

INSPECTION REPORT

ASHTON-UNDER-HILL FIRST SCHOOL

Evesham

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116650

Headteacher: Mrs Vivienne Cranton

Lead inspector: Mr Brian Gosling

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 4th February 2004

Inspection number: 255379

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First school
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 10 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	72
School address:	Elmley Road Ashton-under-Hill Evesham Worcestershire
Postcode:	WR11 7SW
Telephone number:	01386 881333
Fax number:	01386 882830
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Clive Stubbs
Date of previous inspection:	December 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is in the attractive village of Ashton-under-Hill, which is situated on the south side of Bredon Hill in the Vale of Evesham. There are 72 pupils, 37 boys and 35 girls, who are organised in three classes. This is smaller than most schools. The school received the 'Eco Schools' award in 2001. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The pupils come from predominantly white British backgrounds and there are no pupils who are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is well below average and there are no pupils with statements of special educational need. Pupils start school in the year in which they are five and their attainment when they start school is well above average. There have been a number of changes to the deployment of and the number of days worked by the teaching staff. Only one class is taught by a single teacher and the teaching of the other two classes has been organised so that both teachers are in school at the same time during the week to allow them to share planning for the class.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22453	Brian Gosling	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Mathematics; Religious Education; Religious Education; Geography; History; Foundation Stage.
12682	Jim Griffin	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
20614	Don Kimber	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Science; Information and communication technology; Art; Design and technology; Music; Physical education; Special educational needs.

The inspection contractor was:

VT Education Ltd
Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
London
SW11 3AD

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very effective** school that continues to improve. The very good leadership and management of the school by the headteacher and the governors have ensured that there have been substantial improvements since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and this promotes good achievement. Those pupils in Year 5, whose prior attainment in Year 2 was broadly average, have made very good progress and their attainment is now above average. Those pupils in Years 1 – 4 whose prior attainment was high are successful in maintaining high standards. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils attain very high standards in the national tests.
- Pupils behave very well and they develop very positive attitudes to learning because the arrangements for their personal development are very good.
- Teaching is very good throughout the school.
- The headteacher leads and manages the school very well and governance is very good.
- This is a very caring school that supports and guides pupils' learning very well.
- The partnership with parents is very effective in supporting pupils' learning.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to engage in independent study.
- The computer suite and the school library do not sufficiently meet the learning needs of the pupils.

The effectiveness of the school has changed substantially since the last inspection and improvement has been very good. The areas for improvement identified in the last report have been addressed fully and with rigour. In particular, governors are more actively planning school developments and the accommodation is much improved. The headteacher has improved the quality of teaching through increased monitoring and guidance to teachers and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are much improved. These improvements have led to significantly higher standards of attainment.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement is **good**. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage, where all children attain the goals they are expected to reach by the end of Reception and most exceed them, and pupils achieve well in Years 1 - 2 because they are maintaining high standards. Pupils in Year 5 achieve well because their standards of attainment have improved well since they were in Year 2.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
reading	E	E	A*	A*
writing	B	C	A*	A*
mathematics	D	C	A*	A

Key: A - very high; A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.*

Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals.

The results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2003 were very high. (A* shows that the results were in the highest five per cent of all schools.) This is a substantial and impressive improvement on the previous years. The effect of the school's initiatives to raise standards cannot be underestimated. However, only nine pupils took these tests and in small schools it is not unusual

for the results to vary widely from year to year. Nevertheless, the school's detailed monitoring of pupils' learning and inspection evidence shows that high standards are being maintained. Standards in science in Years 1 - 2 are also high and standards in English, mathematics and science in Years 3 - 5 are good or better, demonstrating good progress. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory throughout the school.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **very good**. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and this contributes to their good achievement. Attendance is well above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good** because teachers have high expectations of the pupils and they use assessment effectively to plan tasks that meet the different learning needs of pupils in the class. This helps pupils to know what is expected of them in each lesson and they respond very positively, working well both independently and collaboratively. Learning support assistants provide good support.

The curriculum provided is good with good opportunities for learning outside the school day. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils is very good and the partnership with parents is very good, which supports pupils' learning very well. The school's partnerships with the community and other schools are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management are **very good**. The leadership of the headteacher is very effective in achieving positive changes that have raised standards of pupils' attainment and established a clear sense of teamwork in the school. The work of the governing body has improved and governance is very effectively developing the school's facilities. Management is very good and ensures that improvements are sustained.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the school. Every parent who replied to the questionnaire said that their children like school, they feel comfortable about approaching the school, and that there are good arrangements for starting school. In particular, they think that teaching is good, their children are treated fairly and expected to work hard.

Pupils like the support they get from teachers, both in their work and when they have a problem. They like the fact that teachers listen to their ideas and trust them to do things on their own. It is noticeable that younger pupils are more positive in their responses than the older pupils. In discussions, however, older pupils say that the school is changing and they like the changes.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to maintain high standards and continue to improve are:

- Develop the range of curriculum opportunities for pupils to engage in independent study.
- Extend the use of the computer suite and improve the library to support pupils' independent study.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Children currently arrive at the school with high standards of attainment and high standards are maintained in Years 1 - 2, particularly in English and mathematics. Standards in Year 5 are above average in the core subjects but these pupils attained standards in Year 2 that were a little below average. They are, therefore, also achieving well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attained very high standards in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2003.
- Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- High standards are being maintained as pupils move through the school.
- The school has introduced effective procedures to monitor pupils' learning.

Commentary

1. Children's attainment when they started at the school this year was much better than that expected nationally. Information provided by the local education authority (LEA) shows that their attainment this year is well above the county average. The school's detailed information shows that this is higher than it has been and some year groups arrived at the school with significantly lower attainment. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage and all children attain the early learning goals¹ expected of them by the time they enter Year 1. Most children exceed these goals in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development.

2. The school's results² in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2003 were very high. This is a substantial improvement on the results in the previous years. It is necessary to exercise a certain amount of caution when interpreting these results, as only nine pupils took the tests and it is not unusual for test results to vary widely from year to year in small schools. This is because one pupil represents a large percentage. Nevertheless, very effective leadership and management have secured a number of organisational changes and initiated many new practices and procedures in the last year or two that have been focused on improving the quality of teaching. These developments have had a positive impact on the higher standards that pupils now achieve. All pupils in Year 2 in 2003 attained the nationally expected Level 2³ in reading, writing, mathematics

¹ On Early Learning Goals: QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) has produced a set of early learning goals for children in the Foundation Stage of education. These outcomes are a set of skills, knowledge and understanding that children might be expected to achieve by the time they start the National Curriculum in Year 1 in six areas of learning: communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development; physical development; and personal social and emotional development. The Foundation Stage continues until pupils enter Year 1, when they begin Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum.

² On the school's results: An average points score provides schools with a single statistic with which to compare the overall grades attained by their pupils with the grades attained by pupils in other schools. At Key Stage 1, the National Curriculum Levels of attainment are given a score. For example, in mathematics Level 1=9 points and Level 2=15 points, and so on. The average test score achieved by a school is calculated by adding up all the scores achieved by the pupils and then dividing by the number of pupils who took the test. These comparisons are the ones used in the figures printed in the summary of the report. When the percentage of pupils attaining a particular level is compared to that in other schools, this is stated clearly in the text.

³ On Levels: The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that, by the end of Year 2, pupils are expected to attain Level 2 in all National Curriculum subjects. Those who achieve Level 3 are therefore attaining above nationally expected levels. It is a national expectation that all pupils should reach Level 4 by the end of Year 6. Pupils who reach Level 5 are therefore attaining above the nationally expected level for their age.

and the teacher assessments for science. Additionally, about half of the pupils attained the higher Level 3 in writing and mathematics, and almost nine-tenths attained this higher level in reading. These are impressively high results and indicate strongly that there is good challenge for the more able pupils, which was the most important area for development identified in the last inspection report.

3. The picture emerges of a rapidly improving school. The trend in the school's results at the end of Year 2 is rising above the national trend. The pupils who left the school last year at the end of Year 5 and took the national tests this year at the end of Year 6 in the local middle school, attained standards that were above the national average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. This represents good achievement, as their attainment at the end of Year 2 in 1999 was below average in reading and writing. It also reflects the improved standards in Years 1 - 2.

4. Inspection evidence shows that standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Standards in the core subjects at the end of Year 5 exceed national expectations. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. In the Foundation Stage and Years 1 - 2, pupils are maintaining high standards. Pupils in Year 5 have made good progress because they attained standards that were slightly below average in the national tests in Year 2. Standards in ICT have improved since the last inspection and meet national expectations in Year 2 and Year 5.

5. The school has introduced detailed procedures to monitor pupils' learning and their attainment as they move through the school. The Foundation Stage profile is used in Reception and assessments of other pupils are made at regular periods in each year group. This shows that pupils are attaining well and making good progress. There is some difference in the attainment of boys and girls but this varies from year to year due to the small groups of pupils and there is no significant difference over time. The school keeps a register of gifted or talented pupils and teachers use this information when planning lessons. This, along with the attention paid to the needs of the few pupils with special educational needs, ensures that all pupils receive their full entitlement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils develop very positive attitudes to school that are reflected in their very good behaviour and well above average levels of attendance. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for pupils' personal development is very good, helping to raise their self-esteem and promote very good relationships within the school.
- The pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour are supported by the very good care and teaching they enjoy.
- Attendance is well above the national average.

Commentary

6. The very strong ethos of the school underpins the personal development of all pupils, which makes them feel valued members of the school community, and children in the Foundation Stage achieve the early learning goals in their personal development well. One element contributing well to this provision is the adoption by the school of approaches from the 'nurturing programme', which contributes to other lessons and the personal, social and health education (PSHE) of the pupils. Pupils have many good opportunities to explore beliefs and values and to understand emotions, and the programme for their PSHE is followed well. Teachers show pupils that they value their

questions and they promote respect for everyone in lessons. Year 5 pupils led prayers in a whole school assembly, helping their peers to consider the feelings and emotions of others as well as their own. Religious education encourages pupils to explore beliefs and values. These elements make a good contribution to their spiritual development.

7. Pupils' very good behaviour throughout the school is a major factor in pupils' good achievement. Some pupils had expressed concerns about the poor behaviour of others. During the inspection however, behaviour was consistently very good, apart from one minor incident that was very quickly settled by a teacher. Additional toys and games, and further training of lunchtime staff, have enhanced playground provision. All pupils take part in generating the school rules and this contributes well to the very good provision for their moral development. The rules for behaviour are emphasised consistently by all adults in the school. Relationships in the school are very good and pupils are confident that there is someone who they trust that they can turn to when they need help.

8. The school makes very good provision for the social development of pupils. School council members take up points raised by their peers in class. This enables pupils to experience part of the democratic process, although a few junior pupils do not feel teachers always listen to their ideas. Nevertheless, the suggestion by Year 5 pupils for a lunchtime drama club was taken up, and they enjoy responsibility for leading it. The effect of the social development of pupils is seen in the orderly community in which pupils work well together. There is a strong sense of community when, for example, they sing the Grace together before starting their lunch.

9. Many good opportunities are provided to develop pupils' cultural understanding. Through religious education, pupils learn about different cultures and faith traditions. This was evident in assembly when pupils sensitively introduced important elements of Islamic belief and culture. Part of their assembly invited reflection upon respecting others with different customs and cultures. Pupils' awareness of their own culture is successfully developed in other subjects. Visitors to the school and some extra curricular clubs and concerts add to their cultural development.

10. Attendance is very good and it is well above the national average. This contributes to the very good standards attained by most pupils. Pupils arrive punctually in school and in lessons. As a result they are ready to learn. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	4.2
National data:	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data :	0.0
National data:	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching is very good and there are very good procedures for the care, guidance and support of pupils. The very good partnership with parents contributes well to their children's learning and the curriculum provided is good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection that has been achieved through the guidance of the headteacher. Teachers use assessments very effectively to plan lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' planning is very effective because assessment is used very well to plan lessons.
- There are high expectations of what the pupils can achieve.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support.
- Pupils' learning is very good.
- There are some inconsistencies across the school, for example in the marking of pupils' work.

Commentary

11. This is a small school with three classes. Two of the classes cover two key stages: Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 in one class and Key Stages 1 and 2 in another class. The particular challenge for teachers is in addressing the needs of the pupils with different ages and abilities, and from different key stages. They do this very well by planning tasks with varying levels of difficulty that meet the different needs of pupils in the class.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 23 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1	11	10	1	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

12. Most of the lessons seen were very good or excellent with almost all the other lessons being good. This high quality teaching is consistent throughout the school and only one lesson was judged satisfactory. This is a substantial improvement since the last inspection when teaching was satisfactory. The weaknesses identified then in the unsatisfactory use of assessment to ensure challenge, the pace of the lesson and the purpose of the lesson being unclear, have all been addressed effectively.

13. Teachers plan lessons very well with a very good use of assessments of what pupils have already learned to ensure that the tasks set provide good challenge at appropriate levels for all the pupils. Most lessons maintain a brisk pace and pupils are very productive in lessons, usually completing the task set for them. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils respond positively. They enjoy lessons and are keen to do their best. Learning support assistants provide good support to teachers and pupils. In the Foundation Stage, this is very good. Learning support assistants work closely with teachers, which enables them to understand the purpose of the lesson. They have very good relationships with the pupils and this helps them to ensure very good behaviour and to support the children when they have difficulties. They provide particularly effective support for the pupils with special educational needs (SEN).

14. The learning intentions of the lesson are shared with the pupils clearly, although less so with the oldest pupils. This helps pupils to be aware of what they are learning in the lesson and why. Pupils learn very effectively, partly because of their own positive attitudes to learning, but also

because of the support they receive from teachers and learning support assistants. The tasks set for them contain an appropriate level of difficulty because teachers assess their learning carefully and use this information when planning lessons. This helps pupils to maintain concentration in the lesson and contributes to the improvement in pupils' behaviour since the last inspection. The work that pupils produce is generally neat and well organised. It is marked regularly in all classes. However, there are inconsistencies in some practices in different classes. These include the clarity with which learning intentions are shared with pupils and marking. The marking of younger pupils' work is of a high quality with encouraging comments and also frequent statements that show them how they can improve their work. However, the marking of the older pupils' work rarely contains comments and on a few occasions, pupils' work is not marked at all. This limits the ability of the teacher to fully assess pupils' learning and to use this information effectively to plan the next lesson.

THE CURRICULUM

Curriculum provision is good and meets statutory requirements and those of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. There are very good opportunities for enriching pupils learning that include visitors to school. The quality of resources is satisfactory. The quality of accommodation has improved since the last inspection and is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is planned well.
- Curriculum innovations are improving the educational opportunities for pupils.
- There are good opportunities for learning outside the school day.
- The provision for pupils with SEN is good, and learning support assistants contribute well to this.
- Pupils have insufficient opportunities to engage in independent studies.
- Accommodation is good overall, but the library and the computer suite do not adequately meet the learning needs of the pupils.

Commentary

15. The school has put much effort into developing the curriculum. These developments have successfully addressed the areas for improvement noted in the last report, as well as introducing other developments to maintain or improve standards. The school day has been re-organised to use the time available for teaching more efficiently. The whole school curriculum plan has been revised, and the planning of many subjects draws upon national guidelines. These developments have met several criticisms of the last report by:

- * Eliminating many lessons that were considered too long.
- * Introducing a consistent approach to short term planning that underpins a progression in skills, notably in subjects such as science.
- * Monitoring medium-term curriculum planning regularly.
- * Using regular assessments of pupils' learning to inform medium term planning.
- * Planning carefully for the range of ability and the differing needs of pupils in the class.
- * The successful implementation of these improvements is reflected in the improved standards attained in national tests.

16. Further curricular innovations have been brought in to maintain high standards, or raise them further where possible. These include:

- * guided group reading;
- * the nurturing schools programme;
- * professional development on teaching and learning styles;
- * the 'forest school'⁴ for Foundation Stage children;

⁴ The 'forest school' is a LEA initiative that seeks to enable children in the Foundation Stage to direct their own learning through exploration in an outdoor environment.

- * progress books for supporting the development of writing skills;
- * introducing methods for the teaching of ICT;
- * These innovations improve the ways in which pupils' learning is supported and further enriched. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to engage in independent study and develop their own lines of enquiry.

17. The curriculum includes provision for sex and relationships education and drugs education and it is enriched by a wide range of out-of-school activities. Plans are in place for the further development of the 'forest school' to promote the learning experiences of children in the Foundation Stage. Older pupils experience a residential visit, a multicultural programme in the arts, and visits to places of worship and those of historical or geographical interest. These motivate pupils effectively and make a good contribution to learning in all subjects.

18. The good provision for pupils with SEN maintains the position noted at the time of the last inspection. Learning support assistants work closely with teachers to support pupils experiencing learning difficulties and also to provide further challenge for more able pupils. The individual education plans are of good quality and are now written by the class teacher with support from the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). This enables teachers and learning support assistants to focus sharply on particular learning needs.

19. Accommodation is good overall and there have been several improvements since the last inspection. The playground and surrounds have been improved and additional play facilities provided. These have helped to improve the quality of pupils' playground experiences and have had a positive effect upon behaviour and learning. However, the library does not meet pupils' learning needs, as it is too small and there are not enough books, and the computer suite is capable of accommodating only small groups of pupils.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares for its pupils very well. Pupils receive very good support, advice and guidance. There are good measures to involve pupils in the school's work and development, through seeking and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are very good.
- Pupils receive very good support, advice and guidance.
- Induction arrangements are good.
- The school regards the views of pupils as important to its work.

Commentary

20. The formal policies and practices relating to health and safety and child protection are well considered and properly implemented. Pupils work and play in a healthy and safe environment. The arrangements for induction to Reception as well as the transfer arrangements to middle school are well established and very effective. Members of staff know the pupils very well and address their needs very well. They act quickly if a pupil is unhappy or under pressure and are careful to make sure new arrivals are helped to settle in. As a result, and as the pupil survey confirms, nearly all pupils feel fairly treated and have a good and trusting relationship with one or more adults. The prevailing very positive relationships mean that pupils work in an atmosphere free of any forms of harassment or oppressive behaviour.

21. Pupils' achievement is monitored frequently and thoroughly, and shared with pupils and parents very effectively. Members of staff know the pupils very well and where there are concerns, teachers and other staff work very closely with pupils and their parents to identify how the concerns can be overcome. Pupils know their individual targets relating to their academic progress and personal development. Teachers discuss the outcomes of tests with pupils and regular marking often provides helpful suggestions on how their work can be improved.

22. The very good relationships among pupils and their teachers create a very positive atmosphere in which to seek pupils' views. The pupils have created their own class rules that led to the five school rules. The level of responsibility given to pupils increases steadily as they mature. In lessons, most pupils are comfortable making suggestions and asking questions, as pupils know that teachers value their views. This makes an important contribution to their learning. The school council provides a regular and effective voice for pupils. Recent discussions have, for example, led to more litter bins in the playground, rules about the use of collectable cards and more discussions in classes about bullying.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There is a very good partnership with parents, which makes a significant contribution to the quality of education provided and the standards achieved. Links with the local community make a good contribution to pupils' personal development and links with other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good partnership with parents supports pupils' learning.
- Good links with the community enhance curriculum opportunities.
- Good induction arrangements are flexible to meet the needs of different children.

Commentary

23. Teachers are accessible, approachable, listen and very effectively address parents' concerns. Led by the headteacher, the school positively seeks to work constructively with parents. For example, a parental survey identified that parents were keen to have more information and, as a result, a weekly newsletter and a termly outline of the work pupils will cover have been introduced. Termly information is provided on how pupils are getting on through parents' evenings in the autumn and spring terms and the annual reports of pupils' progress in the summer term. In the core subjects, pupils' reports contain much information about the curriculum covered but they do not provide clear targets for improvement. There is a very high level of satisfaction about homework and its arrangements amongst parents.

24. Parents contribute significantly to the successful partnership. For example, they ensure their children attend school regularly, leading to the well above average attendance levels. There is almost full attendance at parents' evenings and the parent teacher and friends' association (PTFA) organises successful fundraising events. These events also contribute to pupils' personal development and the very good sense of community that prevails because staff, parents and pupils are involved in many of these events. The overall success of the parental links is reflected in the very positive parental survey. Only a small minority of parents has any concerns on any of the questions in the inspection survey.

25. The school plays its part as a resource for the local community. Its premises are used for adult education classes on the use of computers and by voluntary groups, such as the Brownies and a drama club. There are close links with the nearby church. Pupils take part in Christian festivals, whilst the vicar serves on the governing body and contributes to the religious education curriculum. Pupils' learning benefits from a good range of visitors and visits. Public services, such as the police and fire services, enrich the curriculum with contributions on personal safety and healthy living. Pupils take part in a range of collections and sponsored events for charity and their active participation contributes significantly to their social development.

26. Links with the local playgroup are very good and contribute significantly to the good and local induction arrangements into the Reception Year. Good links exist with local schools at headteacher level and in relation to SEN and early years' education. The school has good links with the adjacent middle school to which most pupils transfer. Work experience and subject links in science and art exist with the local high school. The school works effectively in partnership with University College Worcester in the training of teachers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and the leadership of other key staff is good. The management of the school is very good and governance is also very good. Consequently, leadership, management and governance are effectively ensuring a high quality of education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has established good teamwork that is focused on school improvement.
- Subject leaders are developing their leadership skills well and are effectively raising standards.
- The governing body is rigorous in exercising its strategic role.
- Very good financial management is improving the school's facilities.

Commentary

27. The headteacher provides very good leadership. She arrived at the school in September 2001 with a very clear idea of how the school could improve. She has shared these ideas clearly and there is effective teamwork in the school that is committed to improvement. The headteacher shares a good, professional relationship with the chair and vice chair of governors. Together, they are effectively leading the school forward. Effective developments have been achieved in the organisation of the school day, staffing arrangements, the planning of the curriculum and monitoring procedures that have improved the quality of teaching and learning and raised standards of attainment.

28. A monitoring and evaluation policy has been implemented and there are clear arrangements for regular observations of teaching, scrutiny of pupils' work and monitoring of teachers' planning. The role of subject leaders is being developed and the leaders of the core subjects have attended courses last term to develop their leadership skills. They are observing lessons, under the guidance of the headteacher, and evaluations are shared with teachers verbally and in writing, with areas for improvement clearly identified. This is improving not only the leadership skills of the subject leaders but also the quality of teaching and learning as the best practice is shared across the school, which is also an improvement since the last inspection. The SENCO provides good leadership. She has involved class teachers more fully in preparing individual education plans, and works closely with outside agencies to ensure appropriate support. A very productive climate for learning has been established and teachers make good use of information about pupils with SEN and gifted or talented pupils in planning suitable tasks for them. This ensures that all pupils are fully included in the school's provision.

29. The governing body is well organised and very well led by the chair of governors, who is also chair of the finance committee. He is supported effectively by the vice-chair of governors. Governors visit the school frequently. Naturally enough in a small school, many of the governors' monitoring activities are conducted informally and the more formal structure necessary to ensure that good practices are sustained when personnel change, is not in place. Nevertheless, they take a keen interest in the life of the school and have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are increasing their involvement in the school improvement plan as they develop their strategic role. This is a further improvement since the last inspection. The chair of governors, in particular, has a good strategic overview of the school and his effective partnership

with the headteacher has been instrumental in securing significant improvements to the school and its facilities. He has ensured that a very good arrangement for the structure of governors' meetings is in place and governors' receive all relevant information in time for meetings. The governing body is very supportive of the school and also provides challenge to ensure that the very best is provided to meet the needs of the pupils and that changes are fully understood by parents. It is this good organisation and rigorous approach that enables the governing body to exercise its strategic role very effectively.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	211,797.00
Total expenditure	226,075.00
Expenditure per pupil	3,014.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	28,844.00
Balance carried forward to the next	14,566.00

30. Financial management is very good. A budget pack is prepared annually for all governors with detailed yet clear statements and financial models and forecasts. The carry forward from last year's budget was a little above the recommended five per cent. However, this was due to prudent financial management that had collected together monies unspent to successfully establish a computer suite and improve the playground area. Planning permission has been obtained to extend the building to house a library, quiet learning areas and an enlarged computer suite. The school applies the principles of best value well in its spending decisions. Although the expenditure per pupil is higher than average, this is common in smaller schools, and the school provides good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The quality of provision for the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning is very good.
- The children develop very good attitudes to learning.
- Children work and play very well together.
- The learning support assistant provides very effective support.

Commentary

31. Children enter the school in the September of the school year in which they are five. There are eight children currently in Reception but, due to the increasing popularity of the school, this is set to increase as 17 children will be starting at the school next September. All children benefit from pre-school experience, many attending the on-site playgroup. Induction arrangements are good and children visit the school on a number of occasions before they start at the school. Those children who are five in January or later initially attend part-time, although these arrangements are flexible and these children can attend full-time if parents and the school agree that they are ready for full-time education. The attainment of children when they start school has varied over recent years but, currently, it is clearly better than national expectations and helpful comparative information provided by the LEA shows it is well above the county average. The high standards are maintained during the Reception Year and, by the time they start in Year 1, all children reach the standards expected of children of this age and most exceed them in **personal, social and emotional development**, as well as **communication, language and literacy** and **mathematical development**. There was insufficient evidence to make secure judgements on children's attainment in **knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development** and **physical development**, although the indications are that they do well in these areas of learning also.

32. The children are taught in the same class as Year 1 pupils. Teaching is very good because it uses this opportunity for children to work with the older pupils, which provides good challenge for the most able children, but the teacher also carefully plans activities that are clearly focused on the Foundation Stage curriculum. Lessons are happy occasions because tasks are clear, well supported by the teacher and the learning support assistant, and the pupils are very well behaved, co-operative and very enthusiastic. There is a good balance between teacher-directed activities and those that the children choose themselves, both between and within sessions. For example, when children encounter a difficulty in a task and they are not able to gain assistance from an adult immediately, they quietly choose an activity, such as sand and water play, to engage in until an adult comes to assist them. This is usually quite soon, as the adults note the children who have left the task and come to work with them as soon as they can. Although the facilities are a little cramped, resources are organised well and put away when they are not needed. This requires good planning but allows the spaces available to be used fully with good opportunities for the children to play creatively. Good assessments are made of children's learning that are used very well by the teacher and the learning support assistant to extend this learning systematically and effectively.

33. **Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is very good.**

Children settle quickly into school routines and are happy and confident. They talk happily to their classmates and adults and have already formed positive relationships with both children and adults. They learn to take turns, although some children call out and are gently reminded to put their hands up. Children are courteous to each other and play happily in the various play areas established by the class teacher. They dress and undress themselves independently and confidently demonstrate

how different animals walk and talk while wearing various animal masks. They share resources and toys well, playing together happily and confidently. They are friendly towards each other and show much maturity in resolving the little difficulties that arise by being very willing to help and care for each other.

34. **Communication, language and literacy** skills are very good and children are maintaining high standards. There are good opportunities for the children to share their thoughts and feelings throughout the day in both formal and informal situations. They speak confidently to adults and are courteous, friendly and polite. They express themselves clearly and this helps them to resolve the little difficulties that arise each day. In more formal opportunities to speak and listen in a group, children are very willing to make contributions. This confidence, maturity and support for one another allowed the children to successfully take part in the Christmas concert when all the children performed songs. Most children write their names legibly and many are writing simple words and brief phrases. There is a variation in writing ability and some children have difficulty holding a pencil or crayon, and not all children write letters and numbers correctly. Children's confidence is maintained as they are gently encouraged to try different methods and they are all writing well by the time they start in Year 1. Many of the children are writing very well and most of this is completed unaided.

35. High standards are similarly maintained in the children's **mathematical development**. They enjoy counting forwards and backwards in ones and twos and most children confidently add and take away one from a given number up to 10. Children know and recognise primary colours and they have a good understanding of terms such as more and less, over and under. Many children benefit from working alongside older pupils and they already have a good understanding of concepts such as odd and even numbers and a working knowledge of place value. Many children learn rapidly and to a high level of attainment, but this is not pushed to the detriment of the enjoyment of school and their enthusiasm for learning. Consequently, their learning is effective and fun.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain high standards and achieve well.
- Pupils enjoy active learning, including drama and role-play, and this supports speaking and listening skills well.
- Teaching is very good, and often stimulates pupils effectively.
- Curriculum innovations are improving the quality of learning opportunities for pupils.
- The library provision is inadequate to meet pupils' needs.
- Opportunities for writing are used well in other subjects.

Commentary

36. The high standards attained by pupils in national tests are being maintained through the school. This is the outcome of very good teaching and all pupils being expected to achieve or maintain high standards. All pupils, including those with SEN, achieve well throughout the school and some particularly good work was noted with Year 2 pupils. In Year 2, standards have risen impressively over the past two years, which is a reflection of the improved quality of teaching.

Since the last inspection, pupils have maintained very good standards in speaking and listening. Standards in reading and writing are now very good overall in the school. At the time of the last inspection they were in line with national averages in Year 2 and with national expectations in Year 5. The school is currently working upon raising standards of writing in Year 5.

37. Pupils enjoy their learning. Particular improvements noted since the last inspection include the very good planning by teachers and the very effective use of assessment to guide future teaching. Classroom assistants also contribute well to the support, encouragement and challenge given to pupils. Pupils enjoy practical activities in lessons and Year 5 pupils spoke of their enjoyment of role-play and drama. Some of them recently started a drama club, which they lead, during three lunchtimes for other pupils. Speaking and listening skills are further promoted by these activities.

38. Teaching is very good across the school, although some good practices are not applied consistently. An outstanding lesson, thoroughly enjoyed by all present including the inspector, was observed with Year 2 and 3 pupils. Pupils were developing their research skills to find information and the level of challenge in the tasks varied to match the needs of different groups. 'Animals' was the topic used and this was prior to the visit of the 'animal man'. The teacher, with the learning support assistant, maintained a sense of verve and purpose through the lesson and pupils responded with unflinching enthusiasm and effort to the end. Good relationships and respect between pupils and adults underpinned the excellent learning. Having told pupils their learning 'targets', the teacher injected a sense of awe and excitement at the prospect of researching in different ways about different animals. Simple line drawings of a few animals supported the opening discussion on the carpet. The pupils wholeheartedly set about the task expected of their group, working with the resources provided for them. One pupil was selected to work with the teacher using the Internet for research. At appropriate intervals the pace and purpose were sustained with exhortations from the teacher such as 'What is our mission', or 'Children - you have 10 minutes left and then we are going to hot seat someone'. With three pupils sensitively chosen for hot seating, they all enjoyed the closing minutes of an outstanding lesson – full of fun, challenge and expectation. The quality of marking is often very good with encouraging comments and useful guidance for pupils on how they can improve their work. However, this high quality of marking is not found in all classes.

39. The subject is managed well, and recent innovations aim to maintain high standards, and to improve writing in Year 5. These include 'guided group reading', progress books to monitor the development of pupils' writing skills, pupils' individual targets that are displayed in their books and a new reading scheme. The library provision, however, is inadequate to meet pupils' learning needs fully and this limits the opportunities for pupils to engage in independent study on topics throughout the curriculum.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

Pupils use their language and literacy skills well in other subjects. There are frequent opportunities for writing in other subjects, and speaking and listening skills are consistently promoted well in other lessons.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good across the school.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Assessments of pupils' learning are used well to inform planning for lessons.
- Pupils enjoy practical activities and investigations.

Commentary

40. Standards are high in Year 2 and these pupils are achieving well in maintaining high standards. They are good in Year 5 and these pupils are also achieving well because their attainment was a little below average at the end of Year 2. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when standards were average at the end of Year 2. There are also positive signs that standards in Year 3 and Year 4 are higher than they are in Year 5.

41. Pupils develop a good understanding of number and those in Year 2 have a good mental recall of number facts with many also developing a good recall of some multiplication facts. Pupils in Year 5 demonstrate a good mental recall of multiplication facts to 10×10 . This supports their number work well and pupils in Year 2 use their numeracy skills to add and take away two and three digit numbers. By Year 5, pupils work confidently with numbers to two decimal places and with co-ordinates in four quadrants. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject and this has a significant effect on their good achievement.

42. Pupils achieve well because of the very good quality of teaching and learning in the subject. Teachers set clear learning intentions for lessons that are shared explicitly with the pupils. This allows them to know what they are learning and why. For example, pupils in Year 2 explained that they were learning about place value because it would help them to work out money problems when they go shopping. Teachers plan tasks with varying levels of difficulty that match the different learning needs of the pupils in the class. Consequently, all pupils are working at an appropriate level of difficulty and so are able to sustain concentration on their tasks. They are productive and most complete their tasks by the end of the lesson. Some pupils require additional assistance and the learning support assistants provide this well because they work closely with the teacher and understand the purpose of the lesson.

43. Regular assessments are made of pupils' learning and this information is used well in planning lessons. Pupils' work is marked regularly and useful comments are frequently made that show pupils how they can improve their work, particularly with Years 2 and 3. However, although work in Years 4 and 5 is marked regularly, these pupils are given less guidance on how to improve. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and they insist in high standards of behaviour. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and they work hard, which helps to make lessons enjoyable occasions. They particularly enjoy practical sessions and this was seen with Year 1 pupils who worked collaboratively to estimate whether items were more or less than a kilogram before weighing them. However, the oldest pupils report that they have fewer opportunities to engage in practical investigations.

Mathematics across the curriculum

44. There is some use of pupils' numeracy skills in other subjects such as science and design and technology. Pupils also use computers to investigate and identify co-ordinates, for example. There are, however, further opportunities for pupils to develop and use their numeracy skills in other lessons that are not identified in curriculum plans.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning is very good and pupils enjoy the opportunities for practical work in investigations.
- Planning has improved since the last inspection and now supports the steady progression in pupils' skills, including their appreciation of fair testing.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to engage in independent enquiry.

Commentary

45. Standards are well above average because very good teaching motivates pupils very effectively. Year 5 pupils have a good appreciation of the importance of fair testing. Asked about fair testing while engaged in investigating the soundproofing qualities of different materials, a pupil responded simply, 'You cannot change anything else: just the material'. In this lesson, the stimulating and thoughtful teaching kept all pupils engrossed. They developed their thinking skills well as the teacher collected and recorded the observations of the six groups on the whiteboard. Many pupils suggested patterns and made generalisations about how well different materials, such as bubble wrap, towel and tweed muffled sound. They also suggested how they might improve their work with 'more wires', 'a wider range of materials' and 'making a better connection of the buzzer'.

46. The subject is managed well and curriculum planning, which was a weakness identified in the last report, has developed strongly since then. Science topics are now set out in a two-year cycle, and the plans provide teachers with guidance on developing pupils' skills progressively as they pass through the school.

47. The school has usefully identified investigations in science as a focus to enrich pupils' learning. The policy of making sparing use of worksheets means pupils have good opportunities to practise literacy skills in various forms in science. However, pupils have limited experience of using ICT to record their findings. Investigations are, predominantly, led by the teacher. Pupils have insufficient experience of developing their own enquiries, such as formulating a question to be answered, deciding which resources to use, or suggesting a method of investigation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

No lessons were observed during the inspection. However, talking with pupils and with staff, examining pupils' work on disc and on hard copy, and seeing teachers planning, indicates that the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of resources has improved greatly since the last report, although the computer suite does not fully meet the needs of pupils.
- Training for teachers has improved their confidence and expertise.
- Curriculum planning has developed well, making appropriate use of national guidelines.

Commentary

48. Standards of attainment of pupils in Year 2 and Year 5 meet national expectations. All pupils achieve satisfactorily, including those with SEN. Pupils apply their skills to developing text and images when producing, for example, the programme of the Christmas play and reports for the school newspaper. Pupils use the Internet for research, have experience of sending emails and use a programmable toy.

49. Resources to support learning have improved since the last inspection. A wider range of software supports learning in many subjects. A computer suite has been established, although it is not large enough to meet pupils' needs fully. Teachers and learning support assistants have all undertaken further training in using computers, which has had a significant impact on pupils' learning. Teaching and learning is supported well by planning which helps pupils to systematically develop their skills in ICT throughout the school.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

50. There are useful links to support work in other subjects. Examples include word-processing in geography and using the Internet for research in history. However, opportunities for data handling and recording in science and mathematics are not fully exploited.

HUMANITIES

51. One lesson was observed in each of geography, history and religious education. Teachers' planning and pupils' work was examined and pupils were talked to about their work in school. It was not possible to see more lessons, as history and geography are taught alternately and only one lesson in religious education was taught during the inspection. It is not possible, therefore, to make secure judgements about the provision in any of these subjects. However, the curriculum is planned to provide the full range of these subjects as detailed in the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.

52. Pupils in Years 2 - 3 enjoy learning about Chinese New Year in **religious education**. A parent who has recently visited China is supporting this work and the artefacts and information that she shares with the pupils stimulate their imagination well. In the very well planned lesson that was observed, pupils worked well collaboratively on practical tasks that developed their understanding effectively. They demonstrate a sound knowledge of the major religions and this contributes positively to their understanding of other cultures.

53. In **history**, pupils in Years 2 and 3 enhance their knowledge of historical periods by considering changes over time. For example, when studying the Fire of London, they consider how things have changed and the conditions of the time that led to the fire. They continue this line of enquiry when studying Florence Nightingale and they show good factual knowledge of the conditions of the period. The teacher extends this knowledge by asking one pupil in the marking of her work, 'Why do you think the water was dirty?' Pupils in Years 4 and 5 build on their knowledge of the Second World War by considering how things have changed since the 1930's. This work is supported well by a stimulating display of artefacts for each decade since then.

54. In **geography**, pupils in Years 4 and 5 develop a good knowledge of the water cycle that includes correct geographical language for features such as tributaries, meanders and estuaries. They also study different environments effectively and consider how this influences lifestyles. There was little work in Years 1 - 3 to consider because of the way the teaching of history and geography is organised. However, pupils effectively used their experiences of holidays to think about how things are different in various locations.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

55. One lesson was observed in each of art and design, design and technology, and physical education. No lessons were observed in music. It is not possible, therefore, to make secure judgements about the quality of the provision or standards. However, in addition to observing lessons, inspectors spoke to staff, looked at pupils' work and scrutinised teachers' planning documents. From this evidence, it is clear that the subjects are managed well, with sound curriculum plans. The full programme of work planned for these subjects has effectively drawn upon national guidelines where appropriate. A visit from a Peruvian arts group featured art, musical instruments and food, and this effectively widened pupils' experiences.

56. In **art and design**, pupils throughout the school use a sketchbook in which they record examples of finished work. These provide a record of their progress, and pupils also use them to develop skills and to practice different techniques. The local environment is often used as a resource for observational painting in Year 1 and landscape drawing in Years 4 and 5. Year 3 pupils use a viewfinder to frame their observational drawings and they develop their skills in using shading and tone. Pupils in Year 4 having completed landscape drawings and evaluated their progress well to see what improvements they might make.

57. Year 1 pupils showed great enthusiasm in **design and technology**. They had prepared background pictures and were in the process of choosing and designing a moving part to complete the scene. The teacher encouraged them to be independent in their choice of scene, and most showed a good ability to develop their own ideas. A shark at sea, a bird in the sky, and a jellyfish in the sea were some of the moving pictures produced.

58. In **music**, pupils readily show their enjoyment of the subject, not least in their singing in assembly. Pupils sang tunefully in a joyful yet controlled manner. Before dinner in the hall each day, all the pupils are quiet before they sing the Grace together, accompanied by two pupils on the recorder. Pupils' progress in music is enhanced by special days, such as a 'South America Day', and by the recorder club. Some pupils also take additional instrumental sessions provided by peripatetic teachers.

59. In **physical education**, pupils experience a broad curriculum. There are weekly swimming lessons for pupils from Year 2. There was very good teaching in the gymnastics lesson observed. Pupils evaluated their sequences of movements that they built up during the lesson under the guidance of the teacher. All were clear in what they were doing. The teacher helped them appreciate how they could consider certain aspects of their work, such as fluency, control, extension and tension, to improve their performance.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Provision in PSHE is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has successfully adopted the 'Nurturing School' programme to maintain high standards of provision.
- The good provision is reflected in the consistently good and respectful relationships fostered by adults, boosting pupils' self respect and enhancing their learning.

Commentary

60. The school programme for PSHE helps pupils to learn about family life, health and hygiene, drugs awareness and their environment. Sex and relationships education is also covered well. The school is successfully drawing upon ideas in the 'Nurturing schools' programme. Pupils in Years 2

and 3 share their thoughts and feelings about anger, considering what makes them angry and how they might deal with feelings of anger. The secure and supportive environment established by teachers and learning support assistants help pupils to become more aware of themselves and of others.

61. Pupils are helped to develop confidence and self esteem in lessons each day. Teachers consistently encourage them to share their views and ideas and they know they are valued as 'young persons'. This helps them to develop very positive attitudes to learning and behaviour. The ethos of the school strongly promotes pupils' spiritual, social and moral development.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).