

INSPECTION REPORT

IRCHESTER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Irchester, Wellingborough.

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 133601

Headteacher: Mrs Ellen Humphries

Lead inspector: Mr David Carrington

Dates of inspection: 9th – 11th February 2004

Inspection number: 256548

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	329
School address:	School Lane Irchester Wellingborough Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN29 7AZ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Lyman
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Irchester Primary School was formed out of the amalgamation of the former village infant and junior schools in September 2002. It is located in two adjacent buildings in the historic centre of the large village of Irchester, which is three miles south of Wellingborough in Northamptonshire. There are 166 boys and 163 girls in school, most of whom live in the village. When they start school, children have broadly average levels of skills and knowledge. There is an average proportion of pupils with special educational needs; most of these pupils have learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with statements is also average. About five per cent of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average. A relatively small number of pupils join or leave the school part way through their primary school education. The school is currently involved in the *Leadership Development Strategy* initiative and is working towards *Investors In People* status and participation in the *Mental Health Project*.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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1189	Sharon Brown	Team inspector	English and special educational needs.
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Irchester Primary School provides a **sound** quality of education for its pupils. The headteacher has a very good sense of purpose and gives a good steer to the school. She has been very successful in handling the merger of the two former schools and has created an effective team of staff who are working hard to provide pupils with equal opportunity to do well. Standards are average overall and teaching and learning are satisfactory with some strengths. The curriculum is being developed successfully and is of good quality. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Overall standards, including English, mathematics and science, are average in Years 2 and 6.
- Generally, pupils build skills and knowledge consistently through the school and achievement is satisfactory.
- The headteacher has led the process of establishing the new school very effectively. The governors are working well to ensure the school is providing an appropriate education for the pupils.
- Behaviour is good, pupils have good attitudes to their work and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.
- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with strengths.
- There is a good curriculum that is enriched well by a wide range of visits, visitors and additional activities; curriculum innovation is good.
- The development of writing and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum is not consistent.
- The work of senior managers, subject leaders and governors is insufficiently focused on the rigorous checking, assessment and evaluation of the quality of education and pupils' achievement.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs and for children in the Foundation Stage is good.
- The school works effectively with parents and other schools and colleges to enhance the quality of learning.

The school has not been inspected before. It was opened in September 2002 following the amalgamation of the separate infant and junior schools.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Standards in the 2003 SATs¹ were average in reading and mathematics in Year 2 and below average in writing. The Year 2 results were well below the average found in similar schools in writing and mathematics. In Year 6, standards were similar to the national and similar schools average in English and below average in mathematics and science. Boys did comparatively well in reading and mathematics in Year 2 but there was significant underperformance of Year 6 boys in mathematics and science last year. As there are no earlier SATs results for the school it is not possible to relate these results to trends nationally with any reliability.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	N/a	N/a	C	C
Mathematics	N/a	N/a	D	D
Science	N/a	N/a	D	D

¹ Standardised Attainment Tests

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

Overall, achievement is **satisfactory**.

- The current children in reception started with average levels of skills and knowledge and are achieving soundly. Most are likely to reach the targets for the six areas of learning before the end of the school year.
- Achievement is also satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and standards are average overall by the age of seven.
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve satisfactorily and by the age of eleven standards are average in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science; they are above average in physical education.
- The development of pupils' writing and ICT skills across the curriculum are not consistent.
- Pupils are interested in their work; they behave well, and develop as mature and sensible learners.
- The overall quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is **good**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **satisfactory**.

- Teaching quality is **satisfactory**. There are strengths in teaching including teachers' insistence on high standards of behaviour, the provision of interesting and motivating lessons and work to ensure all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed.
- Pupils learn soundly. They are well motivated and work productively. Relationships are good, which ensures effective collaboration in lessons.
- Assessment is satisfactory. The best assessment is in English and mathematics, where clear targets are set for learning. Systems are not yet as effective in other subjects.
- The curriculum is good in all parts of the school. School managers have worked well to develop a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils. The curriculum is enriched well. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Systems to care for, guide and support pupils are effective.
- The partnerships with parents the community and other schools and colleges are good and clearly benefit the quality of education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership, management and governance is **good**.

- The headteacher provides well-focused leadership and has thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Governors work well to guide the educational provision in school.
- Senior managers and subject leaders are ready to take on more responsibility for the quality of education and standards.
- Work to assess, check and evaluate school performance and to set targets for pupils is inconsistent and does not include all staff and the governors enough.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils hold good views of the school.

Parents are positive about the school though there are a few reservations about the consistency of homework, behaviour management at lunchtimes and the information provided about children's achievement. Inspectors find that homework provision is satisfactory, behaviour is good at all times of day and the quality of information for parents is well detailed. The pupils like their school and find

lessons fun and enjoyable. The school takes their opinions seriously and works hard to take them into account when making decisions.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to raise standards and improve achievement, especially in English, mathematics, science and ICT.
- Focus more on the development of writing and ICT skills in all subjects.
- Enhance the role of governors, senior managers and subject leaders in checking performance data, the monitoring of teaching and learning and the setting and tracking of targets for achievement.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall standards are **average** in Years 2 and 6 and achievement is **satisfactory** through the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, achievement is satisfactory.
- Standards in the 2003 SATs² in Year 2 were average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing.
- In Year 6 in 2003, standards in the SATs were similar to the national and similar schools average in English and below average in mathematics and science.
- Children in reception started with average levels of skills and knowledge and are achieving soundly.
- This year, standards are average in Years 1 and 2.
- In Years 3 to 6 standards are average in most subjects; they are above average in physical education.
- The development of pupils' writing and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum is inconsistent.

Commentary

1. The achievement of pupils is satisfactory through the school. Achievement is strongest in Years 2 and 6, where it is good. Pupils of all attainment levels are enabled to build knowledge, skills and understanding at an appropriate rate and standards are average in the main.
2. As shown in the following table, last year the pupils in Year 2 attained average standards in their SATs in reading and mathematics and below average standards in writing. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 3 was average in reading, mathematics and science and above average in writing. Boys did comparatively well in reading and mathematics when compared to the national trend.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	16.0 (-)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.4 (-)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.3 (-)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 43 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Last year, pupils in Year 6 attained average standards in English and below average in mathematics and science. The proportion attaining level 5 was below average in English and science and average in mathematics. In comparison with the national trend there was significant underperformance of boys in mathematics and science in 2003. It is not possible to compare trends in standards before 2002-3 as Irchester Primary School opened only at the start of that school year.

² Standardised Attainment Tests

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.1 (-)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	26.0 (-)	26.8 (26.7)
science	27.9 (-)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 57 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. This year, when children started in reception they had average levels of skills and knowledge. The provision for these children is good, enabling them to settle well and to start work on their six areas of learning with confidence. The children in reception are achieving soundly and are on target to meet their learning goals by the end of the school year.
5. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, with accelerated achievement evident in Year 2 due to the good quality of teaching in those classes. The only unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection was in Year 1 and this impacted on achievement and the standards reached. By the age of seven, standards are average in all subjects including English, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education. Boys and girls generally achieve at the same rate in Years 1 and 2.
6. There is also satisfactory achievement in Years 3 to 6. Again, achievement accelerates towards the end of school, with good achievement in general in Year 6. There is also good achievement in other classes, such as Year 4 mathematics. Boys and girls are equally well motivated by their work and their achievement does not differ significantly. Standards are average in all-but-one subject, including English, mathematics and science. In physical education, standards are above average as nearly every pupil shows confidence, poise and skill across the whole range of activities learned.
7. In general, pupils in all attainment bands, including the middle and higher achievers, are provided with work that consolidates and extends their learning appropriately. There is a small proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. This group includes a very small number who are at an early stage of English. All these pupils are achieving at a similar rate to the other pupils. This is because the support provided by teachers and teaching assistants is well focused on their needs. The other languages spoken are celebrated in school, as seen in an assembly where some complex German phrases were discussed as part of the theme of trying hard and succeeding. This approach promotes the self-esteem of pupils who speak other languages and they work hard to improve their use of English.
8. Pupils with special educational needs achieve soundly because of the good quality of provision made for them. Most of these pupils have learning difficulties and their individual work programmes are well tailored to their needs. The steps to be taken to increase skills and knowledge are well defined and the activities provided are well focused on these targets. The pupils make steady progress and their achievement is satisfactory overall. This is also the case for the few pupils with statements for their special educational needs.
9. A significant proportion of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. These pupils are represented in all attainment bands and they achieve as successfully as the other pupils. About a third of the pupils observed in the Year 3 – 6 Maths Club for higher attainers were from minority ethnic backgrounds. These pupils were in the process of using complex strategies to allow them to find an unknown number between 1 and 100 in the absolute minimum of attempts. All pupils in the group were achieving well and standards were above average.
10. There are also a small number of traveller pupils in school. These pupils are very well integrated into school life and are proud of their work. The school has built such self-esteem

well and this has enabled these pupils to settle well to their work, take a pride in their results and show their potential. The traveller pupils are achieving at similar rates to the other pupils.

11. Since the school opened eighteen months ago, about a tenth of the pupils joined or left at times other than the usual start or finish dates. The pupils who joined the school have made the transition well and are achieving at satisfactory levels. They have been well assimilated and even those who have been in school for just a few weeks clearly enjoy their work and feel as much part of Irchester Primary School as pupils who have been present since its opening.
12. The development of pupils' writing is an aspect that the school has targeted for improvement. The work to promote writing has been successful to date, but much focus has been within English. The development of writing skills across the curriculum, and especially in subjects such as geography, history and religious education is the next priority for the school. Similarly, although there have been significant resourcing issues, provision in ICT has been built successfully enough for pupils to attain average standards in the subject. There is evidence that the pupils, especially the older ones, can attain at a good level, and the development of ICT skills across the curriculum remains a significant improvement area for the school in order to tap this potential.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are **good** throughout the school and they behave well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and the vast majority arrive in good time.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning.
- They behave well and very well in the reception classes.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

Commentary

13. The relationships developed throughout the school together with the high expectations set for pupils' conduct result in good attitudes and behaviour throughout the school. Children in the reception classes behave very well and are happy to come to school. They settle quickly into school routines showing interest and good attention in lessons. Pupils work collaboratively, share resources and listen respectfully to one another's comments. They concentrate well, show interest in their work and try hard to please their teachers in most classes.
14. Pupils' moral and social development is good. The strong moral and social ethos that has been created results in harmonious relationships. The school council helps pupils to develop confidence, have a say in the running of the school, shows them how to represent the views of others and how to feed back to them. A group of pupils trained in playground games help to add to the quality of relationships at break times and effectively develop pupils' social skills. Pupils are taught right from wrong and have opportunities to consider their moral outlook. For example, older pupils discussed the impact of smoking and, through role-play, demonstrated responsible attitudes to adverse persuasion and bullying. Spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory but opportunities to learn about the rich and diverse cultural traditions in other parts of the world are more limited.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	5.5	School data:	0.7
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.4

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

15. Pupils' attendance at school and punctuality is satisfactory. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Attendance is well monitored. New systems introduced this academic year involving parents being contacted on the first day of their child's absence without authority is already beginning to have an impact on individual pupils attendance. The need for children to attend school is regularly reinforced.
16. There was one fixed-period exclusion last year.

Ethnic background of pupils

There was one exclusion in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	339	1	0

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with strengths. There is a good curriculum that is enriched well, though the development of writing and ICT skills across the curriculum is not consistent. The partnership with parents, the community and other schools is good and pupils are well cared for, supported and guided.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching quality is satisfactory with strengths
- There is good insistence on high standards of behaviour, lessons are interesting and motivating and all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed.
- Pupils learn soundly and are well motivated and work productively.
- Assessment is satisfactory. The most effective assessment is in English and mathematics but systems are not yet as good in other subjects.

Commentary

17. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In addition to the 58 lessons observed, the scrutiny of pupils' past work underlined the overall satisfactory quality of teaching in the school. As the following table shows, there was a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. This was in Year 1 where the scrutiny of pupils' past work also showed weaknesses in teaching. The unsatisfactory teaching is primarily due to low expectations, unsatisfactory planning, lack of pace and insufficient focus on the teaching of skills and knowledge. In all other classes, teaching is successful in that it enables pupils to build knowledge, skills and understanding at

an appropriate rate. There are apparent strengths in teaching that augur well for the continuing development of staff. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 2, 4 and 6. The teaching that was judged to be very good was observed in Years 2 and 4. This was due to high expectations, work that was clearly matched to the needs of different groups of pupils, a brisk, productive use of time, and teaching methods that motivated the pupils to enjoyable and challenging learning.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 58 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	3 (5 %)	31 (53 %)	23 (40 %)	1 (2 %)	0 (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.

18. There are particular strengths in some aspects of teaching. Teachers and other staff insist on high standards of behaviour and the pupils respond well to these expectations. Teachers plan interesting lessons that are well geared to the needs of different groups of pupils. They encourage the pupils to good learning and make their lessons interesting and motivating. Additionally, they ensure all pupils, regardless of background, have equal opportunities to learn successfully.
19. The teaching assistants generally work well to help their pupils consolidate and extend their learning. In some lessons the role of teaching assistants is not clear. This applies to the start and end of some sessions where the class teacher is working with the whole class. Otherwise, teaching assistants give good support and in the group activities they play a valuable role in providing appropriate activities and ensuring that learning moves on.
20. The teaching of pupils who speak English as an additional language is sound. These pupils are provided with appropriate work and they are well motivated. They build knowledge and understanding of English satisfactorily and cope successfully with the demands of their work. The few pupils from traveller backgrounds are also taught satisfactorily, as are those pupils from minority ethnic groups.
21. Pupils with special educational needs are taught satisfactorily too. The support offered in lessons is well tailored to pupils' targets and there is good focus on the development of knowledge and skills. Teaching assistants give good support to groups and individual pupils with special educational needs on the whole. Pupils with statements are also taught satisfactorily and this ensures that their learning is productive. The sound quality of teaching and learning ensures that pupils with special educational needs, whatever their individual requirements, achieve appropriately.
22. In general, pupils' learning is satisfactory. They work productively, listen and concentrate well and are interested in their tasks. Pupils build skills, knowledge and understanding soundly. They also learn to work independently and collaboratively, though these skills could be enhanced, especially in the development of research, investigation and problem solving skills.
23. The system of assessment is satisfactory, with strengths in English and mathematics. In other subjects, work continues to establish a basic framework of assessment. Thus, in science, the system of assessment is developing well, but in other subjects, such as ICT, assessment is not so well advanced. The results of assessment are used soundly to plan work for groups and individual pupils. The target setting and tracking system in English and mathematics is bedding in well, though, again, it is not as developed in other subjects. In general, however, the school has done well to establish the existing system within the space of eighteen months. An area for future development concerns pupils' self-evaluation of their learning. Few examples were observed of pupils talking about the state of their learning at the end of lessons. School

managers understand the need to promote such self-evaluation more and have maintained assessment as a core priority for the future.

The curriculum

The school provides a **good** curriculum that is stimulating and rich. Enrichment activities in school are interesting, relevant to all pupils and are well supported and attended. The accommodation inside and outside is of very good quality. Curriculum innovation is a strength.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very successful in providing equality of access and opportunity for all its pupils.
- The development of writing and ICT skills across the curriculum is inconsistent.
- There are a good number of visits out and visitors into school, which broadens pupils' experience well.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is good.
- Planning across subjects is good.
- The *Creative Activities* session on Wednesday afternoons has been well thought out and is very successful. This is an example of the good quality of curriculum innovation.
- Enrichment through extra curricular activities is a strong feature of school life, with a range of opportunities in both sport and the arts.

Commentary

24. The school provides a rich, relevant and interesting curriculum, and many practical first hand experiences are provided to promote pupils' standards and achievements. The school has fully embraced the principles of educational inclusion and makes good provision to ensure that all pupils have full access, where possible, to all subjects and activities. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and teachers and support staff are acutely aware of pupils' individual needs. Staff plan carefully to make sure there are appropriate opportunities for all to achieve success.
25. There is considerable enrichment of the curriculum. This stimulates pupils to learn. Planning in some areas closely links other subjects well, for instance, in music there are good links to literacy, dance, art and design and design technology. However, the development of skills and knowledge in writing and ICT across the curriculum is not consistent and is an ongoing priority of the school. The school is fully committed to providing the pupils with residential experiences. From reception onwards pupils benefit from visits to places of educational interest. These help make learning relevant and help pupils to appreciate their local community. The school has a good range of visitors and events in school, which add real interest to the curriculum.
26. The school is successfully improving pupils' interest in joining the after school clubs, including sports, arts and music. The pupils also have opportunities to take part in a variety of other activities such as football coaching and a residential visit to an adventure challenge centre.
27. Suitable emphasis is placed on English and mathematics. The literacy and numeracy strategies have been used well by most teachers as their basis for planning in these subjects and are contributing to the improvement in standards. The *Creative Afternoon* provides new experiences for pupils and uses teachers' expertise well to consolidate learning in all subjects across the curriculum. The very well planned activities contribute to enjoyable learning.
28. Health education, including sex education and guidance about the dangers of misusing drugs, is planned and taught very well. Part of this work is developed in science and the personal, social and health education provision. This work is supported effectively by outside agencies.
29. The school has a good match of well-qualified teachers to the demands of the curriculum and the learning needs of all pupils. At the time of the inspection one supply teacher was covering

for one class and another for a member of staff who was sick. The knowledgeable learning support staff are well employed during lessons.

30. Accommodation is very good overall. There is a good range of resources to support subjects. The classrooms are spacious, bright and attractive. There is a very good outdoor area for reception and fields and playgrounds for all pupils. Resources to aid learning are good overall.

Care, guidance and support

Care, guidance and support are **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Each pupil is known, treated and valued as an individual.
- The behaviour support system is good.
- Assessment to enable each child to receive support and guidance appropriate to their needs is not yet developed to include fully the foundation subjects.

Commentary

31. Good arrangements for pupils' welfare and child protection cover all required areas, with sufficient staff trained in First Aid. Governors are involved in monitoring health and safety arrangements. Learning support assistants and the special needs coordinator provide good support for pupils with special educational needs. There is good social support for targeted individuals by the provision of a Breakfast Club. The majority of pupils are confident there is an adult in school they could talk to if they had a problem.
32. Relationships in the school are good. The greatest concern for pupils of all ages is their perception of poor behaviour and bullying by a minority. The school council has played a major part in reviewing the school's approach to bullying. Anti bullying posters designed by pupils are displayed around the school and Year 6 children, commonly referred to as *white caps*, are on duty in the playground to organise games for younger children and help mediate in disputes that may occur. Good behaviour support systems are in place for pupils who find it difficult to conform to the socially acceptable behaviour of the rest of the school.
33. There are good induction procedures to school, including those for children entering the reception class. These children attend on a part time basis to start and this helps them settle very quickly into new routines and have a gradual entry into full time education. Pupils are confident and happy in their surroundings. The transition from one stage of their education to the next is seamless.
34. The tracking of pupils' personal and academic progress as they move through the school is satisfactory. Pupils receive appropriate support from staff to help them improve. In some subjects, such as English and mathematics, targets are set showing pupils the level they are working at and what they have to do to reach the next level. The school system does not yet enable staff to set sufficiently sharply focused individual targets in all subjects aimed at raising individual attainment, and then to check whether these targets have been met.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with other schools are **good** and there are good links with parents and the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good partnership with parents and the quality of information provided is satisfactory.
- Links with the community and other schools are good.

Commentary

35. Since the opening of the school, much has been done to raise its profile within the community and gain the confidence of parents. A parents association is now established and a growing number of parents regularly help in classrooms with activities and working with groups of children. Parents and carers who returned the pre inspection questionnaire showed positive views of the school. Any complaints or concerns receive an immediate and sympathetic response.
36. Parents' opinions are sought both formally and informally. There are daily opportunities for parents to visit their children's classrooms and speak to staff and three parents evenings are held each year where parents and staff can review pupils' progress. Written reports about pupils' progress fulfil legal requirements and are good for the core subjects of English and mathematics, where parents are informed of their child's progress and areas where they need to improve are clearly indicated. However this is not the case in all subjects, where the quality of comments varies. There is firm focus on what has been covered during the year, but they do not tell as clearly where the pupils' strengths and weaknesses lie, how they can improve or whether their progress is sufficient.
37. The effectiveness of the growing partnerships between home and school and the positive support of the local community makes a very effective contribution to supporting children's personal development and raising their self-esteem. Good links have been established with other schools. These have benefited the breadth of the curriculum and staff development well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership is **good**. Effectiveness of management is **satisfactory**. School governance is **good**. The school gives **satisfactory** value for money.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations that inspire and motivate staff and pupils are notable strengths of the school.
- The merger of the infant and junior school has been managed successfully and the school has a bright future.
- The creation of an effective school team with a shared determination to succeed has been an important factor in the recent improvement in the school.
- The school has a clear and accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The governing body is effective and positively supports the school.
- Governors, senior managers and subject leaders need to be more involved in judging the school's effectiveness.
- Financial management to achieve educational priorities is very good.

Commentary

38. Irchester Primary School has a short history since its establishment just over eighteen months ago from the amalgamation of neighbouring infant and junior schools. During this time a firm and promising foundation has been laid in the pursuit of improvement, which is underpinned by a good ethos. The headteacher gives very good leadership to the school. She has successfully welded two staff teams into one that now works in partnership and harmony. All staff and governors have a clear sense of purpose and commitment towards making things even better for pupils. Their successful approach towards promoting equality of opportunity for all individuals is a good feature of the school's overall provision. The headteacher has established a realistic set of targets for the completion of key phases of the school's development. She is aware of the progress being made towards each of these appropriate priorities and brings very good personal drive as the school emerges from its present well-founded embryonic stage.

39. Planning for future development is good. The school improvement plan reflects an appropriate well-costed programme for making the school more effective in raising pupils' achievement. School evaluation is led purposefully by the headteacher. However, members of staff and governors need to become jointly involved in making the process more rigorous. At present the school gives satisfactory value for money. The school team recognises this, and knows that standards (chiefly in English, mathematics and ICT) must be higher and achievement consistently good for the school to improve this standing. The process of target setting and tracking has started to work successfully, although its use remains inconsistent across the school. As the rigour to raise standards gathers momentum and rates of pupil achievement rise, there is a strong probability that the present value for money given by the school will improve.
40. The governors fulfil their statutory duties well. They have a good, secure awareness of the school's performance and the reasons for this. Most governors gain information first hand by visiting school, talking to staff, pupils and parents and asking questions. Because they are well informed they are able to discuss relevant priorities for future action and offer constructive support. Governors manage the finances available to the school very effectively. They use their knowledge of the school to challenge its performance. They ask knowledgeably about different actions taken as the school embarks to raise achievement. They share the sense of purpose felt throughout the school about the need for continued improvement and are ready to become more involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.
41. School management is satisfactory. Senior managers and subject leaders carry out their duties with enthusiasm and are keen for the school to improve. The direct monitoring of standards, teaching and learning by subject leaders is at an early stage of development. In science, for example, the subject leader has had planned opportunities to monitor science throughout the school. This good practice needs extending to include English and ICT.
42. Now that a sense of one school has been successfully created and there are secure foundations to support continuing improvement, the prospects for the future are bright. No table of finances is included in this report, as the school does not yet have figures for a complete financial year.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**. Children have a good start and achievement is good in physical development, speaking and listening and personal, social and emotional development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the observed lessons teaching was consistently good.
- Induction arrangements are good.
- A broad and stimulating curriculum offers a good balance of adult led and child initiated activities.
- Accommodation, both indoors and out, is very good.
- Resources for introducing children to independent reading are unsatisfactory, leading to unsatisfactory achievement in reading.
- Assessment procedures are good, but are not used to identify aspects of teaching and learning which need improvement.

Commentary

43. Children join the reception year in the September before they are five, attending part-time for the first half term. A year group of 38 children move between two class bases, enabling both classes to work together. The vast majority of children have attended pre-school, and there is good communication with pre-school staff, children and families before they transfer. When they start school the majority of children are attaining levels in line with expectations for their age, with the full range of ability represented.
44. The individual needs of children are met satisfactorily because their needs are identified by good assessment procedures. However, the analysis of assessment information is under developed, and consequently, the aspects of learning requiring improvement are not identified consistently. The assessments completed at the end of the reception year show pupils achieve standards in line with expectations for their age in communication, language and literacy and mathematics, showing satisfactory achievement in these areas of learning. Pupils with special educational needs also show satisfactory achievement. The achievement of all children in physical, personal, social and emotional development is good. The good ratio of adults to children enables good support for individuals and small groups. There are no children with English as an additional language. The accommodation, both indoors and outside, is very good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because teaching and learning is good.
- The good balance of child initiated and adult led activities promotes good behaviour, independence and collaboration.
- The good induction arrangements promote good emotional development.

Commentary

45. The daily routine offers a broad range of adult led and child initiated activities that are planned to encourage children to co-operate, exercise independence and to listen attentively in large and small groups. Clear expectations are set for behaviour, and pupils respond well, displaying very good behaviour when working with adults and independently. Pupils demonstrate

confidence, and also show enthusiasm for their learning. The positive ethos supports pupils of all abilities well. Good teaching and learning leads to good achievement in social development, independence and behaviour.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum promotes speaking and listening well, leading to good achievement
- There are not enough reading books at an introductory level and this affects achievement in the early stages of reading.

Commentary

46. Speaking and listening are promoted well by the team who encourage children to describe, explain and share personal experiences. Questioning is used effectively to promote children's talk. The lessons observed were good. Literacy activities were stimulating, promoting children's interest and verbal responses well. Children are gradually introduced to sounds and letters and the higher attaining children are beginning to write the first sounds in words and are building simple words. This shows good achievement in writing for higher attaining children. Average attaining children, however, are not yet using their knowledge of letters and sounds in their writing, and consequently these children are showing satisfactory achievement at this mid point in the reception year.
47. Enjoyment of books is promoted well. Teachers bring books alive through their expressive and enthusiastic reading to children. Stories are re-enacted in role-play and in music. Children sequence events in stories. For example, all the children in one class performed a re-enactment of *Peace At Last*. They are developing a good understanding of characters and settings in stories. Children regularly select from a wide range of books, and take them home to share with adults. However, the level of challenge in these books is generally too demanding for the majority of children to enable them to begin reading independently. Teachers acknowledge the need to provide a wider range of introductory books, with simple texts, for teaching early reading. Overall teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of counting and mathematical vocabulary was good in the lesson observed.
- Children's interest is promoted well when they use mathematics for practical purposes.

Commentary

48. Children respond well to practical mathematical activities. For example, in the good lesson observed, children counted links on a chain and ordered them using the vocabulary associated with length. They have also visited a local shop and then used money and read prices as they played in a classroom shop. Children can name most common shapes and they use cartons to build models and name three-dimensional shapes. They count using rhymes and number lines and are beginning count back. Appropriate emphasis is placed on practical counting opportunities, and using mathematics for real purposes. For example, when making jam tarts children were encouraged to decide how many were needed for the group and to use the correct vocabulary when weighing. Assessments show the vast majority of children are attaining levels expected for their age. This shows satisfactory teaching, learning and achievement over time.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good outdoor environment is used effectively to promote exploration and investigation.
- The awareness of other cultures is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

49. Achievement, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Adults regularly use questioning to prompt children's talk and observations. For example, in the good lesson observed, children's vocabulary was promoted well as they explored differences in wet and dry sand. The Foundation Stage leader has acknowledged the need to develop more opportunities for promoting children's awareness of other cultures, which is currently unsatisfactory. Good use is made of ICT to promote learning, and children show confidence as they use computers. A range of visits and visitors enhance children's awareness of their locality, and of people at work. For example they have enjoyed a visit from police officer and the school nurse, and make visits to the church and library. They also enjoy participating in whole school events, such as Christmas, harvest and theatre group performances. The designated outdoor learning environment is used well to promote all areas of learning. It is used effectively as a regular feature of lessons for developing children's sensory experiences, and their ability to observe and explore.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children listen well and follow instructions carefully.
- There are insufficient opportunities for children to select materials and tools for their creative responses.

Commentary

50. Children show satisfactory achievement as they engage in imaginative play in the hospital and with play people and animals in their small world play. They sing enthusiastically, and they listen attentively. For example, they used their voices and musical instruments to accompany the retelling of a story, following direction from an adult carefully and accurately. They are encouraged to use art materials that are set out for them. They paint, draw and stick collage materials with confidence and enjoyment. Learning could be further enriched, however, by offering pupils more opportunities to select musical instruments, art materials and tools for themselves. Regular opportunities to build and construct with malleable materials and construction toys promotes creativity well. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's achievement in the range and quality of movements they use in gymnastics is good.
- Daily opportunities are offered for physical development in a very well planned and resourced outdoor learning environment.

Commentary

51. Children have access to a well planned and stimulating outdoor learning environment for physical activity, and to the hall for dance and gymnastics. This provision for structured and spontaneous physical activity is good. The outdoor environment is used well on a daily basis, as part of children's playtimes and as an option within the curriculum. Pupils develop manipulative skills well as they play with a wide range of malleable materials and construction toys. They use a range of tools confidently for cutting, joining, sticking and painting. Teaching and learning in gymnastics are good. Children achieve well in the quality and range of movements they use as they link movements. They show good levels of control, and good awareness of safety, as they balance and travel on large apparatus. Good planning, accommodation and resources promote good teaching, learning and achievement in physical development.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although standards are average overall, writing is weaker than other aspects of English.
- Pupils enjoy the subject and behave well in lessons.
- Good provision for pupils with special educational needs helps them to make similar progress to their peers.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Good developments in monitoring and tracking of pupils' work results in a better understanding of the progress and achievement made.
- Presentation skills and the spelling of simple words are not always linked to targets set in books.
- Literacy skills are not used well enough to support other subjects.
- More use could be made of computers to support pupils' learning.

Commentary

52. Standards in English by the ages of 7 and 11 are average. As there are no earlier records than 2003 for the school it is not possible to relate these results to trends nationally with any reliability. English has been the major priority for the new school with a focus on developing basic phonics.
53. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Attainment in writing is not as strong as speaking and listening and reading, because the agreed strategies to raise standards are not applied consistently. Listening skills are good. Pupils are attentive in lessons and behave well because they enjoy the subject. The good provision for pupils with special educational needs helps them to make similar progress to others in the class. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language and the few traveller children achieve as well as others in the class.
54. Pupils' speaking skills are average. They listen well in lessons. Where teachers have high expectations they create opportunities for pupils to take part in paired discussions and small group discussions with an adult. Where this happens, pupils gain confidence in expressing opinions and addressing an audience. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, the use of talking partners helped pupils to reflect on story themes and make thoughtful responses to questions. The teacher ensured they understood specific vocabulary such as *weaver*, *sari* and the meaning of *different culture*. A similar technique in a literacy lesson in Year 6 extended pupils understanding of vocabulary such as *clamour* and *engulf*.

55. Standards in reading are average overall. In Year 2 there is a strong focus on the teaching of phonics, although the development of these skills in a Year 1 class is unsatisfactory, making progress between classes and year groups uneven. Higher attainers in Year 2 read with fluency and accuracy and good expression. They are happy to discuss their reading and can identify favourite authors. Lower attainers are hesitant. Their limited knowledge of sounds hampers their ability to build unknown words and they rely on picture clues to help them recount a story. In Years 3 to 6 teachers build steadily on the existing reading skills and there is a strong emphasis on reading in Year 6. Higher attainers in Year 6 make good use of punctuation to aid expression. They read widely and have a good knowledge of a range of authors and their work. They are developing skills of inference and deduction effectively and are able to discuss texts with confidence, comparing books they have read and giving articulate reasons for their preferences. Most pupils enjoy reading for pleasure. Parents are supportive, listening to their children read regularly and contributing to the home/school reading diary. Whilst home/school reading diaries provide a well maintained record of reading, they are not used sufficiently as a diagnostic tool to move reading on.
56. Although standards in writing are close to average, this is the weakest aspect of English. There is variation between year groups and classes in the standards achieved, with evidence of accelerated learning in Year 6. The school recognises the need to improve writing standards both in literacy lessons and in the use of writing across the curriculum. Standards of presentation are very varied and pupils do not have a wide range of strategies to help them spell unknown words.
57. In Year 6, teachers' expectations for neat handwriting and presentation skills are higher and this is reflected in improved standards of presentation in those classes. Extended writing is limited for many pupils and is largely linked to story writing. Although pupils write for an increasing range of purposes, they are not yet secure in many forms of non-fiction writing such as reports and persuasive writing.
58. Teaching and learning quality is satisfactory overall. During the inspection good teaching and learning was often seen, but some unsatisfactory teaching was evident in a Year 1 class, due largely to weaknesses in planning, class management and superficial attention to developing literacy skills which limited the progress made. Good lessons were characterised by the teachers' secure knowledge and understanding of the subject, their management of the pupils and their raised expectations of what pupils can do. Throughout the school, teachers generally work effectively with learning support staff so that pupils with special educational needs make steady progress. In some classes marking is purposeful and indicates to pupils how they can improve. This practice is not consistent throughout the school, however, and there is little evidence of marking being linked carefully to pupils' individual targets. Where effective marking is established it is reflected in pupils' progress. Although there is some evidence of the use of ICT in literacy it is not used widely to support pupils' learning, particularly for the lower attainers and those with special educational needs.
59. The subject is well led and managed with a clear commitment to improvement. There have been good developments in monitoring and tracking of pupils' work. This has led to an increased awareness and understanding of the progress and achievement pupils make.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. The school is currently taking steps to ensure that English is used more widely across the curriculum. Although there is some evidence of this happening, it is in the very early stages of development, and needs to be monitored and evaluated carefully if it is to have a significant impact on raising standards. In some classes the standard of writing in other subjects, such as religious education and design and technology, is not high enough.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average through the school and achievement is generally satisfactory.
- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.
- Mathematics is well led and managed and has good potential for future improvement.
- There is a good focus on numeracy within the curriculum.
- Work to promote problem solving and investigation in mathematics requires enhancement.

Commentary

61. Standards in mathematics are average through the school. Expectation and challenge are best in Years 2, 4 and 6 and so achievement is good in these years. In other years it is satisfactory. The totality of lesson observations and pupils' past work shows satisfactory achievement overall. Generally, different groups of pupils achieve at similar rates. For example, higher attainers are challenged soundly and those who speak English as an additional language progress satisfactorily. Pupils who have learning difficulties as part of their special educational needs achieve well. This is because their individual education plans are well focused on small steps in knowledge and skills and support is good, enabling these pupils to move on with their learning. The precision of planning and assessment for pupils with special educational needs in mathematics is a model for work with other attainment groups. However, in general, the system to set targets and to track the rate that they are achieved is working well in mathematics.
62. Mathematics is a soundly taught subject. The major strength in teaching is the absolute insistence on high standards of behaviour in lessons. The pupils respond well to this requirement and so, learning is focused, settled and productive. The opening mental-oral sessions are of good quality because the development of skills and knowledge is to the fore in this part of the lesson. Teaching assistants generally give good support to pupils; this is especially the case in the group work. In some lessons, however, teaching assistants have a less clear role at the start and end of the session. The concluding section of some lessons, where the learning was drawn together, was rather rushed.
63. The curriculum for mathematics has been developed and planned well. The overall quality of curriculum provision is satisfactory, though there are strengths, including the firm focus on basic numeracy and the good quality Maths Club sessions held as part of the *Creative Activities* afternoon. There is now a need to enhance the focus on problem solving and investigation activities. Some good work was observed in these aspects of mathematics, such as the Maths Club session for higher attaining pupils, but the rather teacher-focused work in some lessons reduces opportunities for pupils to *find out* for themselves. The use of ICT in mathematics is not as well developed as in many primary schools, though some good work was observed in Year 6 on the development of a spreadsheet to show the impact of changed variables on the cost of a party. Some of these parties were clearly going to be extravagant, whilst others were rather frugal!
64. The subject leader has worked hard and successfully to develop the provision for mathematics since the school opened eighteen months ago. He gives good leadership to mathematics and provides a clear steer for the subject. He has firm understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement and has started a number of good initiatives to find out about mathematics provision in other parts of the school. In general, monitoring and evaluation activities in mathematics are helping the school's drive for improvement. There are sensible and entirely appropriate priorities for the continued development of mathematics.

Mathematics across the curriculum

65. The development of mathematics skills and knowledge in other subjects is satisfactory overall. In science, for example, pupils collect data as part of their investigations and they record it in

tabular and graph form. The skills of different types of measurement are developed soundly in science, but also in subjects such as design and technology and physical education. As stated above, links to ICT require strengthening. The Wednesday afternoon *Creative Activities* sessions are a valuable and effective part of the work to promote mathematics across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving.
- The subject is led well, with good ideas for improvement based on experimental and investigational science. There is therefore good capacity for improvement.
- ICT is not used consistently to underpin pupils' skills in science.
- Well-defined assessment and target-setting procedures are not yet in place to ensure planned work challenges all pupils.

Commentary

66. The provision in science is satisfactory and currently meets the needs of lower attaining, average and higher attaining pupils. Now that continuity exists between Year 2 and Year 3 a number of good initiatives have been put into place. There is good capacity for improvement resulting in very positive signs that standards are on an upward trend. The school is now well placed to achieve higher results in the 2004 national tests than previously seen in 2003 where they were below the national average in Year 6. Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work clearly reflects standards presently to be broadly average in Year 2 and Year 6.
67. The subject leader has put into place a good curriculum in the light of her analysis of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievements and through discussion with colleagues. There is clearly a developing thrust towards experimental and investigational aspects of the subject and this is helping to raise pupils' achievement. Scrutiny of pupils' work and lesson observations clearly reflects this positive approach in the majority of classes throughout the school. This is due to the range of well-planned practical activities for pupils to undertake and record their own scientific investigations, predictions and scientific explanations of why a certain thing happened. However, this approach is inconsistent throughout the school, with some classes' over-reliance on worksheets and constraining teaching styles. There is still a need for the school to focus on why a certain event happened in scientific terms rather than writing experiments in the form of *what we did and equipment used*.
68. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In one Year 3 and one Year 6 lesson the quality of teaching observed was good. In these two year groups teachers transmit their knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject, and well-planned activities, appropriate to all pupils' levels of learning, capture their interest and obvious enjoyment during group practical activities. New learning at a brisk pace is fun, teachers' expectations are high and the quality of pupils' work is also of a good standard with all work completed in time. Clear explanations and the use of well-planned resources ensure all pupils understand how to complete the task before them, supported by clear learning targets that are referred to at the beginning and end of the lessons. The use of the correct scientific vocabulary, prominently displayed, also receives clear focus at the start of lessons. In the Year 6 lesson pupils were highly motivated by the use of practical resources to find the force needed to move certain objects. For example, using a force meter, pupils pulled a trolley along a smooth surface and then compared this with pulling a trolley along a rough surface. The final review part of the lesson provided a good opportunity for groups of pupils to share their results with their peers, giving reasons why certain events happened and what caused them. This activity successfully consolidated pupils' speaking and listening skills. The scrutiny of pupils' work shows that there is a broad curriculum for the

subject and that science is given a high profile through the many displays across the school. However, the quality of pupils' scientific illustrations is often untidy and many diagrams reflect incorrect spellings. The skills taught in English are transferred inconsistently into pupils' science workbooks. There are limited opportunities for pupils to practise and consolidate their numeracy skills within science lessons. The planned use of ICT to support recording skills and investigation is rather fragmented and, at best, satisfactory.

69. An enthusiastic, knowledgeable subject leader is successfully moving the subject forward. Greater precision in the analysis of test results and better evaluation of strengths and weaknesses has started to impact successfully. Targets for pupils are not yet used effectively enough to aid pupils' achievement. Marking is consistent in its regularity. However, it often fails to indicate clearly to pupils how they can improve. The subject leader has observed teaching sessions throughout the school and has gone some way to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching. However, there is scope for more focus in the monitoring and evaluation process on the standards being achieved by different attainment groups. Science has a bright light for the future and there is clear determination from all staff to strive for continued improvement

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average through the school and achievement is satisfactory.
- Teaching and learning quality is satisfactory in general.
- ICT is soundly led and managed
- Resource issues have slowed developments in the subject.
- The cross-curricular use of ICT is not firmly enough established.
- The ICT curriculum is satisfactory.
- Assessment and its use are in need of improvement.

Commentary

70. When the school opened it inherited ICT resources and accommodation from the previous infant and junior school. In the eighteen months since then, the resources and accommodation have been re-assigned to create a temporary ICT suite in the older building and a bank of computers in the newer one. There are also individual computers in some classrooms. Early on, governors took the decision to invest significant amounts of money in new resources and accommodation. Work to convert a spare classroom to a purpose-equipped ICT centre has been completed, though the school still awaits delivery of the new computer equipment. This context for ICT resources and accommodation has had an impact on the development of both the subject itself and for the cross-curricular use of ICT.
71. The ICT curriculum satisfactorily covers all aspects of the subject. Teachers each have timetabled periods for the use of the ICT suite or the banks of computers and these are used appropriately. However, the class-based computers are not used as intensively. Moreover, some computers are not reliable and this restricts the work undertaken. In general, staff work well to circumvent the problems of unreliable equipment.
72. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and skills and knowledge are being developed soundly. The pupils are interested in their tasks and they work productively. When talking to inspectors, pupils often said that ICT was a favourite subject as the work was interesting, hands-on and motivating. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in ICT and standards are average through the school.
73. ICT is soundly led and managed. The priorities identified for the subject are the right ones and they are being pursued appropriately. ICT will be a more central priority of the school

improvement plan from April onwards, following the installation of the new computers and it is anticipated by school managers and the governors that once the new equipment is in place, improvement in ICT will accelerate. Included in the planned improvements is the development of assessment systems, including pupils' self-evaluation of their learning, to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can.

74. Whilst attainment is average at present, there is evidence from lesson observations that pupils are able to reach higher standards. Therefore, the continued raising of standards in the subject forms part of the first key issue from this inspection. There are positive prospects for the necessary improvement to provision.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. The use of ICT across the curriculum is not as far advanced as it is in many primary schools. To some degree, this is due to the limitations of resources identified above. There is evidence of the use of ICT in subjects such as English and mathematics, but overall, the cross-curricular use of ICT is a key issue for improvement arising from this inspection.

HUMANITIES

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of sensitive issues are successfully included in the curriculum.
- The similarities as well as the differences between religions are given due prominence.
- The use of secretarial skills, especially spelling and sentence construction, is weak.
- The use of visitors and visits enhances the curriculum.
- ICT is not used well enough to promote pupils' research skills.
- Assessment of pupils' skills is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

76. Achievement is satisfactory. The pupils have well planned worthwhile experiences to learn about and learn from in religious education. Sampling of pupils' work and teachers' planning for religious education indicates that most activities in lessons are centred on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills through discussion. For pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 particularly there is not a great deal of written work to examine. The standard of work seen was in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. The school explains the richness of pupils' backgrounds, cultures and beliefs to good effect, celebrating religious festivals such as Eid, Diwali, Easter, Christmas and the Chinese New Year. For example, Year 2 pupils have looked at stories from sacred books and they know about the Creation and why Noah built his Ark because the world had turned away from God. As pupils move upward through the school, teachers build well on these skills making good use of assemblies to enhance learning. Scrutiny of pupils' books in Year 6 shows empathy for the beliefs of Sikhism. Pupils have clearly described the correct symbolism for certain religious artefacts. In a Year 5 lesson on beliefs, ceremony and dedication pupils were successfully encouraged to describe feelings relating to being in fear of someone. *How might you feel if you met your idol?* Finally pupils were challenged to give their thoughts as a Christian on meeting Jesus for the first time. Pupils were very respectful of each other's views as they described their feelings.
77. Teaching is satisfactory. Discussion work is planned and led well, supported by appropriate artefacts. However, the quality and content of pupils' writing varies considerably throughout the school. In the better classes writing is well presented, diagrams clearly and neatly labelled and thoughts written in a fluent style. Weakness in the secretarial skills of correct grammar and

punctuation, particularly spelling, is apparent in the majority of classes. Little use is made of ICT to underpin skills in religious education. Pupils in Year 1 were very respectful of each other's views as they re-enacted the reasons why creatures are central to the Chinese New Year.

78. Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Good use is made of well-planned assemblies to extend and consolidate pupils' learning as was seen in an assembly on achievement. Relationships, emotions and respect for others feature strongly and most pupils respond thoughtfully.
79. The school has been successful in arranging visits to places of worship of other religions. For example Year 1 visited a Hindu temple. The gaining of first hand experience and knowledge of other cultures and faiths equips pupils well to live in a multicultural society.
80. There is a need to develop consistent and effective assessment procedures to give good oversight of standards and achievement in religious education across the school.

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with expectations for their age
- ICT is not used enough to extend pupils learning.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to undertake fieldwork or to use geographical skills

Commentary

81. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards attained by pupils are average. This shows satisfactory achievement as they move through the school. In the lessons observed teaching and learning was satisfactory overall, with some good features.
82. In year 6 pupils demonstrate satisfactory learning in their research of mountainous regions. They used brochures, reference books and the Internet to find key facts, and identify a range of human activity in the Rockies, Alps, Snowdonia or Himalayas. Independence and collaboration were promoted well as pupils completed these topics in small groups. A meaningful context for describing the features of mountainous regions was used as pupils planned a camping trip to the mountains. There were missed opportunities, however, to develop geographical skills such as using maps of different scales or atlases to support this work. Year 4 pupils develop a good awareness of the similarities and differences between homes in their own locality and a village in Ghana. This reflects good teaching, which made good use of resources and time. In Year 1, teaching is satisfactory though planning is brief and there is a lack of rigour in the organisation of time, groups of pupils and resources,
83. The scrutiny of pupils' work indicates there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to undertake fieldwork or to use geographical skills in their studies of their own and contrasting localities. There is also little evidence of the use of ICT to support learning in geography, either in the lessons observed or in the pupils' work.
84. Recently implemented long term planning now incorporates national guidance. There are indications that this should remedy the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, resulting from a lack of breadth in the curriculum in the past. The new programme should broaden the study of places, themes, and geographical skills, and promote progression as pupils move through the school. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. Assessment procedures have been recently introduced alongside planning guidance, though they are not yet fully effective.

HISTORY

85. No lessons were observed in history, and therefore it is not possible to form an overall judgement about provision. The planned programme, which draws on national guidance, indicates that the requirements of the history National Curriculum are met. It is not possible to make a judgement about the standards achieved by pupils, or their level of achievement, from the small sample of recorded work from the current year. Pupils identify history as a subject they enjoy. Teaching and learning is not monitored in lessons, at this stage, although there are periodic reviews of pupils' work.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

ART AND DESIGN

Provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The work planned in art and design is interesting and varied and links well with other subjects in the curriculum.
- The *Creative Activities* afternoon enhances the art and design curriculum.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons.
- Good opportunities are given for pupils to research other artists.
- There are no systems for assessing and recording pupil's progress from one year to the next.

Commentary

86. Although only one lesson was observed there was enough evidence from displays and the range of activities provided to judge that standards were at least average across the school. All pupils achieve well.
87. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is enriched by experiences during the *Creative Activities* session. Pupils thoroughly enjoy these activities, which include: observational drawings from very unusual artefacts, sculpture, clay work, painting, printing, looking at work by famous artists and representing their work in collage, and using ICT to produce patterns.
88. The pupils in Year 6 have successfully shown how to convey movement in their two dimensional work after exploring dynamic activities such as sport, dance, drama and music. They looked at how the idea of movement is shown in different kinds of art such as photography, illustrations, cartoons, paintings, and prints and experimented with different methods and techniques to explore how to convey movement in their work.
89. In Year 4 the pupils were producing a mixed media piece of work entitled *Journey around Africa*, combining drawing, painting, collage and print making techniques. This linked effectively to the pupil's religious knowledge and geography curriculum. A very good list of words helped pupils to evaluate their work.
90. The subject leader was away during the inspection but she obviously works hard and is enthusiastic about her area of responsibility. However, there is no system for assessing or recording pupil's skills from one year to the next. Resources for art and design are good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Provision in design technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities are given for all pupils to evaluate their work and that of their classmates.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy their work in this subject.
- The curriculum is enhanced through links with other subjects and during the *Creative Activities* afternoon.
- The use of ICT to support learning is at an early stage.

Commentary

91. Standards achieved by the age of seven and eleven are average. Some pupils produce work that is above expectation and make good progress.
92. Activities provided for Year 1 ensure they have a good start to develop their skills in cutting out, scoring, hole making, joining, sticking and making slits. The Year 2 pupils had designed and decorated creative puppets and were able to evaluate the process and final product well. Good links are made with health education and healthy eating when pupils design and name their own cereal for breakfast, make lemonade and fruit salad, and with art and design after designing their own templates of animals for pattern making. There are good links with music in Year 5. Pupils are able to explain carefully and confidently about the instruments they have designed after researching around the world for celebration, dance, entertainment, religion, and how people communicate and imitate sounds.
93. A new, keen subject leader has just been appointed. Resources are sufficient and adequate for current use but the use of ICT to support learning through planning, modelling and control is at an early stage.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in singing are good and lessons seen were well planned.
- There is a good, clear educational direction provided by the subject leader.
- The quality of the curriculum is good and the subject makes an effective contribution to literacy, design technology and art and design.
- Pupils have good opportunities to watch adults in school performing in assemblies and during lessons.
- Many pupils play musical instruments.
- There are no formal assessment procedures in place but the need to develop these has been identified.

Commentary

94. In music, pupils were only observed in Years 4 and 5, although the whole school was heard singing enthusiastically in all assemblies. The choir was heard singing songs in unison and two parts, with clear diction, control of pitch, a sense of phrase and musical expression. The standard of singing is good throughout the school.
95. A display showed how well Year 2 pupils had created and developed musical ideas based on the story of *The gingerbread man*, and another one showed how well Year 5 had designed and made their own musical instruments. In a very good Year 4 lesson based on Paintings *with sound*, pupils were observed creating, performing and analysing their own compositions. Their response to *The Scream* by Edward Munch showed how mood and emotion could be illustrated in music. Pupils extended their vocabulary and developed further understanding of how the sounds each group made could be combined to make a whole class performance.

96. Concerts and performances also contribute to pupils overall musical experience. *Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat*, and a musical evening for parents have been the latest performances. Pupils have the opportunity to play the cello, violin, guitar, keyboard, recorders, and ocarinas and enjoy performing for others. They have good role models to listen to; one member of staff is a saxophonist and another regularly plays his guitar.
97. Standards are average in composition work by year 2 and Year 6 but in Year 4 they are above average. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader is aware there are no formal assessment procedures in place but she gains some insights into the teaching of music in other years in school by her work in other classes.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and achievement is good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The curriculum is good and there is an effective provision of enrichment activities.

Commentary

98. There is a good curriculum for physical education that ensures that skills and knowledge are built systematically across all taught aspects of the subject. Recently, work in dance has been enhanced and the pupils have responded well to the demands made of them in this aspect. Year 4 pupils, for example, enjoyed their very good dance lesson, which was taught very effectively and moved skills on apace. Year 6 pupils have swimming tuition and achievement is good, with most of them able to swim the recommended distance by the time they leave school. The enrichment of the physical education curriculum is good. The provision for sports activities contributes much to the development of skills and such good quality provision makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal, social and health education. The pupils themselves say they like the different sports and physical activities provided. They are also enthusiastic about the school sports day.
99. Because there is regular, systematic development of physical education skills and good quality teaching, pupils achieve well. As they grow older, pupils move with increasing poise and confidence. They are able to develop original sequences of movement in gymnastics and dance and their powers of evaluation increase well. A strength of provision is the way that teachers allow ample time for pupils to watch others perform, evaluate what they see and suggest ways to improve the performance. Pupils sustain energetic work in physical education lessons and they work consistently to improve their skills and knowledge. Overall standards are above average throughout the school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Elements of personal, social and health education are delivered successfully through other subjects.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to become mature learners.

Commentary

100. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. There are good opportunities for pupils to discuss important and sensitive issues. Good teaching and learning happens in discrete lessons, such as circle time, and also in other subjects. For example, as part of unit of work in literacy, Year 6 pupils considered the health, social and economic implications of smoking, and how to make informed decisions. In circle time, in Year 3, pupils learned how to express their own views, listen to each other and how to co-operate as they considered their differences.
101. Good emphasis is placed on valuing the school environment and resources. Pupils are also encouraged to participate in making decision about school life. For example, they voted on whether football should be banned on the playground. As part of an initiative to consider the effects of bullying, pupils were involved in a working party with teachers, parents and governors. The school council usefully gives pupils a say in the running of the school and helps them raise points made by others. These initiatives, combined with a range of opportunities to take responsibility, such as acting as *buddies* for younger children and being monitors, promotes pupils' maturity and sense of responsibility.
102. Pupils say school is fun and that they are listened to and are involved in decisions about their recently established school. Health education is also well promoted in physical education and science.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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