports these positive views.

59 Almost two-fifths of the parents who responded to the questionnaires feel that they are not well informed about how their children are getting on. The teachers are very accessible and are happy to give information but there is only one consultation evening during the year and this is held after the publishing of the reports in the summer term. The staff accept that it would be desirable to offer additional opportunities for consultation during the year.

60 Parents of children with special educational needs receive clear information each term on their children's progress in the form of written reviews and targets. Parents are invited to review meetings, but in practice few attend. Parents sign to say they have been informed about their children's individual education programmes, but few are yet involved in discussing, together with teacher and child, their children's future targets or reviewing the success of previous strategies.

61 Approximately a fifth of the parents feel that the children do not get the right amount of homework and the school does not provide an interesting range of additional activities. The inspection evidence does not support these views. The homework policy was sent to parents this year and they were invited to comment. There is a progressive increase in the time set for homework as children get older. The school provides a rich additional curriculum, particularly through visits to other establishments and visiting artists, theatre and musical groups and events.

The information provided by the school

62 The school sends home regular, frequent, informative letters and newsletters, which cover a wide range of topics, dates and staff news. Parents are not routinely given written information on curriculum topics for each class during the year, although some would welcome this. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are of good quality and give essential information on the main procedures and activities in the school. All of the teachers take the children outside at the end of the school day and this provides good opportunities for them to talk to parents. Both staff and parents use these opportunities well. The staff make a point of seeing all parents informally on at least one occasion during the first two terms.

63 The annual pupil reports are very good and have improved considerably since the previous inspection. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are covered in good detail with comments tailored to the individual child. These include strengths, weaknesses and targets for improvement and development. Levels of attainment are given in all years. The remaining subjects, general progress, behaviour, personal development, attitudes, motivation, perseverance and concentration are also covered in good detail.

Parents' support

64 The good home-school agreement is signed and returned by all parents each year. Parents have also been willing to give financial support for an additional part-time teacher through a 'Gift Aid' scheme. There is very good attendance and support at all school events, including induction evenings and information evenings on national tests (SATs) and individual subjects of the curriculum.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

65 The school has sustained the overall good quality of leadership and management successfully since the last inspection. Several aspects of leadership are particularly strong. Some aspects of management are satisfactory.

Leadership

66 The headteacher sets a clear educational direction and is supported well by the governing body and staff. This is a strength of the school, which has a very positive Christian ethos. It focuses on developing pupils' care for each other and their understanding of the world as well as challenging them to achieve as well as possible. The school has won local authority and national recognition through its excellent international links with Uganda and a number of European countries. These enrich the lives of all pupils, provide outstanding cultural development and bring alive learning in several subjects. The headteacher also ensures that staff and pupils make full use of the school's historical setting. Older pupils' work linked to local historical studies and in observational sketching and painting is of high quality. The headteacher has also developed and maintained excellent community links, involving all pupils in annual events that benefit the school and village.

67 The school received an achievement award last year in recognition of improved results in national tests at age eleven and the headteacher has received recognition of her strong leadership through a Teacher Training Association Award for leadership and management. A member of staff is the local education authority's adviser on working with gifted and talented pupils. The school's work in this field shows a strong emphasis on recognising pupils' abilities and presenting challenging opportunities for them to develop their gifts and talents.

Management

68 Procedures for teachers' performance management are fully in place. The school has a good programme of professional development, linked to teachers' individual requirements and those identified by the school improvement plan. As staff numbers have increased, the headteacher has delegated management of subjects to teachers. These co-ordination roles are at an early stage, but are developing well.

Governors' role

69 The governing body plays an active and very supportive role. The chair meets frequently with the headteacher and most governors visit the school to observe lessons, using agreed protocols. Governors have addressed fully the issues raised at the last inspection. Tasks are delegated effectively to subcommittees and the procedures of the full governing body are efficient. All statutory requirements are met.

Monitoring and improvement planning

70 The school's procedures for evaluating its performance and effecting improvements are satisfactory. The headteacher monitors pupils' progress carefully and reports year group issues to governors. The monitoring of teaching methods has been effective in ensuring all staff look at ways of raising boys' achievement in writing, for example, but not in developing a professionally agreed approach to the use of worksheets or exercises. Too many recording tasks for younger pupils lack purpose and challenge. The provision of a very small classroom for the youngest children, which includes both reception and Year 1, makes it extremely difficult to meet the demands of the Foundation Stage for active learning and a balance of directed and chosen activities. The school improvement plan does not yet contain reference to strategic planning to address the local education authority's decision to admit children at the beginning of the year in which they become five, starting in September 2004.

71 The school improvement plan lists a series of aspects for attention. These include short tasks and longer-term developments. Top priorities, such as the need to improve standards in writing and introduce strategies to motivate boys, are cited, but the outline is not supported by a clear programme of action that governors can monitor. The success criteria are not always clearly measurable. The summary of areas for development in the governors' report contains no reference to the key areas requiring attention. These aspects of management are not sufficiently sharp to ensure that the whole school addresses the prioritised areas and is clear about what has been achieved.

An inclusive school

72 The school's very strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all its pupils is reflected well in its work and the care it takes of them. It seeks to ensure, by monitoring, that all groups of pupils including boys and girls enjoy the same equality of opportunity and access to all areas of its work and life. Good examples of this are monitoring the take up of clubs and activities and a Christian ethos in which 'everybody takes part in everything'. Practical outcomes of this are illustrated well by parents' recollections of how an American child with Down's Syndrome was welcomed and quickly assimilated into the life of the school. However, despite obvious intentions the medieval building with its steep stairs prevents disabled access and Grade 1 listing prevents modification.

73 The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs and those with identified gifts and talents is very good. Clear procedures ensure regular reviews and plans are shared with all class teachers and assistants involved. Review procedures ensure that parents are kept fully informed. The school is seeking greater parental involvement in the process of review and setting targets.

Staffing

74 The school is well staffed with teachers suitably qualified for the age range of pupils. The experienced learning support assistants provide appropriate help for individuals and small groups in classes. Several visiting teachers give instrumental lessons each week and their input is highly valued. There are good procedures for the induction of new staff, who feel welcomed and well supported. Performance management is in place for all staff and the governing body takes responsibility for the performance management of the headteacher. The office staff, midday supervisor, cleaning and caretaking staff are valued members of the school community. All staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are fully involved in the work of the school, working well together as a supportive team, helping to promote good provision.

Accommodation

75 Pupils and staff at Ewelme are housed in the oldest existing school building in England. The Grade 1 listed building is part of a trust founded by Alice Chaucer. Within the original school building there is one classroom, a small hall, offices and a staffroom. In 1999 an

extension was built to accommodate the growing number of pupils on roll. As part of the conditions for listed buildings, the rooms had to be built to certain dimensions and the two classrooms in the extension are very small. It is to the credit of the headteacher, staff and governors that they continue to provide effective education in this historic but very cramped accommodation. A small annex, detached from the main school, is regularly used as an additional classroom to enable the older pupils to be taught separately for some subjects. Storage remains the main difficulty for staff and this was highlighted at the time of the last inspection. However, given the limitations of the listed regulations, it is very difficult to improve storage space and the school copes well with the challenges it faces. The classrooms in the extension are too small to accommodate the additional resources needed to implement the Foundation Stage curriculum, although good use is made of a small courtyard for outside activities. The school uses its accommodation efficiently in the main, although the hall is empty for large parts of the week. Headteacher, staff and governors continually review the use of all available areas to ensure effective teaching and learning.

76 The grounds are adequate and offer good views over the surrounding countryside. There is a reasonable-sized playground, a good-sized playing field and a smaller area for quieter play. The school has worked hard to ensure that all the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. However, work in design and technology and physical education are sometimes limited because of the lack of space to store resources. Good use is made of a sports centre a short drive from Ewelme to ensure adequate provision in physical education.

Learning resources

77 Resources for learning are generally good and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Resources for ICT and music are particularly good and effectively support learning in these subjects. Resources for the youngest children's physical development need attention.

Financial planning

78 Financial planning and control are good and have improved since the previous inspection. The staff and governors, with the very good support of the bursar, produce balanced budgets which reflect the school's development priorities each year. The financial planning takes account of longer-term initiatives such as the current employment of an additional teacher for four years to split the largest class for lessons. The school is over-subscribed and classroom sizes limit further expansion. The reserve at the beginning of the current financial year was approximately ten per cent of annual expenditure and this is a reasonable level for a small school.

Principles of best value

79 Overall the school applies the principles of best value well in its financial planning and expenditure. In particular, there is a good level of consultation between staff and governors to establish priorities for improvement and to allocate resources. There is also a considerable degree of challenge. The school benefits considerably from the close relationship with the Ewelme Trust, which owns the grounds and premises, and the Diocese. In addition to the building developments managed by the Trust the parent company provides specialists to conduct health and safety and equipment checks in the school each year. The school also receives generous support from two local companies, which are underwriting the costs of an additional teacher for four years. The parents and the Friends of Ewelme School make very generous donations each year. The school welcomes students and these provide valuable additional support in lessons. The school buys back a number of services from the local authority and these are reviewed regularly to ensure good value for money. These ensure full competitive tendering. There is very good teamwork and the job sharing is efficient and effective.

Administration and financial control

80 The very good routines in place help to ensure that the school runs very smoothly. The staff make good use of information technology to help with the administration. There are very good financial controls and the regular procedures and records are managed well by the secretary and the bursar. The governors and headteacher actively monitor the expenditure during the year. All earmarked funds are used for the intended purposes. The latest auditor's report found the records and procedures to be in good order and there were only minor recommendations, which have been acted upon.

Value for money

81 The unit costs, attainment of the pupils on entry to school and their socio-economic circumstances are above average. Taking these factors into account, together with the good teaching and learning standards achieved, the school is giving good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

82 In order to build on current strengths, raise standards and improve the quality of education provided, the headteacher, governors and staff need to:

- (1) Reduce the time spent by pupils from ages four to eight on completing worksheets and exercises; also review the value and purpose of worksheets currently in use
(Paragraph references: 5, 6, 9, 18, 22, 24, 70, 90, 92, 98, 103, 105, 106, 114, 122, 142, 145)
- (2) Ensure that younger pupils spend more time communicating in writing for a range of purposes
(Paragraph references: 5, 6, 24, 90, 98, 103, 106)
- (3) Set a clear, limited number of priorities for school improvement and detail how these will be addressed, how to measure the school's success in achieving its aims and how to check progress towards the targets set
(Paragraph reference: 71)
- (4) Increase opportunities for parents to be involved formally in reviewing their children's progress
(Paragraph references: 56, 59)

83 Governors may also wish to include the following area for inclusion in the action plan:

- The creation of space for children in the Foundation Stage, particularly in the light of the forthcoming change in local education authority admissions procedures
(Paragraph references: 3, 22, 29, 70, 75, 77, 84-95)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	19
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	19

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	3	10	5	0	0	0
Percentage	5	16	53	26	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	89
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	6
<i>FTE means full-time equivalent.</i>	
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	1
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

The attainment statistics for Key Stages 1 and 2 have been omitted because 11 pupils or fewer took the tests in the most recent reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	85	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.7
Average class size	22.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	85

Financial information

Financial year	2003
	£
Total income	231824
Total expenditure	218094
Expenditure per pupil	2507
Balance brought forward from previous year	23184
Balance carried forward to next year	13730

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0.6
<hr/>	
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	91
Number of questionnaires returned	56

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	27	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	32	0	0	9
Behaviour in the school is good.	66	34	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	48	18	2	0
The teaching is good.	77	23	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	27	34	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	20	7	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	79	20	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	43	54	2	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	75	25	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	70	23	2	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	41	18	0	2

Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number and may therefore not total exactly 100.

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

84 Children start school in the term that they celebrate their fifth birthday. Some spend a year in the reception class, others a term. The local education authority is changing its procedures from September 2004, when all pupils will be eligible to start school at the beginning of the academic year in which they are five. This will have implications for Ewelme, which need to be considered in the light of the already cramped conditions.

85 Children's attainment on entry varies year on year and is wide ranging in each year group. In the current year it is above average. Children are articulate and many already have considerable pre-school experience of social settings other than home. Children make good progress overall and most reach the early learning goals before the end of the reception year, beginning work on early stages of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Children's special educational needs or their gifts and talents are identified early and children thus identified are well supported. The teacher keeps careful assessment records, using both Oxfordshire detailed records and the recently-introduced national assessment system. The school has broadly maintained standards achieved by the end of the Foundation Stage since the last inspection.

86 Ewelme is a victim of its own success. The school's popularity means that it has more pupils than it has room for. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is limited by the nature of the buildings and grounds. The room currently used by reception children and shared with Year 1 pupils is too small to allow children ready access to materials or to allow the teacher to set up a range of typical areas of learning for children of this age. The outdoor area is small and there are few resources for outdoor play. Staff do their best within the conditions to provide opportunity for children to engage in each area of learning, but provision for physical and creative development especially is restricted.

Personal, social and emotional development

87 Teaching in this area of learning is satisfactory. Children reach the early learning goals by the time they start Year 1. They make sound progress in the main, settling quickly into school. Those starting in the summer term benefit from the role models of children who began earlier in the year. They soon get to know the school routines. Teacher and assistant organise a range of opportunities for children to collaborate in pairs and small groups and to participate in lessons with the whole class. It is more difficult to create opportunities for children to choose and to develop independence. The room size and the sharing of a timetable geared more to Year 1 restrict children's choices. Teacher and assistant do their best in a difficult situation. The teacher has to create a temporary role-play area, as there is no room for a permanent one. Resources that need to be available for children to access have to be provided rather than selected by children. Resources that are accessible to children are squashed into a cupboard. The structured flow of self-initiated and teacher-initiated play and learning activities advocated by the Foundation Stage curriculum alongside teacher-directed activities is not evident. Children sustain concentration in the way they tackle tasks set, but they have less opportunity to organise themselves. When given time to play and use construction toys or sand and water in the outdoor area, children were not observed developing conversation with an adult other than when the adult was in a direct teaching situation. They rely on the teacher or assistant to initiate activities. Children all have previous experience of playgroup or pre-school. They manage their own personal hygiene and help each other don aprons for instance. They have a good understanding of what is right and wrong.

Communication, language and literacy

88 Children reach the early learning goals in this area before the end of the reception year. Teaching and learning are good in the development of early speaking and listening skills and of reading and the enjoyment of books. Teaching is satisfactory in the development of early writing skills.

89 The teacher plans literacy lessons carefully in the mixed-age setting, deploying the teaching assistant to support reception children during the group activity time. Children listened and concentrated well in the lesson observed, showing good understanding as the teacher interspersed her reading of a West African tale with well-phrased questions. When running through the story afterwards, it was clear that everyone had followed, as some of the youngest children described events from the story. Children explain themselves clearly in sentences. The teacher provides some opportunity for role play and independent play, but this is inhibited by space and by sharing the small room with Year 1 following the National Curriculum timetable. No imaginative conversation was heard alongside children's play in the outdoor area during the inspection and no role play was observed. This inhibits the progress they make.

90 Children have made a good start to reading. They enjoy talking about the stories and almost all know their letter sounds and read simple texts. Higher attainers are recognised and the teacher ensures that they have access to books that are both enjoyable and challenging. Children's home-school reading diaries show that children regularly enjoy reading with their parents at home. Children learn to hold a pencil correctly and practise letter patterns, although this activity sometimes lacks focused supervision. Most children form letters well, but a few need close support. Children all write their own names. Occasionally they express themselves in writing, as in short comments on their visit to Stratford Butterfly Farm. They spend too much time filling in letters and words in exercises, however.

Mathematical development

91 Children make good progress in this area of learning and reach the early learning goals before the end of their reception year. The teaching is sound, with an emphasis on practical activities and simple recording. Children develop mathematical vocabulary by talking about the mathematical activities as they undertake them. Their books show good attention to simple recording of counting, matching and sorting activities. Children count forwards and backwards to ten. Several count objects well beyond ten. They recognise numbers and write them correctly. Higher attainers find various ways of making ten, including using different coins to make 10p. All children recognise and name squares, triangles and circles. They compare different-sized containers to see which holds 'more' or 'less'. They order boxes from the 'heaviest' to the 'lightest'. They gain an early understanding of symmetry, painting and folding to create butterfly pictures. Some use is made of ICT programs to develop children's early mathematical understanding.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

92 Children make good progress in this area of learning. They reach the early learning goals before the end of the reception year. Teaching is good in the way the range of interesting activities are introduced and discussed, but the ways of recording are too often teacher-directed, with overuse of colouring in or completion of worksheet tasks. Children develop their knowledge and understanding of the world through activities they undertake alongside pupils in Year 1. The activities are sometimes thoughtfully matched to reception children's

need to explore through play. For example, children used a model island created from sand to add farm buildings and animals following a story about Katie Morag on Struay and discussion of what they could see on large photographs of the Isle of Coll. They then played a game led by the teaching assistant to match different tools to different workers. Year 1 pupils accessed a website and printed pictures of features on the island, but little evidence was found of children in the reception year using the computer to support their learning.

93 During the current half-term, children are learning about minibeasts. They follow the life-cycle of the butterfly and housefly as their teacher explains these, using a big book with large illustrations very effectively. Children have learnt about the weather and used symbols to keep a record. They have discussed 'an event I remember' to develop the concept of 'the past'. They have learnt about events in the past, but the record of their discoveries about the invention of hot air balloons and the printing press is just two coloured-in worksheets. The recording exercise limited rather than enhanced children's learning. Children have discussed light sources, listing candles, lighthouses and the sun. They have linked their understanding about light and shadow in science with the idea of light as a symbol in religious education. They have sampled Ugandan food, and talked about special foods. They have enjoyed discovering about religious and cultural celebrations, including Chinese New Year and St David's Day. They use construction kits, particularly in the outdoor area, to develop early skills in design and technology. The majority of the work is teacher-directed and this limited teaching style stems largely from the restricted space available.

Physical development

94 It was not possible to make a judgement on children's attainment in this area of learning other than through the teacher's assessment records. Children reach the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. This is a result of opportunities provided by parents outside school as well as through the school's provision of a weekly visit to a local leisure centre. The timetable does not seek to offer daily opportunities for physical development. Children attend a weekly physical education and swimming lesson at a nearby leisure centre, but current arrangements do not offer regular daily physical development outdoors, except during play and lunchtimes. There are no wheeled toys and the school's climbing apparatus is on the field some distance from the classroom. Children develop manual dexterity satisfactorily through regular use of pencils, scissors and malleable materials. It was not possible to judge the quality of teaching in this area.

Creative development

95 Children achieve satisfactorily in this area of learning and reach the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Teaching is sound. Children receive a range of opportunities for creative activities, but these are mainly adult-directed. Space limits provision for imaginative play, although children have regular access to the small outdoor area and the teacher has devised a screen to enable children to engage in role play on occasion. The room is too small to set up permanent, distinct areas for role play or creative activities, however. The teacher organises painting, printing and collage-making, but this has to be quite carefully directed because of the limited space available. Children have little opportunity to access their own materials and make choices. Children show good control when using paint and printing materials. No singing or music-making was observed during the inspection except in assemblies, where children joined in readily with the rest of the school, led very ably by their teacher.

Strengths

- *Development of early speaking and listening and reading*
- *Good organisation and planning in the mixed-age setting*
- *Very good use of questioning*
- *Good home/school links for developing early literacy*
- *Assessment*

Areas for development

- *Extend opportunities for physical and creative development, imaginative play and the use of ICT*
- *Reduction in the use of worksheets and colouring activities*

ENGLISH

96 Standards at age eleven are average overall. Speaking and listening skills are well above average. Reading is above average, with several pupils showing high attainment. Writing standards are average, but again several pupils exhibit standards that are above average. A very small number of pupils with special educational needs perform at a standard below average, but they make good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans. Pupils of all abilities achieve well, with higher attainers making very good progress overall through Key Stage 2. Last year's results in national tests at age eleven also show average attainment in English, with a mixed ability year group similar to that of the current Year 6.

97 Standards in speaking and listening and in reading at age seven are well above average. They have been consistently well above average in reading in recent years. In 2000 and 2001 they were in the top five per cent nationally. Standards were well above the national average and in line with those of similar schools last year. In writing, standards are average in the current year. Last year they were well below average and in line with those of similar schools. In the previous two years they were well above average. Pupils of all abilities achieve well in speaking and listening and in reading during their first few years at school. In writing, pupils are not achieving as well as they could.

98 Overall, standards show good improvement in most aspects of English throughout the school since the last inspection, when they were average in all aspects of the subject at the end of both key stages. The school is alert to the need to focus on improving standards in writing. Pupils' reading in the current Year 2 is much better than their writing. Last year's national test results at age seven showed significant difference between very good achievement in reading and poor achievement in writing. This is partially explained by the fact that standards nationally are better in reading at age seven than in writing, and also by the particular special educational needs of the pupils. It is clear, however, that whereas the teaching of speaking and listening and reading is good, some aspects of the teaching of writing do not promote successful learning. In particular, teachers from reception to Year 3 have made too much use of worksheet material that is undemanding and have not encouraged pupils sufficiently to convey their own original ideas, descriptions, comments and thoughts in writing.

99 The school has already taken some steps to address low achievement in writing, following last year's national test results in Year 2. The school has introduced the use of cursive handwriting from reception and the special educational needs co-ordinator took Year 3 pupils for a series of writing lessons. The long-term supply teacher taking Years 2 and 3 has also created a number of genuine purposes for writing during the current term. The teaching staff have also attended training on improving boys' achievement in writing, as the pupils underachieving in writing in Year 3 are boys. The introduction of an additional part-time

teacher to take Year 4 has also had a significant impact on improving writing, though until now in a situation where standards were already very good. High levels of staffing during literacy lessons in Years 4, 5 and 6 and very good organisation and planning ensure that work is closely targeted to pupils' ages and abilities.

100 Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they receive very well-planned support. More able pupils achieve very well because teachers challenge and extend them very successfully, especially in Years 4, 5 and 6. Boys and girls achieve equally well in most year groups. In those where standards achieved by boys and girls differ, the reason lies in the special educational needs of the different gender groups. The school is, however, alert to the need to adapt teaching to challenge all boys in Year 3 and to keep a close check on the progress made by boys in this year group.

Speaking and listening

101 Pupils' achievement in speaking and listening is very good throughout the school because teachers consistently encourage discussion in all subjects. Many varied activities contribute significantly to the high standards achieved. Pupils in reception and Year 1 thoroughly enjoyed predicting what might happen next as they listened to their teacher expressively reading a West African story. Similarly, pupils in Years 2 and 3 discussed how to write from the point of view of a hedgehog after listening to their teacher's reading of a Dick King-Smith excerpt. Year 4 pupils showed extremely high debating skills as they challenged their teacher, in the form of a little green man, with arguments as to why they should not become his fodder. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 create radio broadcasts, acting as interviewers and interviewees following their research into the history of 1960s pop and fashion. Pupils throughout the school benefit from participation in theatrical performances. Many pupils show a broad vocabulary and speak very confidently, explaining what they want to say in detail. They are extremely articulate and clearly benefit from the quality of conversation at home and school.

Reading

102 Most pupils read their chosen books expressively and with understanding. The standard of pupils' reading is well above average in all year groups. A few pupils who find reading difficult receive very good support. Almost all enjoy reading, but a few boys are less enthusiastic and need encouragement to boost their self-esteem in this area. All pupils take books home to read. Parents give very good support in the teaching of reading, sharing books with their children and writing comments in their reading diaries. Younger pupils show good knowledge of letter sounds and use contextual clues well. Older pupils talk freely about the characters and the plot in books they are currently reading. Almost all are widely read and have favourite authors and books. They know how to use contents, index and glossary to access information in non-fiction books.

Writing

103 Younger pupils are learning to form letters carefully as a result of handwriting practice using the new style introduced this year. A few pupils do not form letters correctly. Several pupils in Year 3 are not yet using joined writing. The use of exercises and worksheets up to Year 3 has a detrimental effect on pupils' writing in a number of ways. One of these is on handwriting, especially when the writing on the worksheets is small and there is little room for pupils to enter words or sentences. In pupils' books up to Year 3, few examples of original writing for a genuine audience or purpose were seen. Exercises and spelling tests predominate. These have little value without the regular opportunity to write for a purpose. One very good example of purposeful writing was in the lesson seen with Years 2 and 3, where most pupils thoroughly enjoyed imagining themselves as hedgehogs discovering a safe place to cross the road. A few pupils need greater support in organising their writing, by using 'writing frames' for instance, in order to build their confidence at just completing one or

two sentences and feeling a sense of achievement. Some of these pupils compare themselves too readily with more able pupils and lose heart as they see how much their peers achieve and how fluently they write. Most pupils write in sentences using capital letters and full stops by Year 2. Most enjoy using a wide vocabulary and are not afraid to attempt to spell difficult words. The school has a consistent focus on spelling, but needs to match the challenge to pupils' abilities. For example, two pupils completed the same test in their books: one scored one and the other ten out of ten.

104 Pupils in Years 4 to 6 benefit from their teachers' positive focus on planning and organising their original pieces of writing in a variety of contexts. Pupils create story plans and settings before writing stories. They produce book reviews, write letters and compose their own poems, often adapting the style of a particular author, including Shakespeare, as they create 'Witches' Cauldron' poems. To support this writing, teachers give very good focus on grammar, punctuation and spelling, teaching and consolidating these skills in context. Marking is extremely effective for the older pupils. They know what the marking focus is and the use of stickers and comments promotes improvement. Many pupils in Years 4 to 6 clearly enjoy writing and develop their skills to a level well above average. Many pupils use a wide and interesting vocabulary. They use paragraphs and punctuate accurately. Many use word-processing to draft, edit and present their work attractively. The quality of handwriting is variable, reflecting previous inconsistencies in teaching. Much handwriting by older pupils is fluent and very well formed. Some, in Year 3 in particular, shows pupils needing further support.

105 The quality of teaching and learning in lessons seen is good overall throughout the school and includes very good and excellent features. The teaching and learning reflected in pupils' written work is good in Years 4, 5 and 6 and includes some that is good with the younger pupils. However, the overuse of worksheets and exercises in Years 1 to 3 has clearly resulted in some unsatisfactory teaching and learning during the time spent on these pursuits. Strengths in the teaching include:

- The careful choice of texts and very good use of questioning to promote pupils' thinking and to develop their speaking and listening skills;
- The teaching of reading, including very successful involvement of parents;
- Very good planning, preparation and organisation of lessons, so that pupils focus quickly;
- Clear instruction and explanation of tasks with good class control;
- Very good challenge for higher attainers in all aspects of English in Years 4, 5 and 6;
- Very good marking comments written in older pupils' books;
- Very good use of opportunities to extend and apply literacy skills in the context of other subjects in Years 4, 5 and 6;

106 Areas needing attention are:

- The use of worksheets and exercises with younger pupils;
- The need to give more time to original writing with younger pupils;
- handwriting and presentation;
- the use of strategies to build self-esteem among pupils, particularly boys, who feel they are not doing as well as their more able peers;

107 A focus on writing is included in the school's improvement plan. Improvements in staffing and class organisation have benefited older pupils. The newly-appointed literacy co-ordinator is aware of the areas that need attention. The subject is well resourced. There are few examples of annotated writing to help teachers gauge pupils' levels of skill and what needs to be done to improve. Targets are set in some classes, but the school has not yet devised an agreed policy for reviewing pupils' progress and sharing targets with them and their parents. Assessment for reading is good.

Strengths

- *Standards in speaking and listening and reading*
- *Teaching of these aspects of English*

Areas for development

- *Reduce the use of worksheets and exercises among younger pupils*
- *Purposeful writing opportunities for younger pupils*
- *The sharing of reviews and targets with pupils and their parents*
- *Building self-esteem and positive attitudes among pupils, especially boys, who feel they are not achieving as well as they should*
- *Handwriting*

MATHEMATICS

108 In the 2002 tests standards in Year 2 and Year 6 were well above average. Over the past few years an increasing proportion of pupils in Years 2 and 6 have attained the higher level 3 or level 5 respectively and last year two pupils in Year 6 achieved Level 6. In the current Years 2 and 6 most pupils are achieving the levels expected for their age and many go beyond this. In all year groups pupils are making good progress and achieving well. Overall they are achieving better than they were at the time of the last inspection and the school is supporting and challenging all its pupils effectively.

109 The leadership and management of the subject by the headteacher and her direct involvement in the teaching coupled with curriculum developments and teachers' hard work have all helped to raise standards. The recent division of the large Year 4, 5 and 6 class into two teaching groups, one of Year 4 pupils and the other of Years 5 and 6, is all part of this good provision. Where standards vary from year to year it is because of the composition of the year group, with different proportions of higher attaining pupils or pupils with special educational needs affecting the overall profile. In most year groups standards are above average whilst in Year 6 they are broadly average. Inspection evidence and recent national assessments of Years 2 and 6 confirm this view. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates because of the good support they receive from their teachers and the teaching assistants. Although there have been some variations in the attainment of boys and girls, these are due to the changing composition of the year group rather than other factors and there is no evidence that either group is treated differently.

110 Throughout the school pupils achieve well. By Year 2 pupils can order numbers to at least 100 and are developing understanding of place value. They add and subtract numbers to 20 and many go beyond this. Pupils double and halve numbers, count in 2's, 3's, 4's, 5's and 10's and use these skills to solve problems involving money, time, weight and length. They know the properties of 2D shapes, sort objects by category and number and record their work on simple tally charts, block graphs and Venn diagrams. In lessons they make good use of mental recall of number facts to calculate quickly the answers to addition sums working with numbers up to 20 with a few going beyond this and working with numbers to 100. They are developing the strategies they use for quick calculations well and some use halving and doubling to solve 17×6 by converting it to 34×3 or partition it as 10×6 and 7×6 to arrive at 102.

111 As they move through the school the level of challenge and expectation is increased. By Year 6 pupils have increased the speed of their mental arithmetic, the range of techniques used in calculations, including written methods, and their recall of number facts. They can recite the squares of numbers from 2 to 20, quickly mentally calculate 23×11 and subtract, add, divide and multiply numbers up to at least 1000 with many going beyond this. They work with decimals, fractions and percentages, have good recall of their tables to at least 10 and

use this with strategies such as rounding and partitioning to check the accuracy of calculator answers. They employ these skills well to solve problems involving time, money, distance and capacity. Pupils calculate the area and perimeter of shapes, construct and measure the angles of triangles and create nets of 3D shapes. Data is collected and displayed on bar and line graphs, statistically analysed and the probability of occurrences explored.

112 There is strong emphasis in all classes on developing pupils' numeracy skills and increasing focus on their use to solve practical problems drawn directly from pupils' own experience. Good examples of this are the work seen in both Years 5/ 6 and Year 4 based on the Strawberry Fayre. In Year 4 pupils extended their understanding of data handling well as they began to analyse and record the results of surveying how visitors had known of the event. In Years 5/6 pupils made very good use of their numeracy skills to calculate from the weights of the sorted coins how much they expected to find when they were counted, refining their understanding of weight, methods of calculation and estimation techniques very well.

113 Teachers pay good attention to developing pupils' mental and oral skills as pupils progress through the school, so that they become quicker and more accurate in their number work. They make good use of the starter sessions to develop pupils' understanding and speed of computation through the brisk pace set and choose interesting activities to capture pupils' interest. For example, in Year 4 pupils excitedly found ways to reduce 58 or 99 to 1 using just four calculations, which sharpened their division skills in particular. Pupils in Year 1 reinforced basic numeracy skills as they answered clues to identify the correct pencil case by a process of elimination. However, teachers do not always exploit fully the opportunities these activities provide for discussing and exploring the methods used for arriving at answers, confirming the validity of different methods or highlighting why some are more efficient than others.

114 An over reliance on the use of worksheets in Years 1 to 3 to meet the needs of the wide range of abilities often limits the opportunities for good teacher/pupil interaction. Time is not well used as the focus is more often on colouring or recording than on the development and consolidation of mathematical skills, as pupils cut out nets of cubes or colour coins to represent an amount of money. Although some good use of ICT to support work in the subject was seen in Years 1 and 4 and there are examples of its use in work on display it is not yet a consistent and systematic feature.

115 Pupils show an increasing ability to sustain concentration and work without direct supervision as they move up the school. They are attentive to their teachers and work well with others in their group as they share ideas and complete activities, as seen in Year 4 and Years 5 and 6. They often support one another well, as was seen in the Year 2/3 lesson where two girls helped a third win rounds of an addition facts game. Work in their books shows how they take increasing care in presentation and recording and suggests pride in achievement. Older pupils talk excitedly about what they are doing and what they already know.

116 In the lessons seen teaching was good overall. It ranged from satisfactory in Year 1/2 to very good in Year 5/6. There is a close correlation between the quality of teaching and that of pupils' learning. Teachers carefully plan their lessons to the format of the National Numeracy Strategy for the different ages and abilities in their classes. Teaching assistants are well briefed and often support age or ability groups well in specific tasks, as seen in the investigative activity in Year 5/6 and the card games in Year 2/3.

117 Teaching is most successful when:

- Teachers share the purpose of the lesson with pupils at the outset and revisit it at the end
- Tasks are explained clearly and teachers ensure pupils are clear about what is expected

- Questioning is used well to explore pupils' understanding and advance their thinking

118 A good pattern of regular and ongoing testing and assessing of pupils provides good information about pupils' progress. It is supported well by informal assessments made through questioning and marking and used well to inform planning for the next stages of pupils' learning. The subject is effectively co-ordinated and closely monitored by the headteacher. Resources are sufficient to support practical activities and a newly purchased commercial scheme supports learning.

Strengths

- *Standards in the subject*
- *Overall quality of teaching*
- *Assessment procedures*
- *Focus on practical activities and links to pupils' direct experience*
- *Good emphasis on development of mental calculations*
- *Subject leadership*

Areas for development

- *Use of ICT to support learning in the subject*
- *Reducing reliance on the use of worksheets with younger pupils*
- *Opportunities for pupils to discuss and explore strategies and techniques used*

SCIENCE

119 By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils attain above average standards. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were average at the end of both year groups. Higher attaining pupils did particularly well in 2002, indicating that more able pupils were recognised and challenged appropriately. Pupils attained very well in experimental and investigative science, compared with the national figure. Teachers throughout the school are putting a clear emphasis on investigative work and pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well.

120 During Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress in the acquisition of knowledge and in the deployment of skills. This is because of carefully planned activities that enable pupils to develop a good knowledge across all areas of science. For example, Year 1 pupils know about the life cycle of a butterfly. They can use appropriate language to explain the different stages before the butterfly emerges. Year 2 pupils sort materials according to their properties and they can make sensible predications about which surface from a range is likely to have the most grip. Teachers and support assistants give pupils with special educational needs good support and this helps them to extend their knowledge. Pupils make effective use of drawing to record their work, and the written work of the more able pupils contains appropriate detail.

121 Pupils in Years 3 to 6 continue to make good progress and they use correct terminology in their explanations, have good recall of a wide range of scientific knowledge, and draw well on this in response to questions. They understand 'fair testing' but are less secure in considering and evaluating evidence. They know the names of the major organs of the body and their functions, recognise the elements of a healthy diet and are aware of the implications of lifestyle changes on their bodies. Following a visit to the local Waste management site, older pupils studied conservation areas and recycling linking what they discovered to everyday life in school. As pupils progress through Years 3 to 6 they continue to record the outcomes of their investigations in charts, tables and diagrams and there is an increasing use of graphs to display data. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are beginning to use information technology to display findings. For example, they investigate how plants and animals are

dependent on each other and present their discoveries using a table produced on the computer.

122 Teaching in Years 1 to 3 is satisfactory overall. Teachers plan interesting activities to cover the different aspects of science and encourage pupils to find out information from a variety of sources. In a Year 1 lesson seen, the teacher built on what the pupils already knew about the life cycle of a butterfly to encourage them to use non-fiction texts to research other mini-beasts and their life cycles. The practical activity and well-chosen texts enabled pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding. There are also weaknesses in the teaching of younger pupils. The use of worksheets often provides little challenge for the more able or supports those who need it. Over reliance on commercial worksheets does not extend pupils' knowledge or understanding. Younger pupils frequently spend valuable learning time colouring in the worksheets and this reduces the progress they make.

123 In Years 4 to 6, teaching is consistently good. Teachers plan and prepare their lessons well, taking good account of what pupils already know and building on this to extend their understanding. Practical activities and well-chosen resources excite and maintain their interest. In a Year 5 and 6 lesson, the teacher made good use of the playground to demonstrate how a food web functions. She used labels and string to demonstrate links between the beginning of a food web and the end. She was able to show the pupils which elements in the food web are consumers and which are producers. As a result, pupils extended their understanding and knowledge and maintained their interest throughout the activity. In this lesson and others, teachers used questioning well to challenge and extend pupils' thinking. Good questioning, clear explanations and correct use of terminology show teachers have a good understanding of the chosen topics. The open nature of most tasks allows pupils of all abilities to work at their own level. It is particularly successful where pupils are grouped by ability.

124 The subject is led well by an enthusiastic co-ordinator. She has developed a good awareness of pupils' strengths and areas for improvement through discussions with staff and knowledge of the pupils. Pupils follow a broad curriculum, which helps to ensure all areas of scientific knowledge are developed well. Resources are adequate and used well. Science makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. In particular, pupils are encouraged to look closely at living things, to enjoy finding out for themselves and to co-operate and share resources.

Strengths:

- *Standards*
- *regular use of practical work and investigations;*
- *pupils' enthusiasm for the subject;*
- *use of locality to enhance learning.*

Areas for development:

- *Reduction in the use of worksheets by younger pupils.*

ART AND DESIGN

125 The provision in this area is a strength of the school. There are several examples of very good quality art work produced by pupils and much value is placed on this aspect of pupils' education. No art and design lessons were timetabled during the inspection. Judgements are therefore based on work seen on display and in pupils' folders, discussions with staff and teachers' planning. Planning shows a wide breadth of study and the work on display reflect this breadth. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those with particular artistic talents, achieve well and are enthusiastic about their

work. Standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection when standards at the end of Year 2 were average and at the end of Year 6 they were above average.

126 Pupils in Years 1 and 2 undertake a range of work with different media. Work on display shows pupils using pencils, pastels and paints to produce very detailed observational drawings. Very good use is made of the school gardens to allow pupils to appreciate the wonder of nature as they sketched flowers and accurately reproduced the variety of colours displayed. Younger pupils had the opportunity to work with a visiting potter to produce a variety of masks. They used clay to make the nose for their mask and talked about how the different masks made them feel like the animal or character they had chosen. This work extended pupils' skills in art and design successfully whilst also contributing to the pupils' cultural awareness, as many created masks using African original designs.

127 Pupils in Years 3 to 6 explore art from other cultures, particularly from Uganda, where the school has close links with another school. Displays show a high standard of work with pupils taking great care to recreate the detail of original work by African artists and appreciating the skill of the artists. Pupils used advanced techniques to recreate old houses and buildings observed on a walk around the village. Thatched roofs and complicated brick patterns and stonework are carefully reproduced using a range of media such as pastels and paint. A specialist artist worked with the pupils during their study of art in the local environment and this significantly enhanced the final products and extended the pupils' learning.

128 Teaching and learning are good overall and the school makes good use of quality resources including clay, paint and a wide range of media. Sketchbooks to provide an opportunity for pupils to develop and explore ideas are underused currently and this is an area that would improve further the success teachers have achieved already. There was little evidence to indicate the use of ICT in art, although this is an area the school is hoping to develop. Nevertheless, the range and richness of the learning opportunities mean the curriculum provision is good. The subject also gives very good support to pupils' cultural development, by providing many opportunities to investigate the work of famous artists and the traditions from different cultures. Very good use is made of visits and visitors to the school.

129 The co-ordinator has a good overview of the strengths and areas for development and has influenced the development of the subject since the time of the last inspection. Resources are good and all staff make good use of opportunities to apply pupils' art skills in other curriculum areas, illustrating stories in English, reports in history and descriptions in religious education, for example. Through this application in other subjects and through the care taken in the work, the subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

Strengths:

- *Standards*
- *the use of displays to celebrate pupils' work and raise the profile of the subject;*
- *links with other areas of the curriculum;*
- *the support given to pupils' cultural development;*
- *pupils' enthusiasm for the subject;*
- *good use of visits and visitors to enhance learning.*

Areas for development:

- *extend the use of ICT in art by developing suitable software and enabling pupils to research artists' work on the Internet;*
- *plan the introduction and use of sketchbooks for older pupils.*

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

130 Standards in design and technology in Years 2 and 6 are broadly average. This is an improvement on the last inspection when Year 2 was average and Year 6 below average. Since then a well-balanced planning framework that takes account of recent national guidelines has been introduced and the key issue relating to planning for Years 3 to 6 addressed. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and the more able, achieve equally well and are developing their designing and making skills through suitably challenging activities that include food technology.

131 Throughout the school there is good emphasis on the process of considering the design brief and planning and executing the process of making the article. Pupils are being introduced effectively to the idea of considering fitness for purpose and how to realise a product from the available materials. There is less evidence of pupils experiencing work with a wide range of materials and tools to develop knowledge and understanding of the limitations of different materials and to extend their skills of joining and fixing when constructing objects.

132 Teachers make good use of planned blocks of work linked to events, visits and topics to capture pupils' interest. This might be pancakes for Shrove Tuesday, international foods during themed weeks or making willow structures at the arboretum. In Years 2 and 3 pupils carefully considered environmental issues, the creature's shape and its spines when designing and making a biodegradable hedgehog feeder. This work was linked well to their visit to St Tiggywinkles and their knowledge of nets from creating shapes in mathematics. Their approach to the task showed a developing awareness of design, material selection and of a range of cutting and fixing skills.

133 In Years 4, 5 and 6 the school's annual Strawberry Fayre provided a focus for creating a workable money sorter to be used on each stall. Pupils showed good appreciation of the need to ensure the money was safe and to design a system of different-sized holes to separate the coins. They were supported well in this, particularly in cutting the holes, by their teacher, teaching assistant, parents and a helper. Pupils' understanding of the design and construction process is developed well by the use of kits to create moving toys that feature motors and cams. Year 6 pupils explained how they had realised the strength of triangles when making the structures on display in the hall using rolled tubes of paper that were capable of supporting a kilogram weight.

134 Pupils are eager to talk about their earlier work and older pupils explained how they reviewed regularly and suggested improvements. Their written work shows how they record regularly and explain the making process but there is little evidence of consideration of improvement. They use equipment sensibly, work well with others and are proud of their achievements. All work shows care and attention to detail.

135 Teaching in the two lessons seen was good. Pupils made good progress in developing their skills and understanding because of well planned and prepared activities suitably chosen to take account of the different ages and abilities in these mixed-age classes. Good organisation meant good use was made of the available space for practical activities in the rooms and pupils were managed well in the restricted area.

136 Good use is made of national guidance to support planning for the subject and topics are linked well to work in other subjects. Annual review of planning ensures that a two-year

cycle for younger pupils and a three-year one for the older ones are constantly checked and updated. Opportunities for using ICT for design or control are at the very early stages of development. Limited space for storage and practical activities restricts the range of materials, tools and opportunities planned, particularly for older pupils. Although resources are adequate, they would benefit from being reviewed and supplemented to provide pupils with experience of working with a wider range of tools and materials.

Strengths

- *Quality of finish in examples of work seen*
- *Choice of activities that capture pupils' interest and emphasis on designing for a purpose*
- *Good teaching and classroom organisation*

Areas for development

- *Providing pupils with experience of a wider range of materials and tools*
- *Greater use of ICT to support learning in the subject*
- *More opportunities for reflecting on possible improvements of finished items*

GEOGRAPHY

137 Standards are average at age seven and eleven. Boys and girls of all abilities achieve satisfactorily throughout the school. Planning includes geography topics each term and the curriculum is greatly enriched by the school's international links. Work associated with the African and European links is relevant and exciting, involving exchanges of videos, letters and e-mails. The work linked to studies in the locality, to visitors and to visits also stimulates pupils' interest. Standards have improved at Key Stage 1 and have been maintained at Key Stage 2 since the last inspection.

138 The work by pupils in Year 1, recording weather and developing understanding of the features of an island, shows pupils actively involved in collecting information, in recording this on a simple chart, in using geographical terms and in recognising similarities and differences. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 have compared a beach in New Zealand with one in England, taking advantage of their supply teacher's personal knowledge to develop their knowledge of shoreline features and the use of beaches in Kariotahi and Bournemouth.

139 Pupils in Years 4 to 6 develop the skills of geographical enquiry and map-making during their study of Ewelme. They collect and record evidence of village signs and use secondary evidence to compare the features of Ewelme with that of Great Orme at Llandudno. They locate the two places on a map of the British Isles. They use ordnance survey symbols to make their own local maps. During the term looking at modern and Ancient Greece, they created brochures featuring Greek hotels and used maps of the Aegean to locate Greece in relation to various other European countries.

140 The Ugandan link offers pupils throughout the school the chance to compare life in Bethel School, Kampala with life at Ewelme. Little is recorded in pupils' books about these comparisons, but pupils are clearly aware of the different culture, food, music and working patterns. They have received visits from the school headteacher and a Christian Minister. They have watched videos of the children singing and prepared and tasted African fruit and vegetables. They have participated in an African drumming session. Older pupils locate Uganda on a map of Africa, recognise that it is landlocked and find the countries that surround it.

141 The Comenius link with other European schools gives older pupils the chance to locate and exchange weather information, using the Internet. Two good uses of ICT are the exchange of weather information and the creation of posters to advertise Great Orme.

142 The quality of teaching is good overall. Pupils learn successfully because teachers present the work in an interesting way. For example, the teacher in the Year 4/5/6 class acted out role-play situations with small groups of pupils, stimulating their thoughtful interpretation of information they had located about Llandudno. Pupils used notes from their research to locate hotel prices and places of interest and to provide directions from the tourist office or railway station. The teacher's high expectations ensured ready participation by each group. The previous task of researching the information had involved efficient collaborative group work. The imaginative planning motivated pupils and extended their ability to use secondary sources to locate information and express their findings. In the lesson seen with the youngest pupils, the teacher had planned and prepared the lesson thoroughly, making very good use of a number of resources to stimulate and sustain pupils' interest. The use of a story, large photographs and the Internet to share information about the features of the isle of Cool successfully motivated pupils to watch, ask and answer questions and use geographical vocabulary. Pupils accessed a website with support from their teacher to download and print a picture of their chosen island feature. The teacher's reading of a Katie Morag story set on Struay and her effective questioning about the story and photographs increased pupils' understanding about land use and jobs. Recorded work in books includes some very well presented examples, such as Year 2/3 pupils' contrasting seaside resorts, well labelled and explained, but too many examples show the result of interesting work for younger pupils recorded by colouring in and completing gaps on undemanding and unattractive worksheets.

143 Subject leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator has a clear overview of planning and is fully involved in the school's extensive international links. The subject is well resourced. The school has adapted national guidelines for its use and uses assessment at the end of units of work to inform reporting to parents.

Strengths

- *The use of international links to enrich the curriculum*
- *Teachers' imaginative planning and presentation of the subject*
- *The standard and presentation of work by most pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6*
-

Areas for development

- *Reduce the use of worksheet materials with the younger pupils*

HISTORY

144 Standards at ages seven and eleven are average. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Only a short part of a lesson was observed during the inspection. Evidence is drawn from work samples, displays and discussions with the co-ordinator. The school has raised standards in this subject at Key Stage 1 since the last inspection, when they were unsatisfactory, and maintained them at Key Stage 2.

145 Pupils in Years 1 learn about famous people from the past, such as Samuel Pepys, Florence Nightingale and Louis Braille. They compare toys from 100 years ago with some from 50 years ago and some from the present. They discover differences, noting for example that several older toys are heavy and made of metal, whereas modern toys are light and made of plastic. The recording of this learning and of the information showing toys or games that pupils, their parents and their grandparents have enjoyed playing with makes a useful record of this activity. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 know about hill forts and motte and bailey castles. They have carefully drawn diagrams of these and labelled them. The work on Maiden Castle shows good knowledge and understanding. Pupils' recording clearly shows

pride in their work in this example. Too often however, the recording, as of studies related to the Aztecs in Years 2 and 3 or of the Montgolfier brothers in Year 1, involves colouring and completion of undemanding worksheet activities.

146 Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 have studied Ancient Greece. They use their written record of their learning to talk about the differences between Sparta and Athens and to recollect information about Greek gods and goddesses. They have learnt about their local environment, which is steeped in history, using art and writing to record their information about the history of the school, church and cloisters. They recollect information about evacuation and several are reading novels set in the time of the Second World War. The most recent theme shows pupils very well acquainted with the more recent history of the sixties. They have selected and linked information from a variety of historical sources to record their knowledge of the Beatles and 1960s pop culture and fashion.

147 From observation of children's recording, teaching appears satisfactory overall in this subject. Pupils' recorded work varies in quality, but some at both key stages shows care and interest, with good use of historical terms. The care in recording is more consistent from Years 4 to 6. Pupils in Year 6 talk enthusiastically about their historical studies.

148 The school has adapted a scheme of work using national guidelines. The rolling programme of themes avoids repetition. Staff in Years 4, 5 and 6 make good links with other subjects, especially writing and art. Assessment procedures are in place to note pupils' achievement at the end of each unit of work. This information is used in composing pupils' annual reports.

Strengths

- *Use of the local environment*
- *Links with art and literacy*

Areas for development

- *Better ways of recording pupils' learning in Years 1 to 3*

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

149 Standards in Years 2 and 6 are broadly in line with expectations and all groups of pupils achieve well, including boys and girls and pupils with special educational needs. This is a similar position to that found by the last inspection. Since then increased resources, raised staff confidence and expertise as a result of national training and adoption of local authority guidelines as a basis for planning have all moved provision forward. At the same time expectations and requirements in the subject have risen. The school has worked hard to overcome the limitations of its accommodation to maintain the quality of its provision. Pupils are gaining experience of graphics, Internet access, data handling and control. Most pupils have ready access to computers at home. This facility and their use of computers in school have developed their word processing skills and ability to use ICT for research.

150 During the inspection no direct teaching of ICT was seen but pupils were observed working at classroom computers on tasks linked to other subjects on a few occasions. Observation of this and other inspection evidence shows that pupils are making sound progress or better in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding across the expected range. Across the school pupils confidently log on, select the programmes they are going to use and know how to save and print their work. Pupils in Year 1 show good control of the mouse as they confidently select and confirm choice of number monster when counting in 2's in 'Space Hopscotch'. Pupils' work and teachers' records show that by Year 2 most pupils can use a paint program to generate shapes and create patterns, as well as

create freestyle pictures using different tools and effects. They are learning how to add borders to their work, drag and place images, send e-mails to pupils in New Zealand and are developing knowledge of the keyboard. They know how to program and control a floor robot and have used the Internet to access information about the life cycle of the frog.

151 By Year 6 pupils have experimented with writing instructions to create complex geometric patterns, know how to change the font, style and colour of text and have regularly downloaded information for topics from web sites including details about the locality and the weather. Their work on topics such as RAF Benson show that they have learnt to combine text, pictures and photographs. They know how to enter and display data as charts and graphs and are learning to combine sound and text in presentations about their residential visit to Great Torrington. In conversation they explained how many regularly e-mail work begun in school to their home for later completion. Their experience of control and modelling is more limited with no opportunities, for example, of using sensing equipment in science, spreadsheets to try 'what if' scenarios or ICT to operate their products in design technology.

152 On the very limited evidence available it is not possible to reach a secure judgement about the quality of teaching and learning in the subject. ICT is being used to support work in other subjects and teachers are planning its regular use. A good example was seen in a Year 4 mathematics lesson of two pupils confidently entering data about visitors to the Strawberry Fayre into a database before experimenting with its presentation. In conversations pupils reported that they use the class computers once or twice a week and enthusiastically explain what they can do. However, although the school is doing its best to incorporate ICT into the work of other subjects this is not yet a consistent and systematic feature.

153 Pupils' rate of progress in the subject is restricted by the limited opportunities to work at class computers. The school is working to overcome this and has already increased the number of computers available by placing two more machines in the hall but the limited size of the rooms and lack of overall free space makes the siting of machines difficult. There are plans to purchase an interactive board and digital projector to allow whole class teaching and the school is investigating the possibility of using laptops to allow more pupils access to ICT at the same time.

154 The enthusiastic co-ordinator, who has only recently taken responsibility for the subject, has helped review the detailed action plan drawn up by the headteacher and ICT team from the local education authority to move the subject forward. Good consideration has been given to ensuring equipment is compatible and suitable technical support is in place. Current subject planning identifies possible links to other subjects to support learning and reinforce ICT skills. However, current siting of computers remains problematic. A good programme of assessment based upon clear skills development for each year group has been introduced and this will serve as a useful reminder to teachers of the need to ensure skills are developed progressively and reinforced through regular practice. Pupils' work is being collected and levelled and will provide clear exemplification of expectations for each level.

Strengths

- *Good subject leadership*
- *Development of resources for the subject*
- *Increased staff expertise*
- *Recognition of possible uses of ICT in other subjects*

Areas for development

- *Greater use of ICT to support learning in all subjects*
- *Increasing opportunities for direct teaching of ICT skills*

MUSIC

155 It was not possible to make a precise judgement on standards of music overall at ages seven and eleven or of the progress made by different groups of pupils, as the only music lesson timetabled was with Year 4. Evidence from this lesson suggests that standards are set to be above average by the time these pupils are in Year 6.

156 Solo and duet instrumental work, a few samples of written recordings from Year 4 and videos of school productions show that music has a high profile in the school. Singing in assemblies and at the church is tuneful. With a teacher leading each group, the whole school sustained a four-part round. Many pupils take up opportunities from visiting instrumental teachers to learn piano, flute, clarinet and violin. Although evidence is limited, what is seen represents an improvement since the last inspection, when standards were average and pupils made satisfactory progress through the school.

157 The subject clearly makes a significant contribution to the school's provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development. The exchange of videos with the Ugandan school gives pupils an excellent opportunity to learn about African music and song. The school has taken full advantage of this, using an African song in assembly for example.

158 Pupils in Year 4 show a good understanding of rhythm and melody as they develop their own chant songs to celebrate the Chinese New Year. They use the pentatonic scale, maintain the pulse and develop ostinato patterns to accompany their lyrics. In the lesson observed, several pupils also used correct musical terminology, recognising quavers, crotchets, minims and rests and applying their symbols to create rhythm patterns. They worked independently in pairs, using percussion instruments alongside chants they had composed. They showed good understanding of dynamics, using loud, soft crescendo and diminuendo to vary the repeating patterns, understanding the different effects and commenting on each other's work. The teacher's thorough preparation and careful planning, building on previous lessons, ensured that all pupils were focused. Pupils made good progress through the lesson because the teacher maintained a brisk pace and moved helpfully among the pairs working at their tasks, listening and prompting effectively, giving extra support to those who needed help. All pupils were actively involved and each pair created a successful piece, which they played to the year group at the close, thus ensuring they all had a sense of achievement.

159 The subject is well resourced. The school offers opportunities for pupils to learn to play a range of instruments and to perform before the school in assembly. Pupils and staff clearly enjoy the annual productions and performances to parents and to local villagers. As well as experiencing African rhythms and song patterns, pupils also learn Swedish and Italian songs, including the national anthems, and how to sing 'Happy Birthday' in several languages.

Strengths

- *Teaching seen in Key Stage 2*
- *Instrumental tuition for a high proportion of pupils*
- *Opportunities for performance - both singing and instrumental*
- *Use of a wide range of world music*

No notable areas for development

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

160 Physical education was not being taught during the inspection and it is not therefore possible to make judgements either about pupils' attainment or the quality of teaching. This is a similar situation to that at the time of the last inspection when there was insufficient evidence on standards in Year 6 whilst in Year 2 they were satisfactory. From viewing teachers' planning, long term subject plans and talking to teachers and pupils it is clear that all strands of the subject including gymnastics, dance, games, athletics, swimming and outdoor and adventurous activities are planned and taught.

161 Planning takes full account of the age ranges in each of the classes and is reviewed annually to ensure expected coverage. The restrictions of the small hall with its central pillars, small outside hard area and the sloping neighbouring field has meant that the school has had to work hard to overcome these problems. It is made possible by the weekly use of the pool at the Abbey Sports Centre, Berinsfield for swimming and its Sports Hall for coaching games, gymnastics and dance during the pupils' hourly sessions. As a result of the regular opportunity for swimming tuition pupils of all ages make good progress and achieve well. By the end of Year 6 all are able to swim at least the expected 25 metres and have developed confidence and safety in the water. Many go well beyond this, developing the quality of their strokes, increasing the distance swum and the ability to survive for extended periods in the water.

162 Good use is made of outside providers and parents to coach sports, such as football, in after school clubs which are open to boys and girls of all ages. Outdoor and adventurous activities for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are part of an annual residential visit made to different venues each year. Year 6 pupils recalled opportunities for night hikes and rock climbing at Great Torrington. The colourful range of photographs from this visit illustrated the many activities undertaken there.

163 The enthusiastic co-ordinator, who has recently taken responsibility for the subject, has already drawn up a teaching programme for the subject timetabling coverage and skills development. This will help to ensure that pupils experience all areas of the planned curriculum at a level suitable for their age. Competitive matches in football, netball, rounders and cricket have also been played against other schools in the local small schools cluster. Photographs and pupils' recollections confirm the inclusive nature of these. They illustrate the range of activities provided for pupils, including an annual Sports Day. Good use of specialist off-site facilities has been central to this and although it concentrates activities into one session, it is a very good means of addressing the school's accommodation problems. The school is considering improvements to the surface of the large school field that would enable greater use and also ways in which the range of activities can be varied and extended.

Strengths

- *Good standards in swimming*
- *Coverage of all aspects of the PE programme despite restricted internal accommodation*
- *Use of parents and outside specialists*
- *Subject leadership*

Areas for development

- *Greater use of the playground and field*