

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGH ASH CHURCH OF ENGLAND COMBINED SCHOOL

Great Brickhill
Milton Keynes

LEA area: Bucks

Unique reference number: 110419

Headteacher: Mrs L Eaton

Lead inspector: Janet Sinclair

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 24th September 2003

Inspection number: 256413

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First and Middle
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 to 12 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	264
School address:	Pound Hill Great Brickhill Milton Keynes
Postcode:	MK17 9AS
Telephone number:	01525 261620
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Andy Howell
Date of previous inspection:	29 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

High Ash is an average sized Church of England voluntary controlled school, located in a small village near Milton Keynes. Pupils come from a predominately white background, mostly of UK heritage. There are a small number of pupils from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, specifically Chinese and Asian. Approximately two per cent of the school population come from homes where English is not the first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average and there are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Pupils' attainment on entry varies over time but is mainly above average. The socio economic circumstances of the pupils are generally advantaged and pupil mobility is average. The school has recently been awarded 'Investors in People' status.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18824	Mrs Janet Sinclair	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Science; Religious Education
1311	Mr Barry Wood	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
22831	Mr Clive Lewis	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Information and communication technology; Creative and aesthetic
18498	Mrs Denise Morris	<i>Team inspector</i>	Foundation Stage; Physical Education; Special Educational Needs
15023	Mr Ali Haouas	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Humanities; English as an additional language; French

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school's **effectiveness** and value for money are **good**. Pupils achieve well across the school. This is because of good teaching, the clear direction given by the new headteacher, good curriculum coverage and very good use of assessment. The school's very good ethos, strong commitment to inclusion and supportive working environment encourages very good attitudes to work.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well across the school and by the end of Year 6, standards in reading, mathematics and science are well above average.
- Standards in physical education are high and pupils achieve very well.
- The leadership of the headteacher, key staff and governors is good, and provides a clear educational direction for the school.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and sometimes very good and ensure work is well planned to match most pupils' needs, particularly those who are less able.
- The school's very good ethos, care of pupils and provision for curricular enrichment promotes very good attitudes and behaviour in the pupils.
- Information and communication technology is not used well enough across the curriculum by all staff.
- Greater match of work is needed if gifted and talented pupils are to reach their full potential.

Overall, the school's improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen well in mathematics, science, information and communication technology and physical education. There were no key issues in the last report but the minor issues identified have been fully addressed. In all other areas the school has maintained the strengths identified in the previous report. This is a good and improving school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	All schools			Similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A	A	A	C
Mathematics	A	A	A	C
Science	A	A	B	B

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

Achievement is good overall. Across the school pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language make good progress. Standards of the current Year 6 are above average overall in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Pupils are achieving well in mathematics and science and satisfactorily in English. Pupils' current rate of progress in English is good. Standards are high in physical education. The school provides well for the very small number of pupils in Year 7. There are no significant gender issues.

Standards in Year 2 are well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics and pupils are achieving well.

Standards are above average in relation to the goals children are expected to reach at the end of their Reception year. Children achieve well and exceed the early learning goals in all areas of learning. On entry they are slightly above average in their attainment and by the end of the year they are securely above average.

Pupils' personal qualities are **good** overall. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good and their spiritual, moral and cultural development is good overall. Attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Teaching and learning are **good** with examples of good and sometimes very good teaching in each year group. In the best lessons, teachers make good use of questioning to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Good use is made of developing thinking skills to focus children on specific areas such as feelings. Teachers plan lessons well and lessons are well organised and managed, enabling pupils to make good progress. Pupils enjoy these lessons and put in a great deal of effort and hard work. Very good use is made of assessment to ensure work is well matched to pupils' individual needs. In the less successful lessons teachers allow too much noise and do not challenge pupils sufficiently, which can lead to a loss of interest in the activities. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning through the effective support they give to groups and individuals.

The curriculum across the school is good. It is well planned, broad and relevant. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and their individual education plans provide clear instructions on how to meet their needs. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language are catered for well within the curriculum. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are very good and fully meet requirements. There is scope to widen the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. The school has a good partnership with parents and with the community it serves.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good.

The headteacher, senior management team and key staff are providing clear educational direction and secure management systems in order to create an effective working environment. Pupils' progress is tracked very well and there is effective monitoring of teaching and learning. The school improvement plan is detailed and is used by all staff and governors as the main tool for school improvement, particularly raising standards. Financial management is tautly controlled. The work of the governing body is good. They are committed to the school and its continued improvement and ensure they take appropriate action to enable them to identify its strengths and weaknesses.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents: Most parents are happy with what the school provides. Their children like coming to school, the teaching is good, their children are expected to work hard and are encouraged to become mature and responsible. They appreciate the good range of activities that the school provides as well as the good arrangements for settling in new pupils. A few were concerned about the information they received about their children's progress, provision for homework, the mixed age classes and how they were consulted. The inspection team could find no evidence to support these concerns.

Pupils: Pupils like school, find other children friendly and feel extremely secure that they will find an adult to support them when they are worried. Most feel they are expected to work hard and are confident that their teachers will help them to make their work better. Some of the older children were concerned that all children did not behave well. During the inspection all pupils behaved very well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Improve the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum;
- Provide a programme, involving subject co-ordinators, to extend gifted and talented pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards are well above average in reading, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 and pupil achievement is good.
- Standards are high in physical education at the end of Year 6 and pupils achieve very well.
- The current rate of progress in English is good.

Commentary

1. Children mainly start school with levels of attainment that are slightly above average overall. By the time they leave the Reception classes and enter Year 1, almost all children have exceeded the standard required to meet the early learning goals, and achieve securely above average standards in all areas of learning. Consequently, their progress during their Reception year is good.

2. In the National Curriculum test taken by pupils in Year 2 in 2002, results were well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Teacher assessments for science were well above average. Compared with similar schools, based on the number of pupils having a free school meal, standards were above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. Teacher assessments in science were well above average. The school has maintained these standards over several years. The 2003 unpublished results show a dip in standards in reading and writing, but there were a larger number of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in this year group and pupils did not perform as well as expected in the new writing tests. Pupils presently in Year 2 are likely to attain well above average standards in reading, mathematics and science and above average standards in writing and information and communication technology (ICT). There is good curricular provision, assessment is used well to target individual needs, pupils are being taught well and consequently their achievement is good. This includes pupils with SEN who are well supported and pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) who achieve in line with their peers.

3. In the National Curriculum tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2002, results were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. These standards had been maintained over several years. Given their prior attainment, standards were average in English and mathematics and above average in science. The 2003 unpublished results show a drop in achievement in English and this was mainly because there was a high number of pupils with SEN in this year group (approximately 40 per cent of them had been on the SEN register at some point between Year 3 and 6). Standards in mathematics and science have been broadly maintained, although these too were lower. Pupils currently in Year 6 are likely to attain well above average standards in mathematics and science and above average standards in English. The current rate of progress in English is good, as the school's English co-ordinator has clearly identified areas for improvement and put strategies in place to secure this. In mathematics and science, progress in lessons and overall achievement is good as a result of good provision for scientific investigations, very good match of work in mathematics and a well planned and organised curriculum. Standards in physical education are high by the end of Year 6 and pupils achieve very well. This is a significant strength of the school and is due to the very strong leadership provided by the subject co-ordinator and the commitment of staff, parents and outside agencies to after-school sporting activities. Standards in religious education are in line with the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils with SEN are well supported and pupils with EAL achieve in line with their peers.

4. There has been a good improvement in standards in mathematics, science and physical education since the previous inspection. Overall achievement is similar

5. There is presently a smaller than average number of pupils with SEN at the school. Provision for these pupils is good, and they make good progress towards achieving their targets. This is a similar picture to that at the last inspection. Clear specific targets are set and pupils and parents are fully involved in the process. Achievements are reviewed regularly. In class, pupils with SEN are well supported and fully included in all aspects of learning. Good links with the local education authority (LEA) support services and with future providers ensure that pupils receive their entitlement.

**Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2002
19 boys and 11 girls**

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.2 (29.6)	27.0 (27.0)
Mathematics	29.0 (28.2)	26.7 (26.6)
Science	30.4 (30.4)	28.3 (28.3)

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Provision for their moral and social development is very good and provision for their spiritual and cultural development is good, making these aspects of the pupils' personal development good overall. Pupils' attendance at school is good and their punctuality satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils are proud of their school and have a very good understanding of the high expectations of the headteacher and staff.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in the classroom are consistently at a good level and contribute well to their interest and concentration. Their very good behaviour outside the classroom effectively supports the school's smooth running.
- Pupils' good relationships allow them to feel confident and safe in all school activities.
- The very good moral and social provision has positively shaped the pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils want to attend school, but in-term holidays can lower the attendance of some pupils, and a small minority of pupils have poor attendance, which affects their progress.
- Teachers do not systematically plan opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision in their lesson plans.

Commentary

6. The headteacher makes a determined effort to focus parents on ensuring that their children attend school. Most parents respond conscientiously, but some parents do not see holidays in school term time as absence. The school has well established attendance procedures and the analysis of registers is thorough. The school works closely with the education social worker to improve attendance.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2001/2002 (%)

Authorised Absence		Unauthorised Absence	
School data	4.0	School data	0.0
National data	5.2	National data	0.2

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

7. The new headteacher has created an environment where pupils' self-discipline is effectively promoted. Throughout the school pupils respond well and their calmness ensures a purposeful atmosphere in classrooms and builds high quality relationships between teachers and pupils. The school has not needed to use exclusions, as all pupils have a good understanding of the behaviour boundaries. Pupils with SEN are indistinguishable in attitudes and behaviour from other pupils. All pupils listen well to their teachers and show high levels of concentration when working alone and good co-operation when working in groups or exchanging ideas. Older pupils increasingly realise that hard work can be fun and will bring good results. Around the school, pupils are relaxed and polite to adults and their attitudes and behaviour are very good. They play safely together without fear of bullying or harassment. Pupils value each other's differences and contributions either in the classroom or in the many school activities. They show obvious respect for their environment, of which they are justifiably proud. Pupils are given good opportunities to take responsibility and older pupils are eager to help younger pupils through the 'Buddy' system.

8. The well-developed provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is backed by timetabled very good personal, health and social education (PSHE). However, teaching across all curriculum subjects would benefit from developing more planned opportunities. This is particularly true for the spiritual provision, where pupils' exposure to the teachings of other faiths is limited. The school is sensitive to pupils' feelings and emotions, especially when they introduce topics at assemblies. All pupils know the difference between right and wrong, which is reinforced through work in assemblies and visitors to the school such as the community police officer and the local vicar. Pupils are proud of their house teams and enjoy representing the school in outside competitions, where they have considerable success. The school's ethos is strong in valuing the individual, allowing pupils to think deeply about issues and promoting their confidence and self-esteem, but within the context of friendship and working together. The school is an energetic force in the local community and pupils respect their own cultural roots and traditions. They take part in the many clubs for sport, art, and music. The small number of pupils from other cultures have opportunities to celebrate their own cultural backgrounds and enrich the life of the school. For example, the school celebrated Chinese New Year and pupils learnt to count to 20 in Mandarin.

9. The personal social and emotional development of children in the Reception Year is catered for well by their class teachers. Their progress in achieving the Foundation Stage's early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development is good. Children's attitudes and behaviour are generally good, and pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
185	0	0
1	0	0
5	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
62	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. There is a very good ethos which permeates the work of the school and very good relationships which provide a strong basis for the good quality teaching and learning which takes place.

Teaching and learning

The quality of **teaching and learning** are **good** across the school. Assessment of pupils work is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teachers plan lessons well and ensure that learning intentions are made clear to pupils.
- Very good relationships create a harmonious working environment where pupils work collaboratively, demonstrate very good attitudes to tasks and a willingness to work hard.
- Assessment of pupils' work is very good and the information gathered is used effectively to meet their needs.
- Teachers develop pupils' literacy skills well across the curriculum.
- Occasionally, lessons lack challenge and teachers allow pupils to become too noisy; both of these adversely affect pupils' learning capability.
- Although the school has identified its gifted and talented pupils, there is no structured programme in place to support their learning.

Commentary

10. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the school is similar to that of the last inspection, when it was also considered to be good. Learning is also similar and this is helped by the very good attitudes and behaviour shown by the pupils.

11. Teachers plan lessons well, ensuring good coverage of the curriculum as well as providing a clear structure for the lesson, which enables them to question pupils effectively. In their plans, there are clear learning intentions for the lesson which are almost always shared with the pupils and often revisited during the lesson. This ensures that pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn and focuses them well in lessons. It also helps to focus teacher questioning, as does the new 'thinking skills' programme. Literacy and numeracy lessons are well planned to ensure they meet the requirements of the national strategies and successfully promote pupils' learning. Planning in these lessons takes full account of the differing learning needs of pupils, particularly those with SEN.

12. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and in most lessons there is an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity to the needs of others. Pupils settle quickly and sensibly to their task and, as they are usually quite clear about the learning intention, most are able to complete their work without undue hesitation. The good opportunities that are given to work collaboratively enhance their speaking and listening skills and fully support their social development. These exchanges are always harmonious and thoughtful. Most pupils think that teachers are fair and will listen to what they have to say.

13. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress, which were good at the last inspection, have improved since then and are now very good. They are thorough and very detailed in English, mathematics and science with good improvements in the foundation subjects since the last inspection. Day to day assessment is effective and very good use is made of learning objectives to gauge pupils' learning, both in lessons and in marking pupils' written work. This works well because teachers systematically share the criteria for achievement with pupils. The system used to record pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science is

very detailed and thorough with data updated regularly. The information is effectively used to group pupils and to focus support on those who fall short of expectations to help them catch up. A good number of portfolios of assessed work in a number of subjects are used to guide teachers in ensuring that assessments are accurate and consistent.

14. Pupils' progress is regularly reviewed and updated through the use of progress books which provide a rich source of information for pupils as they move through the school. Targets for improvements are shared with them and, in the best examples, are followed through when work is marked. Pupils respond well to how their work is assessed and this enables them to make good progress. Most pupils think that their teachers show them how they can make their work better.

15. Teachers are very good at developing pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, in a Year 6 lesson in religious education, pupils were encouraged to give their views on the meaning of a range of artefacts. In a science lesson, pupils were encouraged to use technical terms such as 'dissolve' and 'saturation' associated with the investigation they were carrying out, and in a history lesson in Year 3, pupils were encouraged to use their reference skills in order to research information on the Greek army.

16. There are many reasons why teaching and learning are good, but some have a greater impact than others. Teachers have high expectations and question pupils effectively, pupils know what they are expected to learn, they are managed well and there are very good caring relationships which fully support their learning. The school has a variety of booster and extension classes and organises pupils according to ability in English, mathematics and science in Year 6, in order to match work closely to their learning needs.

17. Occasionally, when teaching is no more than satisfactory, teachers allow too high a level of noise or tasks lack challenge and this is detrimental to pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 6 science lesson, there was not enough instruction to clearly focus pupils on their investigation and some became very noisy and this affected the concentration of all the others.

18. The school has a policy and register for gifted and talented pupils but has not clearly set out a programme of work to fully develop the abilities of these pupils. Co-ordinators are not clear about who these pupils are or the level of support and extension they may need.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (2%)	8 (16%)	28 (56%)	13 (26%)	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

THE CURRICULUM

The **curriculum** on offer at the school is **good**. It is broad, balanced and relevant and successfully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. The school provides very good opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum, through very good extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy the subjects of the curriculum and most think that lessons are fun and they learn new things. There has been **good improvement** in the provision since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good and leads to high quality social and moral development.
- The physical education curriculum is a major strength, leading to very high achievement in physical skills.
- Provision for speaking and listening is very good, both in English lessons, and across other subjects.
- The new 'Thinking Skills' programme, introduced by the headteacher, enriches pupils learning.
- Pupils have easy access to and enjoy a very wide range of opportunities that enrich the curriculum extremely well, including extra curricular activities and sport.
- The expertise and commitment of the staff are good and the good level of resources for learning helps them meet the needs of the pupils and curriculum effectively.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used well enough in other subjects of the curriculum.
- The school's accommodation has an insufficient number of toilets for the number of pupils.

Commentary

19. Provision for PSHE is very good. A strong focus has been developed to encourage pupils to develop healthy life-styles. The very good scheme of work is closely linked to 'Health for Life', and it includes good provision for sex education and drugs awareness. Workshops have been held for staff and parents to ensure continuity in the provision. An important feature is the provision for 'Circle' times, in which pupils have opportunities to share their successes and their concerns. The high quality of the provision promotes very good moral and social awareness in pupils.

20. Provision for physical education is very good and is a major strength of the school. The very wide range of activities and extensive sporting clubs, lead to very good achievement by pupils and standards that are high. The subject contributes very well to the social and moral development of all pupils.

21. Provision for speaking and listening is very good. In English lessons, pupils are offered frequent opportunities to express themselves, extend their vocabulary and develop their language skills. In other subjects, this is very well fostered. For example, in physical education, pupils use speaking skills very well to evaluate their own performances. Circle times promote very good discussions as pupils talk about matters of immediate interest and listen carefully to others. In humanities, pupils were observed listening very carefully in one lesson as they learned about the ancient Greeks. They offered sensible and well thought out comments, benefiting from the opportunities offered for discussion.

22. The new 'Thinking Skills' programme is a major initiative, which the headteacher has introduced. All staff and governors have received training and parents were invited to attend a workshop. This programme, observed during the inspection, is successful in helping pupils to think carefully, work out answers to questions and solve problems. It has led to some very good questioning by teachers, which extends and challenges pupils in many subjects.

23. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used well enough to support learning in other subjects. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to undertake research in subjects such as humanities, science and mathematics, or to use ICT to present their work in all areas of learning.

24. The headteacher and staff understand the importance of extra-curricular activities in the life of the school. They are keen that all pupils, whatever their circumstances, are able to participate in a wide range of high quality activities outside the classroom. Many pupils are busy at lunchtimes or after-school enjoying their favourite pastimes. The school makes every effort to support some

activities with outside trained resources or local enthusiasts. In some cases older pupils initiate and run clubs for younger pupils. The school's promotion of sport is excellent and produces success in inter-school competitions. The school is highly innovative in the menu of activities provided for pupils; for example, an electronics club, a glass club and a French club illustrate the diverse range.

25. Overall, the school's resources are satisfactory. The staffing levels are adequate for the needs of the curriculum, but staff's expertise, morale and commitment levels are significantly high and produce good outcomes. The accommodation is attractively set and is adequate for the needs of the National Curriculum, but access to classrooms is sometimes poor, particularly in the lower school, and there is a lack of sufficient toilets and separate changing facilities for older pupils. The school has prioritised the provision of learning resources in the school budget and they are at a good level in most subjects.

Care, guidance and support.

The school ensures pupils' care, welfare and health and safety very effectively. It provides them with good support and guidance and is highly effective in involving them in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The school is a safe environment for all pupils through very good health and safety, effective child protection procedures, and the keen awareness of staff.
- The headteacher, staff and well-trusted regular visitors have a very good knowledge of pupils and offer them good personal support.
- Pupils are soon made to feel part of the school through good induction procedures.
- The school makes very determined efforts to listen to pupils and value their views as part of the school family.
- The school does not have sufficient procedures in place for easily tracking the personal development of pupils during their time in the school.

Commentary

26. The new headteacher has strengthened many aspects of the support, guidance and welfare of pupils to a very good level. Systems and procedures are thorough and are well implemented by diligent and caring staff and this is supplemented by good support from outside professional agencies. The school has a very good focus on the care agenda and it effectively integrates pupils within a wide spectrum of learning difficulties. It is very vigilant to risks to children. Child protection procedures conform to local statutory guidelines and staff training is updated regularly. The headteacher, governors and caretaker undertake regular audits of the school premises and the school completes risk assessments of activities, which produce a safe environment.

27. The provision of support and guidance based on monitoring the individual child is good. Academic performance is systematically tracked over the pupil's time in the school. The personal development of pupils is well monitored by teachers and issues discussed with the headteacher. However, the history of an individual pupil's personal development is not easily tracked, as records are passed between teachers and few records are centrally summarised. Teachers identify pupils with SEN and they develop good individual educational plans, which are shared with pupils and parents.

28. The headteacher and staff give a very high priority to the pastoral care of all pupils, and pupils know that they can trust their teachers and other staff to listen to their problems and anxieties. Regular visitors to the school support the school in this task. Pupils show an obvious happiness in their school life and feel that they can undertake a learning adventure in a safe environment surrounded by friends and people they like. The school buddy system is firmly part of the school's culture and allows older pupils to mentor younger pupils without requiring adult intervention.

29. The induction of pupils new to the school is good, and is appreciated by parents. Pupils rapidly become part of the school family, eagerly form good relationships and have a go at activities without fear.

30. The school is very effective in consulting with pupils and seeking their ideas. It routinely calls for their views through personal and social education sessions in class. Pupils have influenced parts of the school development plan and they can formally express their views through the school council, which discusses and implements real issues of importance to pupils. For example, pupils are currently involved in consultation on the development of a wildlife area in the school grounds.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community.

The partnership with parents is good. The links with the local community are good. The links with other schools are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The headteacher is building a good and improving partnership with parents.
- The information for parents about the school and their children's progress is very good.
- Parents support the school well through good attendance and helping their children at home.
- Parents participate well in the daily life of the school, and contribute to the strong ethos.
- All pupils benefit greatly from their numerous contacts with the local community.
- The school sustains good relationship with secondary schools which smoothes the transfer of pupils to the next stage of education.
- A small minority of parents are dissatisfied with aspects of the school, despite the school's best efforts to listen to their concerns.

Commentary

31. The new headteacher gives a very high priority to the school's relationships with all parents. There is a small increase in the levels of parental satisfaction since the last inspection. Parents show an increasing confidence in all aspects of the school and particularly the way in which the headteacher confronts and deals promptly with their problems and complaints. They feel that their role as a parent is valued and respected. There are large increases in parents' satisfaction for the revised homework arrangements. Parents have very high satisfaction levels for many aspects of the school; extra-curricular activities, the standard of their children's work, the values and attitudes of the school and the effect on the maturity of their children, teaching, induction procedures and the approachability of the school.

32. The dissatisfaction levels of parents have risen since the last inspection. Despite the headteacher's and school's best efforts, a small minority of parents compare the new headteacher's management style unfavourably with the previous headteacher, dislike some of the changes in school procedures, for example mixed age classes, or have expectations for their children in terms of grammar school selection that the school cannot guarantee to fulfil. The headteacher is a capable leader and manager who has the total confidence of her governing body. She is courageous in reshaping the school in line with the requirements of the school budget, and as a school that includes many types of children, whatever their backgrounds or emotional or physical problems, without any reduction in the overall performance.

33. The statutory information for parents is very good and shows the essential ethos and character of the school. Annual reports to parents are comprehensive statements of what children can do in all National Curriculum subjects and contain academic targets for the following year. Parents feel comfortable with the feedback opportunities they have with the school and recognise their children and their achievements.

34. Parents have signed the home-school agreement and fulfil their pledge through their children's good attendance and assisting them with homework. The school has been proactive with parents in discussing how they might help their children and explaining new educational strategies, including the 'Thinking Skills' programme. Many parents are energetic in helping the school and attending the many school functions.

The school serves three villages and links with the local community are thriving, to the mutual benefit of the pupils and the villagers. Relationships with the local church are increasingly good though the joint efforts of the new vicar and headteacher. Both the church and the adjacent countryside are important resources for the practical teaching of some subjects of the National Curriculum, and for school celebrations. People from the local community are welcomed into the school and play an important part in supporting the education of pupils. The school is well used as a community facility.

35. The school has good links to both the village pre-school and to secondary schools. Parents receive good advice as the time for transfer approaches, and the school's positive efforts produce an anxiety-free transition. The school's strong pastoral care extends to visiting the pupils in their new surroundings.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher provides good leadership with a clarity of vision, clear sense of purpose and appropriately high aspirations. Other key staff share a common purpose and make a good contribution to the school's goals and values. The effectiveness of management overall is good. The governing body has a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and helps shape the vision and direction of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The good leadership of the headteacher and other key staff.
- The commitment of the whole school staff to inclusion and equality and concern for the needs of individuals.
- Good financial management.
- The governance of the school is good.

Commentary

36. The headteacher provides good leadership for the school. She has a clear sense of purpose and high aspirations for the school and, in a relatively short period as headteacher, she has succeeded in creating an effective team who work together very well and inspire, motivate and support fellow staff and pupils. All school staff and governors are closely involved in the school's development planning and the resulting school improvement plan, which clearly reflects the school's ambitions and goals, is monitored closely. Curriculum leadership by the headteacher is good and has been particularly successful in ensuring appropriate emphasis on the 'non-core' subjects – the creative subjects and the humanities - when the national stress in recent years has been overwhelmingly on English and mathematics. The leadership and commitment of subject leaders is mainly good and in some cases, such as in English and mathematics, very good. All subject leaders are responsible for undertaking an annual review of their subject and senior management constantly monitor performance data, review emerging patterns and take effective action in order to improve standards. A very good example of this is the amount of effort, which has gone into improving writing across the school, the effects of which are only beginning to show.

37. The headteacher and all staff have a very clear commitment to inclusion and equal opportunity for all pupils and provide good role models for pupils. Target-setting and the monitoring of achievement are well established for individual pupils and policies for behaviour, planning and assessment are reflected clearly and consistently across the work of the whole school. This is

resulting in very good behaviour and attitudes in the pupils, which are having a good effect on their learning. Staff confirm that the school's performance management systems are well-managed and effective in providing support and in bringing about improvement. Staff new to the school, particularly newly-qualified teachers, speak very positively about the very good level of support they have received.

38. The school's systems and approaches to financial management were described as 'excellent' in a recent audit report and the school acted promptly on the main recommendations contained in the report. Inspection findings confirm that essential management functions are covered well and are not unduly bureaucratic, allowing teachers to get on with their job of teaching the pupils. Well-organised and well-monitored accounting systems help the school achieve key educational priorities by, for example, providing funding for additional teaching and support for the mixed-age classes, made unavoidable due to the significant annual fluctuations in year groups. There was a very large under spend in the budget when the new headteacher arrived 18 months ago. She and the governors are spending this money judiciously in order to improve the learning environment for the pupils and to support teaching and learning within the classroom.

39. The headteacher and governing body are aware of the 'Best Value' principles of challenge, comparison, consultation and competition. Their application to date in decision-making in such areas as setting targets, planning for improvement, and allocating resources to priorities and managing implementation has been largely informal.

40. Governors provide a good level of challenge and support to the school and carry out their statutory duties well. They are committed to raising achievement and scrutinise all results carefully to assess this. Along-side the headteacher and staff, they are fully committed to inclusion and have worked hard to secure a good level of access for disabled pupils and those with learning difficulties. Through their involvement in the school improvement plan they have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weakness. This is fully supplemented by their visits to the school and through their committee structure. All are willing to undertake training to improve their performance. They have been involved in the school's self-evaluation and recently reviewed the aims of the school in partnership with the whole school community. All of this enables them to challenge and debate with the school in an informed way.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	542194.00
Total expenditure	578342.00
Expenditure per pupil	2077.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	118931.00
Balance carried forward to the next	82785.00

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

41. There are two classes in the school, which cater for children in the Foundation Stage of Learning. One is a discrete Reception class; the other is a mixed-age Reception and Year 1 class. In both classes, provision is good and children achieve well. This is because of good teaching, very good support from teaching assistants and the good range of learning opportunities that are provided.

42. On entry to the Reception classes, children achieve standards in line with those expected nationally in literacy, communication and language, and also in personal and social skills. In the other areas of learning, for example, mathematical, creative and physical development, and in their knowledge and understanding of the world around them, children achieve just above the nationally expected levels. By the time they leave the Reception classes and enter Year 1, almost all children have exceeded the standard required to meet the early learning goals, and achieve securely above average standards. Consequently, their progress during their Reception year is good. This represents good improvement since the last inspection.

43. The accommodation has also improved; with a good new outdoor play area that is easily accessed from both classes. The assessment of children's achievements is good and very good in literacy and language skills. It ensures that children of all abilities, including those with SEN, make good progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Children's achievements in this area of learning are good. They behave well in lessons, take turns and share resources. They are beginning to take some simple responsibilities. This is due to good quality activities and good teaching and support.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good management of behaviour in lessons and around the school leads to positive attitudes and behaviour.
- Good range of activities promotes confidence and self-esteem.

Commentary

44. Children's personal and social skills are good. Children behave well, are polite to each other and adults, and are developing into confident speakers and listeners in class. They work well together and quickly make friends. This is due to good quality teaching, which enables them to talk about personal issues, offer opinions and share their concerns. Children know and understand the classroom rules and they respect them. The good range of activities, including personal support, discussion, assemblies and play sessions, all enable pupils to learn about life within a community. They are taught to look after their environment and respect the needs of others through different curriculum areas and stories. They have studied texts, such as 'The Rainbow Fish' which promotes a sharing culture, kindness and friendship. These qualities are evident in everyday play situations. Children are beginning to undertake simple responsibilities, such as looking after their own equipment and putting away their books and toys but as they have only been in school a very short time, there was little evidence of children organising their own activities and learning resources, either indoors or outdoors.

COMMUNICATION LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Communication, language and literacy are good. Children achieve well in their communication, language and literacy skills due to good teaching and the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Very good assessment leads to activities that are very relevant.
- Children enjoy literacy sessions and are confident speakers, they behave very well.
- Teaching assistants are very well used to support individual learning and small groups.
- Sometimes, space in classrooms is not used well enough, and this causes disruption to other groups during literacy sessions.

Commentary

45. Children's development in language and literacy has improved since the last inspection. The good achievement of children in their communication, language and literacy skills is closely linked to the very specific assessment carried out regularly by teachers. This identifies particular abilities and needs, so that tasks can be tailored to improve achievement further. Children enjoy literacy. They are confident speakers and listeners, and contribute very well in lessons. They benefit from the very good questioning by teachers, which encourages them to think carefully before answering so that they use complete sentences that are generally accurate. Behaviour during literacy sessions is very good and children quickly become absorbed in stories. Teaching assistants are used very well to support children with difficulties, and also to work with small groups. They are very skilled in talking to young children. Occasionally, lessons are less successful because space is not used well enough. At these times, noise levels from one group distract other groups and reduce the quality of their learning.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is good. Children benefit from some very good practical activities and games that enable them to acquire the necessary skills for play situations. They achieve well due to good teaching and support, and to the good implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The quality of numeracy activities, which leads to enthusiasm and enjoyment in mathematics, is very good. Promotion of number language is also very good.
- Planning is not always clear enough to indicate what children will learn daily in mathematics.

Commentary

46. Some very good numeracy activities were seen in the Reception classes during the week of the inspection. Children learned about mathematics through play and through some exciting games. For example, in one lesson, they were identifying the number of legs on a spider, recognising numbers on 'toy boats' in a 'pond', and singing a range of number songs with enthusiasm. They showed that they could count to 10 confidently, recognise many numbers and begin to understand simple addition. Number activities are planned in many other lessons. For example, children were encouraged to name the shapes of boxes they were using to make musical instruments. One child commented that he had used two round tubs to make his shaker. The language of number is very well promoted by staff to encourage understanding. For example, in one session, the teacher asked which carton was the 'biggest', and which tube was the 'longest'. In a literacy story, good quality discussion about animals led to clear understanding of size, as children discussed the 'long'

neck of a giraffe and the 'big' ears of an elephant. Although many numeracy activities take place, planning does not always make clear which aspects are being fostered. Consequently, it is not clear how much mathematical development children receive on a daily basis. This makes monitoring difficult for each individual child.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is good. They develop their curiosity through a broad range of learning opportunities that encourages them to ask questions, investigate and find out information. They benefit from good teaching and good use of resources in this area of learning, and they achieve well in their lessons.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Use of resources to extend enquiry skills is good.
- Very good questioning by adults is used to extend thinking skills.
- Limited use of ICT was observed during the inspection and, in the review of past work, limited evidence of its use was found.

Commentary

47. Children's awareness of the world around them is effectively fostered through the use of real resources, pictures and books. They are encouraged to use their senses to find answers to questions. For example, in one lesson, children were studying a large picture to learn about growth and exercise. Because of very good questioning by the teaching assistants, they were able to note differences in the size of children and adults, identifying activities that were 'good' for the people in the picture. They noted that cycling was good exercise and 'kept you healthy'. A review of past work showed that children also recognise the need for sunlight and water in plant growth, and the need for food in plants and animals. However, too little evidence was seen of children using computers and other forms of ICT, both during the inspection and in past work. This impacts adversely on their investigative and enquiry skills.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is good. Children achieve well in this area of learning due to daily opportunities to use the good new outdoor play area, which enables them to make choices, use small and large equipment, push, pull, ride and play together with their peers. Good teaching, support and resources contribute to their good achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- There is a good, new outdoor play area.
- Resources are good overall.
- Daily opportunities, in fine weather, are provided to extend skills in physical and personal areas of learning.
- There is a lack of an outdoor covered area, which inhibits daily outdoor play in wet weather.

Commentary

48. Children's physical development has improved since the last inspection, and is now good. This is due to the opportunities created by the daily use of the new outdoor area. Because of this, children are confident to move around in space and develop their physical, as well as their personal skills. In one lesson, for example, children were observed happily riding in cars, playing with stilts,

pushing prams and wheelbarrows and taking turns very well. The outdoor area is small, but well stocked with resources to extend skills and keep children focused. However, the area lacks a covered section which would allow children to use it in wet or wintry weather. Consequently, daily use is limited at these times, which inhibits higher levels of achievement.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Children's creative development is good. They enjoy creating pictures and three-dimensional models, and tackle these tasks with enthusiasm. They benefit from good teaching and a good range of activities, which lead to good achievement in this area of learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- A good range of learning activities promotes artistic and design skills.
- Good questioning by staff extends children's creativity.
- This area of learning contributes to children's personal development.
- Time allocated to feed back is sometimes too limited to enable all children to explain their creations and extend their skills further.

Commentary

49. The good development of creative skills is promoted through some exciting activities that encourage high levels of concentration and enthusiasm. For example, children were observed designing and making puppets. They were very enthusiastic as they tore newspaper for papier maché, and good questioning ensured that they understood the process. In another lesson, children designed and made musical instruments. They were given several options to join boxes, tubs and tubes. Through trial and error, they made decisions about the most successful material for their instrument. Good questioning by the teacher extended their understanding of design and making. They thought very carefully about what they wanted to complete and how best to achieve it. Children use a range of different approaches to develop their own pictures. There are good examples of paintings, collage and drawings, which show good awareness of colour, line and texture. In the lessons observed, not enough time was allocated to feed back. Because of this, children were not always able to talk about their own efforts, receive ideas, or evaluate their successes.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH and FRENCH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards are above and often well above average across the aspects of English.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and, as a result, pupils achieve well.
- Literacy skills are developed in a number of subjects and are particularly well promoted through speaking and listening activities.
- The quality of leadership and management in the subject has a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Commentary

50. Standards in English are well above average in speaking and listening and reading and above average in writing by the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in speaking and listening and writing and well above average in reading. Pupils in Year 7 are making good progress against standards achieved at the end of Year 6. Standards have improved since the last inspection. The majority of pupils, including those with SEN and the few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, achieve well and this is mainly a reflection of the quality of teaching, the effectiveness of monitoring pupils' achievement and the quality of support provided for pupils who are at risk of underachieving.

51. By the end of Year 2, pupils listen attentively in a range of contexts, take an active part in discussions and share their work with their peers. Pupils demonstrate good levels of awareness of their peers as an audience and adapt their speech well according to the task in hand. Good examples of this were demonstrated by pupils in a history lesson, where they conveyed clearly to their peers their findings on the Greek army and navy. In many subjects, good emphasis is put on subject vocabulary which enables pupils to use it well; for instance in ICT, science and mathematics. By the end of Years 6 and 7, pupils build effectively on their previous learning. The great majority engage well in discussion and participate actively when responding to the shared text. Because of teachers' high expectations and the clear emphasis put on discussion, many demonstrate good skills in presenting information and sharing it with the class as an audience. Planned opportunities for speaking and listening are clearly identified in medium term plans and other opportunities such as a 'Speech Cup' competition, role play and the use of drama are equally harnessed to promote speaking skills.

52. Pupils in Year 2 read a range of texts with fluency, accuracy and good expression. The consistent focus in teaching of letter and sound patterns as well as the teaching of library skills on a regular basis has a positive and direct impact on reading standards. Higher and average attaining pupils recognise the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary and express preferences. The majority of pupils are familiar with the organisation of non-fiction books and use the content and index pages appropriately to find information. In Year 6, pupils are highly motivated, confident and read extensively a variety of texts. They cope well with demanding material, read independently and use non fiction material for research purposes. Many pupils keep a reading journal which they use to record their response to different types of texts. Pupils make good progress because of the effective management of reading with increasingly improved provision for guided reading. Library facilities are of good quality and pupils use them well for borrowing and browsing.

53. In Year 2, most pupils write correctly and fluently in both narrative and non-narrative forms with the highest attaining pupils organising writing appropriately, extending ideas and showing increasing control of punctuation. Pupils in Year 6 produce a wide range of writing, including letters, instructions

and poetry with the highest attaining pupils writing at length and using complex sentences. Evidence from analysis of work shows many good examples of writing of different kinds, including, for example, play scripts. The highest attaining pupils produce writing that is imaginative, extensive and varied, showing a good grasp of paragraphing and structure. Pupils are now making good progress against their prior attainment as a result of the school's recent increased focus on specific aspects of writing. Written work is now effectively assessed and the best teachers provide pupils with a clear idea about their strengths and where they need to improve.

54. The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of English, often reflected in the imaginative ways in which lessons are presented. Where teaching is particularly effective, pupils are enthused, challenged and want to learn. In such lessons, very good use is made of demonstration and questioning to establish and extend learning and the lesson is conducted at a brisk pace. This was amply demonstrated in a Year 4 lesson on investigating how small details can establish an interesting setting for a story. In this lesson, the teacher drew effectively on pupils' previous knowledge through skilful questioning. The teacher scribed key phrases, encouraging pupils to explore the power of language. Throughout the school, the teaching of grammar is a distinctive strength with older pupils being taught effectively to analyse sentences into main and 'subordinate' clauses, including the terminology needed to rehearse and write their own sentences. Assessment arrangements are very good, with targets for improvement and effective marking making a real difference in helping pupils to understand what they do well and where they need to improve. Assessment information is effectively used to track pupils' progress and identify those needing more support.

55. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic and committed subject leader who is very keen to raise pupils' achievement. Both the analysis of data and the monitoring of teaching and learning have been used judiciously to identify priorities for developing the subject and to identify those pupils who need extra support. The use of ICT is sound overall. However, there is scope for extending its use, especially for editing and improving work.

Language and literacy across the curriculum.

56. Provision for teaching literacy skills across the curriculum is good with many examples seen during the inspection, particularly in history, mathematics, science and in physical and religious education. In history, for instance, pupils in Year 3 were encouraged to use books to find information on the Ancient Greeks and in the Year 6/7 class where they used a variety of books and the Internet to research information on working conditions during the Victorian age.

FRENCH

Commentary

57. French is taught to Year 6 and to the small number of pupils in Year 7 for two periods of 50 minutes a week. As it was not possible to see lessons in the week of the inspection, no judgement can be made about standards. However, from evidence of work in books from last year's Year 6, planning and discussion with the subject leader, pupils' achievement is satisfactory by the time they leave school.

58. A review of work shows that pupils respond in the target language in the context of classroom routines and the topics being studied. The language is practised in everyday situations and regularly integrated into other subjects. Most pupils respond competently to simple questions related to greetings, name, age and items on the date and day of the week though not all show easy recall. Their pronunciation is satisfactory and reinforced through constant practice. In writing, the majority copy words and simple sentences accurately.

59. The majority of pupils, including those with SEN, make satisfactory progress. They are keen learners and show interest and a desire to learn. Pupils relate well to the teacher and to each other and this helps their learning.

60. The teacher keeps abreast of developments in modern languages and uses resources well to inspire the pupils. This includes the incorporation of national guidance. Appropriate assessment arrangements take place but these need to be more closely linked to the planned learning intentions.

MATHEMATICS

The school's provision in **mathematics** is **very good** and this, coupled with good and often very good teaching, results in pupils achieving well in the subject. Standards of achievement by the end of Year 6, the curriculum provision, the use of assessment and the quality of subject leadership have improved significantly since the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The very good standards and good progress achieved by the end of Year 6.
- The very good leadership of the subject co-ordinator.
- The good quality of teaching in the subject.
- The very good use of assessment to modify the curriculum and to track individual pupils' progress.

Commentary

61. Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 6, which had been very good compared to national averages over recent years, dropped significantly in the 2003 national tests and the attainment of Year 6 pupils was only slightly above national averages. Inspection findings confirm the subject leader's view that this was indeed a 'blip' in the school's typically high standards caused by the higher than usual level of pupils with SEN in the 2003 year group. By contrast, well over half of the current Year 6 is expected to exceed the expected level for their age in their end of year national tests and standards are again likely to be well-above national averages. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school from above-average attainment on entry to Year 1; standards in mathematics at the end of Year 2 are above average and by the end of Year 6, well above average. The school provides well for the very small number of pupils in Year 7.

62. Teaching in mathematics ranges from satisfactory to very good and is good overall throughout the school. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. They have good classroom and behaviour management skills, allowing most lessons to progress at a very good pace and they match tasks well to pupils' abilities and learning needs. This was demonstrated very effectively, for example, in a Year 6 lower set where, due to the teacher's very high expectations of behaviour and very good classroom management, a very positive response was achieved and there was no evidence of the 'fear of mathematics' frequently seen in lower-attaining groups. Here, the teacher made the lesson exciting and interesting and, as a result, pupils responded confidently with most hands going up to answer questions involving the identification of near doubles to help with subtraction of three digit numbers. Pupils maintained a good focus on their work throughout the lesson and achieved well. Pupils with SEN are supported well by classroom assistants and teachers and make good progress.

63. The subject leader provides very good leadership. She analyses school test results in detail, suggesting amendments to the curriculum in the light of what is revealed. Assessment in the subject is very good; in addition to the detailed analysis of test results and trends noted above, pupils are tracked individually as they move through the school and, as a result of this analysis, pupils in the upper school are 'set' into more able and less able groups for mathematics lessons and additional

support is provided outside these lessons through 'Springboard' or 'booster' lessons for pupils needing a little additional support to gain a Level 4 in the Year 6 tests, for example.

Mathematics across the curriculum.

64. Provision for the use of mathematical skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. It is good in science, for example, pupils use graphs to show the weight of an object in air and water and measure the temperature, length and mass of a variety of solids and liquids.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching is good with a good emphasis on scientific investigation and assessment.
- Standards are high at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils achieve well.
- The subject is well led by the co-ordinator
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used well enough to support teaching and learning in science.

Commentary

65. Results and current standards for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 have remained consistently high over several years and pupil achievement is good. Although standards dipped slightly in year 2003, due to the large number of pupils with SEN in this year group, they were still high. Standards have improved since the last inspection whilst teaching has remained good. The trend in standards is upwards, both in Year 2 and Year 6. Good teaching, well-used assessment procedures, setting of pupils in Year 6, a planned revision programme for pupils in Year 6 and opportunities for practical investigations, which supported by clearly understood methods of working, are all important factors in ensuring pupils do well. The school provides well in science for the small number of pupils in Year 7.

66. Teaching is good, both in the lessons seen and over time. Teachers plan lessons well, ensuring all aspects of science are appropriately covered. Good attention is given to investigative work so that pupils learn to predict, to know what constitutes a fair test, to carry out a series of observations, to measure accurately and to reach conclusions. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 2 were involved in investigating the effect of exercise on their heart rate, Year 3 pupils were planning a fair test and deciding what to measure in order to ensure this, whilst in Year 6, pupils were investigating what factors affected the rate of dissolving of a variety of substances. The school uses a device called a 'planning house' to help pupils focus on investigations in a sequential order. These were introduced by the current subject leader, who has worked hard to ensure their use across the school. Assessments undertaken at the end of each unit of work are used well by teachers to target individual pupil's needs, especially those who need additional support. Good use is made of scientific vocabulary to promote good learning in topics and pupils use and understand scientific vocabulary such as 'ammeter', 'wave' and 'amplitude'. In Year 6, pupils are 'set' in order to ensure work is well targeted at their learning needs. Pupils with SEN are well supported in lessons and work is planned to meet their specific learning needs. Teachers make good use of pupils' mathematical skills in science, for example, when measuring liquids or making line graphs. However, few teachers use ICT well to support pupils' learning in science. It is not regularly planned for and is mainly undertaken by enthusiasts such as the Year 5 teacher who, in a lesson seen, used data logging to show the reflection of a variety of materials. Occasionally, there is not enough challenge in lessons for higher attaining pupils and they do not make the gains of which they are capable.

67. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of living and non-living things; have explored surface friction and carried out a variety of experiments. They predict well and are clear about the questions they need to ask to find solutions. By the end of Year 6, pupils use correct scientific vocabulary and have a good understanding of a variety of forces. They are able to reason about their results, for example, 'this surprised me because a short string should have made air resistance less'. They are able to repeat tests to confirm findings and use diagrams well to explain their work. Most can select apparatus for a range of tasks and make a series of observations and measurements with precision.

68. There is good leadership of the subject. The subject leader has introduced a scheme of work that has ensured good curriculum coverage and a focused approach to planning investigations. She has introduced extension activities for higher attaining pupils, but not all teachers are using these effectively to stretch these pupils in lessons. Resources are stored satisfactorily and are accessible and used well to teach the curriculum. She is aware that there is scope for better use of ICT across the science curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The school makes good provision for ICT and this constitutes an improvement since the last inspection, when provision for ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The improvement in standards.
- Leadership is good.
- The systematic use of ICT across the curriculum is not sufficiently planned for.

Commentary

69. Standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are good and pupils achieve well. Although no lessons were observed in Year 6, examples of work produced by last year's Year 6, were sampled and these, including 'Powerpoint' presentations extolling the virtues of the school and digital photographs of the teaching staff, showed achievement to be clearly above expectations. A significant achievement of which the school is understandably proud and which further demonstrates the above-average achievement of pupils, is that pupils in the previous Year 5/6 class were awarded first prize in a national robot-building competition and visited Italy to represent the United Kingdom. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons seen ranged from good to satisfactory and is good overall. Most teachers demonstrate a good level of confidence and subject-knowledge, a product of in-service training and support. This was demonstrated, for example in a Year 4 lesson, where pupils were combining text and graphics to communicate information. The teacher made very good links to previous learning and to the design and technology, science and personal and social curriculum. The learning intentions and expectations of behaviour were made very clear and, as a result, the lesson was distinguished by the very good attitudes of the pupils and the good pace throughout. Assessments are used well to track pupils' progress and to ensure coverage of the curriculum.

70. Leadership and management of the subject are good. At the start of the new school year, only a few weeks prior to inspection, the previous subject leader had handed the role over to a new teacher and at the time of inspection, both teachers were jointly managing the subject. Both teachers demonstrate a good understanding of developments in the subject and improvements they want to make to the school's provision. The school's ICT suite is having a positive influence on pupils' progress, providing as it does the opportunity for two 'hands-on' lessons each week, as is the good and at times very good attitudes of pupils. Although 'cross-curricular' lessons were observed, such as an art lesson in the ICT suite and the use of ICT in mathematics, science and history lessons, there is insufficient whole-school planning for the use of ICT across the curriculum and provision currently varies according to teacher enthusiasm.

HUMANITIES

History and geography

Provision for history is **good**. There was not enough information to make an overall judgement on geography

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The quality of teaching and learning in history is good and this enables pupils to achieve well.
- History is used effectively to promote literacy skills.

Commentary

71. No lessons were seen in **geography** but some evidence was obtained from a review of pupils' work and this is noted. In **history**, several lessons were seen as well as samples of last year's work and this indicates good provision for the subject.

72. There is appropriate curriculum planning for geography and a review of last year's work shows that by the end of Year 2, pupils have used their locality to identify and categorise different features and express opinions on them and have acquired basic mapping skills. They identified different countries on a world map and used a key when looking at features in Stoke Hammond. By the end of Year 6, pupils have satisfactory mapping skills, can describe different weather conditions around the world and explore how these influence the way places are developed.

73. In **history** most pupils in Year 2 have a secure sense of chronology and draw comparisons between life today and life in the past, using artefacts. Higher attaining pupils speculate on their use and begin to make inferences on aspects of home life in the past. Evidence from previous work shows pupils have a good understanding of the topics studied, for instance the conditions of hospitals at the time of Florence Nightingale or the effects of the Great Fire of London. By Year 6, through their studies of different periods like the 50's and 70's, pupils demonstrate good gains in understanding the effect of change. They are skilled in carrying out research, using books and computers to find appropriate sources of information. For example, during the inspection, Year 6/7 pupils used books and the Internet very well to gather information about working conditions during the Victorian period. Pupils demonstrate high levels of motivation when researching and writing up their individual projects.

74. The quality of teaching seen in history was good. Learning intentions are clearly identified and used well throughout the lesson to remind pupils of what they should achieve. Attention is focused on key vocabulary which is explained clearly, using illustration, examples and effective questioning to prompt and challenge pupils. This was demonstrated in a history lesson in Year 3. A range of books was made available for pupils to choose from to answer questions about Greek soldiers and their armour. Pupils responded very positively with the highest attaining pupils using the content page and index to narrow their search. Lower attaining pupils were supported by having the page references written on the board. Pupils were then able to present their findings to the rest of the class and answer relevant questions. The activity was clearly devised to consolidate and extend pupils' enquiry skills and enhance their literacy skills. This aspect of the teaching is a recurring feature in history and is a very good example of the use of language skills in context. Where teaching was less effective, this was mainly due to teachers not specifically identifying how the highest attainers might be challenged.

75. Both the history and geography curriculum are enhanced through extra curricular activities and fieldwork.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The curriculum is well planned and complies with the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus.
- Older pupils have not enough knowledge of other religions through in depth study and comparison with Christianity.

Commentary

76. The scheme of work provides good guidance for teachers on appropriate methods and activities to support learning. The medium term plans ensure there is coverage of both learning about religion and learning from religion. Pupils are assessed against each unit of work and samples of work are kept to show achievement against each unit. These are well annotated and explain pupil achievement.

77. Teaching and learning, both in lessons seen and from a sample of pupils' work over time, is mainly satisfactory. In Year 1 and 2, pupils learn about special occasions, places and people. They know about and have read some of the parables that Jesus told, such as *The Prodigal Son*. Pupils in Year 2 begin to interpret some of these with comments such as, 'this parable tells us God loves everybody'. They have celebrated festivals such as Holi, the Hindu festival of colour, and one pupil described how he liked throwing the streamers. In a good lesson seen in a Year 1/2 class, the teacher planned well for the different age groups. She made good use of thinking skills to focus pupil on their feelings about the world around them. Good links were made with science, when pupils reflected on their natural environment. They were keen to explain that trees gave out oxygen through their leaves and took in the 'bad stuff that we breathe out'. In Years 3 and 4, pupils study Islam through looking at special books and places and comparing them with Christianity. They explore Christian celebrations in depth but this is largely learning about religion and is mostly concerned with factual information. In Year 5, last year, pupils carried out an in-depth study of a modern church in Milton Keynes. The teacher made good use of detailed worksheets to help them find important artefacts and places within it. The good emphasis the teacher placed on how it made them feel resulted in interesting poems with verses such as 'it was so colourful it was like the Garden of Eden'. In the lesson seen in Year 6, pupils worked on the origins and meanings of Christian symbols such as the Cross, candle, dove and fish. They showed a good understanding of their significance and, through a good introduction, the teacher provided good opportunities for questioning and discussion. However, there was not enough opportunity for them to deepen their understanding through finding out for themselves. Discussions with pupils in Year 6 indicate that they have a good understanding of Christianity and respect for the religious beliefs of others. They have limited knowledge of other religions; their symbols, celebrations or special books so are not in a good position to compare similarities and differences.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

The school's provision for the creative arts of art and design, music and design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The quality of teaching and learning.
- The quality of subject-leadership.
- The good systems for assessment.

Commentary

78. The quality of teaching in art and design, design and technology and music, in the small number of lessons observed, ranged from satisfactory to very good and is good overall. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and plan and resource their lessons well. In the best cases, they have very high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and, as a result, pupils are well-motivated and apply themselves to their work with enthusiasm. This was seen, for example, in a Year 6 art and design lesson where the teacher's very good relationships with the class led to pupils responding confidently and responsibly and, as the lesson progressed, the very good pace and the use of relevant resources led to very good progress in learning. Similarly, in a Year 1/2 music lesson, the teacher's very good subject knowledge, very good use of technical vocabulary and use of questioning led to very good standards of behaviour and very positive attitudes. This was demonstrated very clearly when pupils were formed into groups to rehearse playing an accompaniment to 'Daisy Bell' on metallophones and glockenspiels and to sing 'I love water, I love water' to the tune of 'Frere Jacques' in character, that is, 'angrily', 'sadly', 'happily'.

79. Leadership of the three subjects is good. Subject leaders maintain detailed files of their work, provide support for other colleagues and produce annual evaluations of their subject area. Schemes of work for the creative arts are based on national guidance, supported and enriched by published schemes which provide more support for non-specialist teachers, such as the music examples provided on compact-disc with the published music curriculum.

80. Assessment sheets are completed for each unit of work undertaken and these are collected and analysed carefully by the co-ordinators. For example, one annual subject-report notes: 'In 2002/3, a high percentage of children met or exceeded our learning expectations'.

Physical Education

Standards in physical education are high in comparison to the national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils in all classes achieve very well in lessons and many achieve high standards in the wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities that take place. Some outstanding practice was seen in gymnastics in Year 6, where pupils strived to achieve their best possible performances as they worked very hard, both on and off the apparatus. Achievement in physical education is a major strength. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Achievement in gymnastics is very high.
- Provision for extra-curricular sports is excellent.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The clarity and vision by senior staff and the leadership of the subject are very good.

Commentary

81. Pupils across the school benefit from the excellent range of extra-curricular sports activities on offer, such as athletics, cricket, tag rugby and hockey league. The high quality tuition and coaching by staff, parents and by experienced external coaches, leads to very high levels of success. For example, the school has achieved places in the top ten in the County cross-country Championships. School workshops within curriculum time also enhance provision. Dance workshops have improved movements and enabled pupils to develop their own sequences.

82. The quality of teaching in all aspects of physical education is very good. Staff skills are high. They manage lessons very well and make very effective use of resources to keep pupils focused. This leads to very good learning and development of skills as pupils move through the school.

Example of outstanding practice

Pupils achieve very high standards in gymnastics due to excellent teaching.

This was particularly evident in Year 6, where an outstanding lesson was observed in which pupils successfully combined fluent, controlled movements with grace and style. They benefited from excellent teaching by which they were challenged to excel. Through questioning and by example, the teacher extended pupils' skills, enabling them to perform with consistency and expertise. Boys, as well as girls, thought carefully about their own body positions, flow of movement and skill.

83. The success of the subject is largely due to the clear vision and effectiveness of management, which enables innovative approaches and high quality enrichment to enhance the subject. For example, workshops and coaching sessions are regularly used to improve the skills of staff further. Very high quality links have been established with parents, who are very supportive in transporting pupils to matches and other sporting events. Very good monitoring has led to a clear view of the strengths in the subject, and the co-ordinator is secure in her knowledge of how well pupils achieve.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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