

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LONG ITCHINGTON C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Long Itchington, Southam

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 130874

Headteacher: Mrs. Lindsey McDonagh

Lead inspector: Hugh Protherough

Dates of inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> January 2004

Inspection number: 256768

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:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	161
School address:	Stockton Rd. Long Itchington Southam Warwickshire
Postcode:	CV47 9QP
Telephone number:	01926 814819
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Andrew Kennedy
Date of previous inspection:	27 <sup>th</sup> April 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This small primary school has 161 pupils on roll, almost all of whom are of white British ethnic origin. The majority of the pupils live in the village, but a significant minority live further a field and are brought to and from school by car each day. The village lies close to the M40 corridor and is well favoured socially and economically. Most children have had some pre-school experience, and many have attended the independent pre-school class based within the school. Their levels of attainment on entry to the Reception class cover the full range, but are generally above average. The number of pupils with special educational needs (18%) is broadly average. However, the proportion with higher levels of need is above average. Four pupils have a statement of special educational needs and a further thirteen are also receiving support from external agencies.

In 2001, the school received an Achievement Award from the DFES for the improvement in the pupils' results in the national tests.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8339	Hugh Protherough	Lead inspector	English and information and communication technology
14083	Andy Anderson	Lay inspector	
20911	Judy Dawson	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage, art and design, design and technology, music, physical education
27541	John Collins	Team inspector	Mathematics, science, geography, history, religious education, special educational needs

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school that is steadily increasing its effectiveness.** The governors and staff have successfully created a caring ethos that supports pupils of all backgrounds and capabilities; it enables them to benefit from a broad curriculum and the wide range of cultural and sporting activities. The pupils achieve particularly well in mathematics, science, reading and music, but there are weaknesses in the approaches to the teaching of writing. The new headteacher has made an accurate assessment of the school and a successful start in her role as lead professional. However, the management of a few of the other key staff currently lacks sufficient rigour. The school offers good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The children in the Reception class receive a flying start to their full time education
- The school is well governed and the new headteacher is providing strong leadership for the staff team
- The teaching of writing lacks coherence in Years 1 to 6, and the pupils do not achieve well enough
- Throughout the school, the pupils achieve well in speaking and listening, reading, mathematics, science and music
- The good quality of the children's work in music contributes strongly to their social and cultural development
- The role of some subject managers is not firmly established

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school's curriculum is on a firmer footing and the provision for the children's all-round development has been considerably enhanced. Taken overall, standards are much higher now, and the pupils are achieving satisfactorily in religious education and information and communication technology. However, the pupils' writing has not matched the rate of improvement found in other subjects, such as mathematics and science.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	C	C	D	D
mathematics	A	B	B	B
science	A	B	B	A

*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.*

**With the exception of their writing, the pupils are achieving well.** The children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well and most exceed the goals that they are expected to reach by the end of Reception. By the end of Year 2, the children continue to achieve above average standards in reading, mathematics and science, but their writing skills are below average.

The inspection findings show that in Year 6 standards in mathematics and science continue to be above the national average and that the pupils achieve well in comparison with their prior attainment. However, their performance in English is below the national average because they underachieve in their writing. Throughout the school, the children achieve well in music.

Taken overall, the **pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good.** All the pupils express very positive attitudes about school; they work hard and generally behave well. The levels of attendance are satisfactory and in line with the national average.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a good quality of education. In the Foundation Stage where teaching is consistently very good** because the teacher has an excellent understanding of how young children learn. The children respond eagerly to the wide range of stimulating activities offered each day and swiftly grow into well motivated learners. Taken overall, **the teaching in Years 1 to 6 is good.** The lessons are well planned and the teachers' expertise in subjects such as mathematics, science and music frequently leads to challenging work and enthusiastic pupil response. However, the teaching of handwriting and spelling lacks consistency and rigour.

The school offers a good, broad curriculum and the pupils benefit considerably from the very good range of educational visits and additional sporting and cultural activities. The adults take very good care of the children and the school council has made a good start to informing staff and governors of the pupils' views and ideas. The arrangements for the induction of the children from the local pre-school are very good. The strong links with the local community college enrich the curriculum and enhance the teaching to the extent that most Year 6 pupils express very positive views of their forthcoming transfer to secondary education.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are good.** The governors work hard and effectively on behalf of the school. Their core values are cogently expressed in their annual reports to parents and successfully reflected in the work of the close-knit staff team. Thorough governance is evidenced further by the recent appointment of a headteacher who clearly shares the same fundamental beliefs about education, but who brings a fresh pair of eyes and a critical insight to the work of the school. She has already evaluated shrewdly and articulates a sensible view of how to build on current successes and improve the pupils' achievements in areas that are weaker. The head, deputy and Foundation Stage co-ordinator have a good oversight of standards and achievement. However, the subject management elsewhere in the school is less secure and requires improvement, especially in English.

### **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

There was an exceptionally high response to the pre-inspection questionnaires. Both parents and pupils express high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the work of the school.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Establish sharper policy and practice for the teaching of writing
- Develop further the roles and responsibilities of the subject managers, especially in English

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

With the exception of their writing development, pupils of all abilities are working hard and achieving well.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The standards of handwriting and spelling in Years 1 to 6 are too low
- The children in the Reception class work hard and achieve very well across all the areas of learning
- The pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve well in speaking and listening, reading, mathematics, science and music
- Standards in religious education and information and communications technology have improved throughout the school since the last inspection

#### **Commentary**

1. The school's results in the national tests have kept pace with the national trend in Year 6 and exceeded it in Year 2, due largely to the very good results achieved by seven year-olds in 2003. The key factors to emerge from an analysis of the school's test and assessment data are the consistently strong performance in mathematics and science and the comparatively weaker results in English. For instance, over the past three years, the results in mathematics and science have been above the national average or better, and in 2003 compared very favourably when set against the performance of these pupils in Year 2. However, the results in English have never bettered the national average, and in Year 6 are often below average or worse when compared with the results of pupils from similar schools. The reasons behind this apparent anomaly were a key focus for the inspection team.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.8 (16.2)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.6 (14.7)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.2 (17.6)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 25 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.1 (27.5)	26.8 (27)
mathematics	27.9 (26.8)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.9 (28.6)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 22 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*



2. The inspection findings confirm that the children in the Reception class receive a flying start to their education in all of the areas of learning. The vast majority of the pupils are on course to meet the targets expected of them at the end of their Reception year and many will exceed them. This is because the teaching is of a very good quality. Children of all abilities are consistently challenged at an appropriate level to think hard and achieve their utmost whatever their area of study. For instance, the most able mathematicians are already carrying out cost-cutting exercises for the sale in their hat shop by calculating two pence reductions on hats valued up to twenty pence. Those of lower ability or who have special educational needs are effectively supported by the adults and the good range of resources. Consequently, they too make significant progress in learning to count and to recognise words and letters. The key to the pupils' successful achievement lies in the teacher's emphasis on their personal, social and emotional development. The core values and expectations of the school are seamlessly woven into every aspect of the provision, and as a result all children feel secure and have a keen sense of their worth and importance as members of the class.
3. Taken overall, standards in Years 2 and 6 are better than those reported at the time of the last inspection. The weaknesses identified in information and communication technology have been remedied and the pupils now achieve standards in line with the expected levels. The inspection findings confirm that the pupils' performance in speaking and listening, reading, science and music is above average by the end of Years 2 and 6. In mathematics, standards are above average in Year 2 and well above average in Year 6. In each of these subjects, there are many teachers with considerable subject knowledge, flair and expertise. The increased use of drama to support the discussion of literature and work in history, and the encouragement of debate in forums such as the school council, have a beneficial effect on the pupils' speaking and listening skills. Practical investigative work in science offers further opportunities for discussion and supposition and enhances the pupils' understanding of the subject. Several teachers have a personal interest in music and employ their skills to great effect in extending the pupils' achievements in singing and playing instruments. The development of a mathematics "master class", supported by staff from the local community college, has contributed strongly to the very good numbers of Year 6 pupils achieving the higher levels in the national tests in this subject.
4. The school's own analysis of test and assessment is good and the staff had already correctly identified that the pupils' performance in writing and spelling is weaker than other aspects of English. However, despite the introduction of a wide variety of initiatives, there has been no significant improvement. This is due largely to the fact that there have been no proper checks to see how policy is put into practice, and no rigorous evaluation of the pupils' day-to-day work in their exercise books. After a preliminary examination of a sample of the children's written work, the inspection team followed an evidence trail across the school. It revealed that in every class there is a significant proportion of pupils who do not know how to hold a pen or pencil correctly and that in some classes up to a third of the pupils are forming their letters incorrectly. Similar proportions also struggle with the spelling of common words. As a result, there is considerable variation both in the quantity of the written work and in the quality of its presentation. This in turn affects the capacity of some of the oldest pupils to write in the fast, fluent and legible style that would allow them to record neatly and accurately their many interesting thoughts, ideas and observations. Although standards are generally in line with the national picture, the pupils are capable of more and are currently underachieving in this aspect of their work in English.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Taken overall, the pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. All the pupils express very positive attitudes about school; they almost always work hard and behave well. The levels of attendance are satisfactory and in line with the national average.



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils are proud of their school
- Strong provision for personal and social development in the Reception class lays the foundation for the pupils' positive attitudes to learning
- Relationships throughout the school are very good

## Commentary

5. The school community is governed by an agreed set of rules and expectations that reflect the mission statement within the prospectus. The pupils' social and moral development is successfully nurtured because all the adults who work at the school understand the principles involved and apply them consistently. As a result, the school is a good place for children to be and many are eager to share their positive points of view with visitors. They show great pride in their school. The absence of any exclusions is a further very good indication of the strength of the pupils' good behaviour and very positive attitudes to school.
6. The teaching staff does a very good job in building and sustaining positive relationships with the pupils. In particular, the teaching and organisation of the Reception class encourage the children to take initiative and responsibility for their learning from a young age, which is then built on steadily as the pupils move through the school. Opportunities to make their own contributions, through the school council for example, are increasingly valued by the pupils, especially as the new headteacher has made it clear that she expects them to inform her about the areas in which they feel the school might be improved.
7. Inspectors' conversations with the pupils threw up many interesting insights into what motivates them as learners. The breadth of the extra-curricular activities and the very good range of sporting and cultural activity clearly inspires the all round development of many. In terms of the core curriculum, many positive comments were received about the teaching of mathematics and science and the enjoyment many pupils gained from books and literature and the school's computers. However, far fewer pupils mentioned writing. It is interesting to note that the inspection evidence shows that on the very few occasions when the pupils' attitudes were less wholehearted this was normally linked to a writing task.
8. The table below shows that attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The rate of authorised absence has risen in recent years and reflects the current, and undesirable, trend caused by those families who now choose to take their annual holidays during term time when their children should be at school.

### ***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)***

Authorised absence	
School data	5.5
National data	5.5

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.08
National data	0.1

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

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education provided by the school is good. There is particular strength in the Foundation Stage. Elsewhere, despite some weaknesses in the teaching of writing, the staff provide stimulating lessons that interest the children and are well matched to the different ages and abilities in each class. The school's curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of activities in the arts and in sport.

### **Teaching and learning**

Taken overall, teaching is good and the pupils are learning effectively. In the Foundation Stage, teaching is very good. With the exception of the teaching of writing, the teaching in Years 1 to 6 is good. The assessment of the pupils' work is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching in the Foundation Stage motivates young learners and gives them a secure grounding in all the areas of learning
- Challenging tasks in mathematics engage the pupils' interest and lead to high levels of achievement
- Teaching of writing lacks coherence
- The effective use of practical and investigative activities in science reinforces the pupils' learning successfully
- The many teachers involved with the music curriculum have strong subject knowledge
- The marking of the pupils' work does not always tell them how to improve

### **Commentary**

9. The Reception class teacher has an excellent understanding of how young children learn. Consequently, the teaching in the Foundation Stage is very good across all areas of learning and much of it is excellent. The teaching of children's personal and social skills is exemplary. Her expectations of good social skills are consistent and any unacceptable behaviour is always discussed in a way that enables the child to evaluate his or her misdemeanour and decide what should have been done. She uses her own actions to teach personal and social skills. In a day when it snowed, for example, the class returned to the classroom after a few minutes excitement chasing snowflakes. Her question; "I'm so excited, children, what do I need to do?" prompted lots of kind and useful advice, backed up by demonstration. The class was calm. This very effective questioning permeates all aspects of the curriculum, resulting in above average speaking and listening skills, cooperative work and play and an impressive independence. The activities have a specific focus and are planned to include periods of direct teaching, guided group work and independent selection of tasks from the list for the day. Learning in the Reception class is seen as a team effort, involving adults and children alike. The teacher shows she loves to learn so the children do to. The teaching is planned very carefully, matched to the pupils' needs and based on rigorous assessments of each child. The children are encouraged to attempt to write by themselves. The teacher poses questions to individuals based on individual ability, expecting and receiving the maximum effort from them. On other occasions, the children "write" for specific purposes, such as appointments for hat deliveries and use clipboards to record experiments. As part of their day-to-day activities, the children count and order numbers, use the vocabulary of position and shape and explore the world around them in lessons and role-play. Because the learning is fun and their efforts are very much appreciated by the adults, the children learn rapidly and make very good progress. A child with a statement of special needs is making impressive progress because of his excellent inclusion in all aspects of learning. In a physical education lesson in the hall, for example, he helped put out large equipment alongside his peers with the support of the teaching assistant. Parents are fully involved in the learning process and are given advice on how to support their children through

direct discussion and exchanges of written comments in the home/school reading books. The teacher briefs the support teachers very well and they provide effective support. Occasionally, however, they need more expertise and encouragement to support the high quality learning that is the norm.

10. The teaching is generally good throughout the rest of the school. In mathematics and science, it is especially good because the teachers have a good understanding of both subjects and are effective in encouraging the application of numeracy skills across all aspects of mathematics and scientific enquiry. A short, sharp mental arithmetic session in Year 1, for example, was aptly timed to match the pupils' concentration span and kept them alert, interested and motivated throughout. Good questioning later in the lesson resulted in the pupils analysing the processes used to double numbers and using them to solve problems involving near doubles. Cubes in bright colours gave a good visual prompt to consolidate understanding of doubles and near doubles. The pupils in Year 5 investigated the best materials for making a string telephone in their science lesson. The class teacher showed good subject knowledge as she framed questions to encourage pupils of all abilities to explain and expand their findings, and used the outcomes to prompt others to further investigation. This led to the pupils having an understanding of how telephones work and an enthusiasm for recording the results in the way they considered most appropriate. They learned well.
11. Although the teaching of reading is good and pupils learn well, there are weaknesses in the teaching of writing. The teachers give their pupils a range of tasks involving writing for different purposes, but the teaching of handwriting and spelling is inconsistent. Most teachers deal with handwriting and spelling as discrete aspects of English, but are not rigorous enough in insisting that pupils apply these skills to their writing. Several do not require enough of their pupils' spelling, handwriting, and presentation, and on occasions their expectations of the pupils' productivity are also too low. As a result, the quality, and sometimes the quantity, of the pupils' writing are not as good as they should be. All work is marked, but few of the teachers comment on how the pupils could improve their work. The targets that they set for individual pupils are rarely referred to in the marking. Although the teachers are successful in generating interest and enthusiasm and encouraging an extensive vocabulary, the lack of attention to writing prevents the pupils from making satisfactory progress in acquiring the high level of skills of which most are capable.
12. The teaching of music was very good in both lessons observed during the inspection. Both teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. In a lesson in Years 4 and 5, the pupils evaluated their original cyclic composition, recorded on charts, and worked together in small groups to improve the pace and dynamics. The teacher deployed other adults very effectively. The pupils' show impressive knowledge of musical terms and conventions, the sounds of different instruments and how they can be used to create different effects. This is the outcome of very good teaching. The younger pupils also have a very good musical knowledge and were horrified when their teacher [deliberately] mistakenly referred to "beat" and "pulse" instead of "rhythm" in their lesson. This lesson, with the Reception children and Years 1 and 2, was dominated by the teacher's excellent relationships with the pupils and her high expectations of their achievements. Without prompting, the pupils adjusted the volume and style of their singing to the mood of the music.
13. The teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and show concern for their well-being. They plan interesting work and use the resources well. The teaching assistants are generally given good guidance for supporting the pupils although they are not always deployed as efficiently as they could be, particularly during whole-class sessions in Years 3 to 6. In one or two lessons, the teachers were not rigorous enough in their management of the pupils' behaviour, resulting in some lack of application and productivity. Homework is used well to enhance and extend the work in school and encourage independent study. The teaching of

pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and these pupils are given appropriate support. Their individual education plans are linked accurately to their pupils' needs, but the lack of rigour in the teaching of writing has an adverse effect on their progress.

14. Assessment is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. The teachers have appropriate procedures for assessing the pupils' work and setting targets. In mathematics and science, the pupils are given some feedback on how they can improve, but this is rarely the case in English where there is little or no reference to the targets pasted into the front of the pupils' exercise books. Across the curriculum, the teachers question the pupils well and the outcomes are used in the planning of subsequent work. The school is developing assessment procedures and beginning to track individual progress in English, mathematics and science. The strengths and weaknesses of the provision are analysed, but the outcomes have not yet sufficiently influenced the teachers' methods and planning in English. All teachers have a strong desire to improve the teaching of writing, but are hindered by the lack of consistency in practice and expectations across Years 1 to 6.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in [number] lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (6%)	7 (21%)	15 (44%)	9 (26%)	1 (3%)	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 school's curriculum is good and meets the needs of all groups of pupils well. It fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum, the curriculum for the Foundation Stage and religious education as outlined in the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The Foundation Stage curriculum is very good and offers the children a wide variety of stimulating, educational experiences
- The previous weaknesses in the school's curriculum have now been adequately remedied
- There is a very good range of cultural and sporting opportunities available to the pupils
- The improved provision for the pupils' personal and social development is good

**Commentary**

15. At the time of the last inspection, the planning for the curriculum, particularly in religious education (RE) and information and communication technology (ICT) was unsatisfactory. This is no longer the case and the overall planning for the curriculum is now on a much more secure base. Good use is made of national and local guidance for all areas of the curriculum and there is more systematic planning for the development of the pupil's skills, knowledge and understanding. The resources for most subjects have also been improved and are now having a positive effect on rising standards, particularly in mathematics and science. Improved resources in ICT now enable the school to meet all the requirements of the National Curriculum. The good Foundation Stage curriculum described in the last inspection report has improved still further and now provides a very good basis for the children's early experiences of full time education.

16. The school provides strongly for the personal and social development of its pupils. It does this through a well-planned set of topics that effectively develop the pupils' awareness of aspects such as relationships and how feelings change as they grow. Their knowledge and skills are developed progressively at appropriate levels for their ages. There are appropriate arrangements for the teaching of sex education and raising the pupils' awareness of the dangers of drugs. Good opportunities are taken to develop the pupils' speaking and listening skills through discussion and debate. Conversations with present pupils in Years 5 and 6 show that they are growing into mature, sensible young people with clear views of right and wrong.
17. The school extends its curriculum very valuably through a wide range of clubs and activities that are well supported by pupils of all ages. Music is well represented and enhances the already good provision of the school. Many sporting clubs help to further the skill development of considerable numbers of pupils. In addition, visits and visitors help to support the teaching and learning in a number of areas. The younger pupils visit a local garden to enrich their understanding of the seasons and the infant pupils have visited a Hindu temple to raise their awareness of the values and beliefs of other cultures. The junior pupils have visited Charlecote House in their work on the Victorians, and Year 5 and 6 pupils have a residential visit to the Pioneer Centre in Kidderminster, which helps them to develop their social skills of cooperation and working together collaboratively.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The adults take very good care of the children. The pupils' achievement and their personal development are monitored well and their views are sought through the increasingly influential school council. Induction arrangements for the children from the local pre-school are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are excellent induction arrangements for pupils starting in the Reception class
- The health, safety and welfare of the pupils are promoted well
- The school council is increasingly influential in informing the staff and governors of the pupils' views

### **Commentary**

18. The school makes all the required inspections and checks to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its pupils. They are carried out at regular intervals and properly recorded. The governing body has appointed a governor with specific responsibility for this aspect of its provision. Child protection procedures are secure and all members of staff are aware of them and of their own responsibilities.
19. The pupils are well known to the staff and the support, advice and guidance available to them are good. Their very good relationships with their teachers and other adults generate confidence and a sense of self worth. The personal and social, health and citizenship programme is also supportive of the pupils' needs. The children enjoy an excellent induction to school life. The school brochure ensures that parents have good knowledge of school life to support their children. The pupils who join school at other times are also well supported. The children with special educational needs have good access to a wide range of agencies and they use them well.
20. The pupils have very good opportunities to express their views. The school council meets every other week and is taking an increasingly active role in influencing change. The members of the council are elected by vote in each class, and the chairperson and secretary come from Year 6. They lead the meetings very ably and allow all to have their say in matters of concern. The pupils

help willingly with jobs around the school, including the collection of register and the delivery and return of playground equipment.



## **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

There are good partnerships with the parents and the local community. There are also very strong links with the local community college and pre-school playgroup.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The parents hold the school in very high regard and provide good support for their children's education.
- There are productive links with the local community that enrich the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

21. The vast majority of parents indicate that they are very pleased with what the school provides and have every confidence in its ability to meet the academic and pastoral needs of their children. Parents and grandparents help in classrooms and willingly accompany the children on out-of-school trips. The school association raises funds for the school and has provided extra resources and subsidised educational trips.
22. The school provides good day-to-day information for parents through monthly newsletters and regular handouts about specific events and activities. The class teachers send parents very good curriculum and topic information at the start of each term. The school's attractive prospectus is currently under review to bring it up to date with current statutory requirements.
23. The parents have good opportunities to meet with teachers to discuss their children's work and progress. The headteacher and her staff are very approachable and welcoming, and are easily accessible to parents at the start and end of each school day. The arrangements for more formal parents' evenings are also good. The current annual reports on the pupils' progress are satisfactory. They clearly indicate how the children are getting on and describe what has been taught. However, they do not set out clearly what the children need to learn next.
24. The school has good links with the local community. There are a wide range of trips and visits that support, for example, the art, geography and science curriculum. There is also a good range of appropriate visitors to the school. The school's very good links with the local playgroup and the community college ensure the children's smooth transition across the different phases of their education. Curriculum initiatives, whereby members of staff from the local community college support the teaching of mathematics and DT, have led to a situation where the vast majority of pupils express positive views about the prospect of transfer to secondary education.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Taken overall, the leadership and management of the school are good. The governors articulate a clear vision for the school and offer strong support and intelligent challenge. The headteacher leads well and is ably supported by her deputy and the Foundation Stage co-ordinator who have a good oversight of standards and pupil achievement. However, the subject management elsewhere in the school is less secure, especially in English, and requires improvement.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a sound ethos and value system shared by staff and governors
- The new headteacher is successfully establishing herself as a sensitive, astute and increasingly effective lead professional
- The governing body provides conscientious and effective support for the school
- The management of some subject leaders, especially English, lacks sufficient rigour



## Commentary

25. The nurture and care of the school community is at the forefront of the leadership and management and the inspiration for the aims of the school. As a result, the pupils are secure, happy and generally well motivated. The very good links with parents and the approachability of the headteacher and governors make this school highly regarded in the community.
26. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school's curriculum is on a firmer footing and the provision for the children's all-round development has been considerably enhanced. Overall, standards are much higher and the pupils are now achieving satisfactorily in religious education and information and communication technology. However, the pupils' writing has not matched the rate of improvement found in other subjects such as mathematics and science. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good.
27. The new headteacher has made a good start in effecting further school improvement. She has made a rapid and generally accurate assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She is concerned, for example, about the standards in writing and, with the deputy headteacher, is establishing tracking procedures to monitor the pupils' progress and identify weaknesses. Her open and friendly leadership values both staff and pupils and has been instrumental in establishing good relationships and a universal desire to improve the school. Its strengths have been celebrated, but she is clear-sighted about the need to develop the management skills of the staff. Through the school council, she is actively involving the pupils in the management of the school. She made it a priority to teach every class, which has given her a good understanding of the quality of the provision and teaching in each class and enabled her to establish firm relationships with the pupils. Through performance management, she has identified the development needs of the teachers and is beginning to involve the whole staff. This has encouraged the subject leaders to look closely at their roles and to identify areas for development themselves. There are effective systems to support new staff to the school. She has a very clear vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations for the school.
28. The subject management is satisfactory overall, but is inconsistent. Mathematics and science are managed effectively. The subject leaders have a very good understanding of their subjects and have a good overview of the curriculum planning and the teaching. They analyse the outcomes of the pupils' tests and have identified areas for improvement. These measures have been instrumental in raising standards in mathematics and science. The Foundation Stage is also led very well. There are exemplary systems for easing transition from nurseries and the pre-school into the Reception class and the parents are well informed about all aspects of the process. This very effective leadership makes a major contribution to the children's personal and social development. There are, however, weaknesses in the subject management of the other subjects, especially in English. The subject leader, although committed to extending opportunities for drama and role-play and creative writing, does not have a clear understanding of how to improve standards in writing. Suggestions about improving handwriting and spelling have been put forward, but have been neither monitored nor evaluated. There is a lack of understanding of what the pupils should be achieving. The pupils are given targets, but are not told what they need to do to reach the higher levels. The other subject leaders have a good understanding of their subjects and have been very successful in extending the curriculum through visits and visitors, the arts and sport. Until recently, however, there has been no opportunity for them to extend their expertise throughout the school, to monitor the teaching and standards in their subjects and to share their expertise with others. The restricted budget has prohibited them from making decisions about expenditure on resources, but the day-to-day management of the present equipment is satisfactory. The provision for the pupils with special educational needs is managed appropriately and is identified as an area for further development. However, little special provision is made for the most able and as yet no pupils have been identified as gifted or talented.

29. The governors are rightly proud of their school and have a good grasp of its strengths and what needs to be done. They are very supportive of the new headteacher and are secure in the knowledge that she is maintaining the ethos of the school. They are committed to preserving the integrity of the teaching force in spite of the limited budget brought about by fluctuations in the number of pupils on roll. They have a very clear understanding of the school's financial position and have a very good plan for maintaining the effectiveness of the school while reducing the deficit in the budget. It has the full approval of the Local Education Authority. They are ambitious for the school and consider that the pupils' all-round development and the broad curriculum are as important as the standards that the pupils attain.
30. The headteacher, management and governors are in the process of drawing up plans for school improvement and have sensibly waited for the outcomes of the inspection to finalise the document. There is no doubt that they have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school further.
31. The day-to-day management works well. Parents are welcomed and the administrative procedures run smoothly. There is little use of information and communication technology to support school management at present, but the headteacher and governors are appreciative of the strengths of the systems. The limitations of the budget have resulted in much tightening of belts, particularly in regard to administrative and maintenance costs. This has been carried out cheerfully and effectively with no adverse impact on the life of the school. The school is committed to the principles of best value and spending is very carefully monitored.

***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	382,016
Total expenditure	397,100
Expenditure per pupil	2,377

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-566
Balance carried forward to the next	-15,660

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

32. The very good provision for children in the Foundation Stage is a strong feature of the school. The provision and teaching have improved since the last inspection when both were deemed good. The school now provides a very good curriculum and teaching that is generally very good and often excellent. This enables the children to make significant progress in the Reception class.
33. The children's attainment on entry to the Reception class is generally above average. The entry arrangements and the joint planning with the pre-school next door are exemplary. The teacher has high expectations across all the areas of learning and a very good understanding of the children's achievements, especially in regard to their personal and social development. As a result, most children exceed the early learning goals in their communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Their achievements are well above average in their personal and social development, physical development and creative development. Their parents are justifiably very appreciative of the provision in the Foundation Stage.
34. The organisation and management of the foundation stage are very good. There is a very carefully planned mix of whole class teaching, focussed group work and independent activities closely matched to the focus for learning. The teacher and teaching assistants work and play alongside the children and monitor each individual's progress towards the early learning goals. The exciting environment and rich curriculum motivate and delight the children so that they sustain concentration and take a pride in what they do. They are given plenty of opportunities to apply and develop the skills and knowledge they have been taught. The teacher demonstrates a delight in learning about the world around her and passes this on to the children. She takes every opportunity to widen the children's experiences and extend their learning. The whole class, for example, went outside to dance with the snowflakes on the morning when it snowed. A child with special educational needs is fully included in all aspects of the curriculum and every activity. As a result, he is making very good progress. The teaching assistants are deployed effectively and the teacher gives them very clear instructions about their work with groups of children. Although they support the children well, sometimes their style of teaching and their practical skills are not fully in tune with the very good practice of the class teacher.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The provision for the children's personal, social and emotional development is **excellent**.

#### **Main strengths**

- The children's sense of independence is promoted very effectively
- The adults maintain consistent expectations of the way that the children behave
- Excellent relationships encourage the children to care for each other and their teacher

#### **Commentary**

35. Generally excellent relationships enable the children swiftly to feel secure and valued. The teacher and teaching assistants encourage the children to understand the needs of others by showing how pleased they are with instances of kindness, sharing and taking turns. The teacher often reinforces personal skills by asking children for advice. Questions like "I'm so excited.

What do I need to do?" prompted advice about deep breaths and keeping hands and feet still. This imaginative technique produced a calm and settled class after the excitement of chasing snowflakes. The many opportunities for children to interact with each other help them to understand the needs and opinions of others. Her impeccable management of the children provides consistent expectations and these children have a very clear understanding of acceptable behaviour. Any unacceptable behaviour is quietly discussed and the children themselves decide on the correct action. The independence encouraged from the first days in school stimulates curiosity and a desire to learn and children maintain concentration for impressive periods. By the end of the Foundation Stage the children exceed the early learning goals for personal and social development and many have very good personal and social skills.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

The provision in communication, language and literacy is **very good**.

### **Main strengths**

- The teaching and learning are very good
- The teaching of letter sounds and reading and writing skills is very good
- The children write for many purposes and writing is highly valued
- Role-play extends and enhances the children's speaking and listening skills

### **Commentary**

36. Most children are confident speakers when they join the Reception class. They quickly learn to listen, guided by the gentle voice and high expectations of their teacher. She uses every opportunity to extend the children's vocabulary. As a result, the children use terms such as "anti-clockwise" and "investigation" with accuracy and ease. Books are readily to hand and stories are used to reinforce learning as well as for enjoyment. The children's reading skills are above average and some are already at the level expected of Year 1 pupils. The less-skilled children discuss pictures eloquently and sometimes guess what happens at the end of the book. Various materials and equipment to develop writing skills are readily available, and the children's efforts are valued and encouraged. All are methodically taught to write letters correctly and to match them to the sounds they make; the more able children are prompted to use their understanding of letter sounds to write accurately. The curriculum is planned very effectively so that reading and writing become an integral part of children's learning. By the end of the Foundation Stage, the children make very good progress in all aspects of communication, language and literacy and most exceed the early learning goals.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The provision for the development of the children's mathematical knowledge and skills is **very good**.

### **Main strengths**

- The teaching is very effective and leads to very good achievement
- Basic number skills and mathematical vocabulary are reinforced at every opportunity
- The adults are deployed very effectively to reinforce learning, and purposeful play activities reinforce mathematical skills

### **Commentary**

37. The teacher has established a very well motivated class of mathematicians by planning activities that are relevant, challenging and fun. As a result, the children are numerate and can calculate

with ease. For example, they know the number on roll and can find the number of children present during registration. With two absentees, they instantly spotted that there were seventeen children present. When one arrived slightly late, this was adjusted to eighteen and the numeral was pointed out on the number square. In one very good lesson, a child selected six friends to help him. Very effective questioning such as “How many have you got now?” and “Do you need any more?” supported the activity well. Each child selected a hat and the teaching assistant removed some while the teacher looked away. The fun this generated and the enthusiasm to explain to the teacher what was happening resulted in rapid learning. Mathematical vocabulary is an integral part of the day. In a music lesson, for example, a child lost the string to his triangle. The children soon corrected the teacher when she asked, “What has happened to your square?” The children measure, position objects and compare sizes in the hat shop. Head circumferences determine the size of the hat. One of the more able children successfully reduced the price of all hats by 2p when challenged to do so. By the end of the Foundation Stage, the rich curriculum and very effective teaching enable most pupils to exceed the early learning goals for mathematical development.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

The provision for developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world is **very good**.

### **Main strengths**

- The teaching is very good and makes the learning fun
- The rich curriculum builds on the children's own experiences and introduces the wider world with well structured and interesting activities
- The development of the children's knowledge and understanding of the world permeates the curriculum

### **Commentary**

38. Most children enter school with a range of experiences of life beyond Long Itchington and many have holidayed abroad. The teacher is well aware of this, and she challenges the children by posing problems for them to solve. During the inspection, for example, the children went outside, armed with clipboards to find the best place to dry hats from the hat shop, using their knowledge of wind, shelter and heat. A serious discussion about the difference between living things and inanimate objects developed as children worried that the heat of a radiator might hurt the hat. In another lesson, they used their very good knowledge of train travel to build sophisticated tracks and stations as a place that “Small Bear Lost” went. Others designed and made models with boxes, selecting their own materials to join the various parts. Computer skills are promoted very well, and the children are confident in using both the keyboard and the mouse. They are curious to find how things work and can independently select suitable materials and tools for their activities. The curriculum planning shows that the children have full access to all aspects of this area of learning. Most are already meeting the early learning goals in their knowledge and understanding of the world.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The provision for the children's physical development is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teaching of physical education is excellent
- The planned activities for the development of the children's manipulative skills and coordination are very good

- The space for outdoor activities is limited and the outdoor equipment is sparse

### **Commentary**

39. An exciting environment greets the Reception children each day. Many of the activities necessitate good hand / eye co-ordination, and therefore develop fine movements and control. The children are very responsible when handling tools and show concern for others, reminding them to be careful if necessary. In the hall, the children move thoughtfully but with great panache, beginning and ending movements with excellent attention to posture. Their awareness of the shapes they make with their bodies and the space around them is well above average and would be considered good if achieved by much older pupils. There are exemplary systems for using equipment safely that are adhered to strictly. All children, including one with special needs, put out the large apparatus. The teacher has high expectations. Her excellent teaching and impeccable management of the lessons generate a desire to succeed and a joy in both movement and achievement. Consequently, the children's performance well exceeds the early learning goals in their physical development.

### **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

The provision for the children's creative development is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teaching of music is excellent and the children's achievements are high
- A wide range of opportunities promotes their creative development
- Imaginative play is a central part of the curriculum

### **Commentary**

40. The classroom is rich in opportunities for the children to use their imagination and creativity. Within a carefully selected range of activities, the children draw, paint and make models. They also use malleable materials, sand, water and toys to good effect. The adults encourage invention in the role-play and many children show real empathy with the characters they are assuming. They sustain concentration for long periods. In one lesson, for example, an exasperated "receptionist" in the hat shop complained that a customer kept ringing up to change the delivery time. In all situations, the teacher shows that she believes in the role-play and, like the teaching assistants, she often joins in when invited to do so. In an excellent music lesson, the teacher promoted the children's personal and social development as they took turns to play an instrument loudly or softly. The children showed impeccable restraint as they selected instruments and left them alone until needed. The teacher has very high expectations and takes every opportunity to enhance the children's learning across the curriculum. For example, she used a grid with large and small hats to prompt children to play loudly or softly. The children really enjoy their music, and are achieving levels well above the early learning goals for creative development.



## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **unsatisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership and management of English, although improving, is unsatisfactory
- The teaching of handwriting and spelling is unsatisfactory and the pupils underachieve
- The pupils are enthusiastic about books, and read widely and well

#### Commentary

41. The disparity in the pupils' achievements in writing compared with the standard of their work in the other subjects of the National Curriculum has been apparent for some time, but there has been a lack of coherent response to remedy the situation. In recent years, a wide variety of advice has been sought and a number of initiatives undertaken, but without the necessary consistency to bring about sustained improvement. Too many of the initiatives have focussed upon features of teaching provision within the literacy hour without sufficient attention to the outcomes – what the children achieve. Prior to the arrival of the new headteacher, the last analysis of the pupils' written work was held in 2002. In the interim, the English co-ordinator had neither the opportunity to observe the introduction of the various strategies adopted for the teaching of spelling, nor sufficient guidance in monitoring the outcomes. The new headteacher has made an urgent assessment of the quality of the pupils' written work and, following professional dialogue and performance management interviews, has devised sensible plans to develop the role of the subject manager and improve her effectiveness.
42. Although writing standards are generally close to the national average, the children are capable of achieving far more. The weaknesses in their handwriting and spelling stem from inconsistencies in the teachers' knowledge, practice and expectations. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils are encouraged to write freely across the full range of styles and types set out in the National Literacy Strategy. Their good knowledge of the sounds of letters means that most will have a go at spelling words for themselves, and in Year 1 the children are beginning to spell common words correctly by using the look-cover-write-check system. The teachers model handwriting correctly when writing in front of the class, but they seldom draw attention either to the need for a correct grip of the pencil, or to the starting points of letters. Similarly, in the lessons observed during the inspection, the teachers and their assistants were seldom observed intervening to instruct the pupils in these basic skills, yet in one class at least a quarter of the pupils are experiencing difficulties in establishing a correct grip and a third have problems with aspects of letter formation and orientation. The outcome of these weaknesses can be seen in the work of the pupils in Years 3 to 6 because too few go on to develop the confident, fluent joined script and accurate spelling skills of which the majority are capable. In these classes, the use of separate exercise books for handwriting practice does little to help. The work set by the teachers is random and seldom helps the pupils to establish a keener understanding of the craft of handwriting. For instance, rather than introduce diagonal joins by using simple pairs of letters such as l and i, some teachers set exercises where more complex joining is required. Moreover, the marking of work is cursory and often ignores elementary mistakes in the formation and positioning of letters. A further significant feature is the good proportion of the higher attaining pupils who appear to be able to produce neat calligraphy in their handwriting exercises, but seldom use these skills in the presentation of their general work. Across the classes, various spelling worksheets from a range of published schemes are in use. Again, there is an absence of whole school policy and a lack of clear structure in the teaching that will help the children acquire these skills progressively.

43. The strength of the writing curriculum lies in the teachers' conscientious coverage of the framework suggested by the National Literacy Strategy. There are good occasions when this work motivates the children and they produce work of a better quality. For instance, some of the Year 6 biographies and autobiographies contain flashes of originality and demonstrate thoughtful production. Furthermore, several pupils made effective use of word processing, researched on the Internet and imported images to illustrate their booklets. Their writing in the style of Kipling's "Just so stories" also benefited from this type of treatment. However, by the time they reach age eleven the pace and productivity of the children's writing in literacy lessons is not as good as it should be.
44. The teaching of reading is good. In Years 1 and 2, the teachers make effective use of a wide range of published schemes and support this with various good quality texts and literature. The home / school reading arrangements work well and there is evidence of a helpful dialogue between teachers and parents that supports the children's development. The thorough teaching of the sounds of letters means that the children soon acquire good strategies to tackle unfamiliar words, and most are able to make sensible guesses based upon the context of the text. By the time they leave the school, most pupils are reading widely and with increasing fluency. The higher attaining pupils read aloud with good expression and use their skills confidently when tackling research questions in non-fiction texts. The lower attaining pupils and those with SEN still express positive views about reading and make good progress. These pupils' conversational skills are generally good. Throughout the school there are children willing and eager to discuss contemporary literature because this aspect of English is well taught and the teachers ensure that personal response to stories and poems is encouraged. As a result, many of the Year 6 pupils are acquiring distinctive personal tastes and the pattern of their development as readers is emerging clearly. It includes some who thrive on the gritty realism of the works of Jacqueline Wilson and others who enjoy science fiction or the fantasy of writers such as C. S. Lewis and Philip Pullman. The teachers have equipped them well.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

45. The pupils make effective use of their good speaking and listening and reading skills across the curriculum. Although they record an adequate volume of work in subjects such as geography and history, the weaknesses in their handwriting and spelling sometimes limit the scope of their written responses.

### **MATHEMATICS**

The provision for the teaching of mathematics is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teaching is good, and often very good and standards are high
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good
- Most pupils have good attitudes to learning and achieve well
- Teachers do not make enough use of assessment information to match the work more effectively to the individual abilities and needs of their pupils

#### **Commentary**

46. The pupils achieve well to reach above average standards at the end of Year 2 and well above average standards by the end of Year 6. This is largely because the quality of the teaching has improved since the last inspection. The lessons are now well planned and the learning intentions are made clear to the pupils at the start. This helps them to focus more closely on what the

teacher is saying and increases their interest and engagement. All the teachers show a good knowledge of all aspects of mathematics and use it well to question pupils. The teachers' questions are well framed and targeted so that all pupils are able to make a contribution to the lesson. This raises their self-esteem and confidence and contributes well to their personal development. For example, in a very good Year 6 lesson, all the pupils responded with enthusiasm when challenged to find the relationships between fractions, decimals and percentages. At the end of the lesson, they knew what they had learned that day and all were eager to contribute to the discussion. Similar good learning was observed in a Year 4 lesson when the pupils enjoyed playing the game of "Just a minute" to develop their knowledge and understanding of time. Throughout the school, the pace of lessons is good, but the teachers do not always make good enough use of what they know about the pupils' previous learning to tailor the work to the needs of different attaining pupils. The marking of work is good in some classes, but less effective in others where the teachers' comments do not make clear what the pupils can do to improve further. Although some use is made of information and communication technology in the recording of work, for example in graphs, more could be done and this remains an area of development in the subject.

47. In a good lesson in Year 1, the pupils increased their understanding of how to double small numbers and then used this knowledge in the addition of bigger numbers. The Year 2 pupils are able to measure objects by direct comparison and can recognise simple fractions. The Year 5 pupils were observed learning to use a protractor accurately to measure angles. In Year 6, the pupils check that their calculations are accurate by using a calculator and can work competently with three and four digit numbers. They multiply numbers by 10 and 100, work competently with decimals and reduce fractions mentally by cancelling. Most pupils in this year group can also calculate the perimeter of an irregular shape and use a formula to calculate the area of regular shapes. In all year groups, the pupils are achieving well in developing their knowledge and understanding of problem solving. They have good opportunities to explain their working methods and all the teachers encourage the correct use of vocabulary.
48. Their pupils' success is partly due to their good attitudes towards learning. They enjoy their lessons and respond positively to the challenges that the teachers present. They particularly like the mental calculation sessions that start each lesson and respond with enthusiasm when trying to 'beat the clock'. The current Year 6 has a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, but these are mainly language-related. The work they follow is mainly the same as that of other groups in their class, and they would benefit from work more closely matched to their needs. This also applies to other classes. Their current achievement in Year 6 is as good as that of other groups of pupils because of the very good teaching and support they receive in lessons. The teacher and the support staff ensure that they contribute to all aspects of the lesson in a meaningful way. This enhances their personal development by raising their confidence and self-esteem.
49. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and have had a direct influence on the good teaching and rising standards. Both have seen significant improvements since the last inspection. The co-ordinator provides a very good role model for other staff and supports them well. Through observing lessons and checking on the pupils' learning, she has identified the strengths and weaknesses in the provision and has contributed strongly to the improved quality of the teaching and learning.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

50. There is appropriate use of mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in science the pupils record the results of their investigations in tables and block graphs. They also make good use of their skills of measuring in design and technology lessons.

## SCIENCE

The provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching and learning are good overall and standards are above average
- The pupils' work is often presented untidily, particularly their written work
- The leadership and management of the subject are good

### Commentary

51. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in the provision for science. As a result, the pupils achieve well to reach standards at the age of seven and eleven that are better than those expected nationally. For example, during Years 1 and 2, the pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge of the specific properties of materials by testing their waterproof qualities. They can identify a range of natural and man-made light sources and have developed a good vocabulary and appropriate ways to record work in the form of tables, charts and diagrams.
52. By the age of eleven, the pupils work safely and collaborate with others. They observe, record and report their findings accurately using a good range of vocabulary. For example, they employ terms such 'transparent', 'opaque' and 'translucent' and can explain the differences between them scientifically. They have an enthusiasm for learning because of the emphasis on practical and relevant activities that interest them and ensures that they develop positive attitudes towards science. Although the pupils' record their work in various ways, they have insufficient opportunity to use information and communication technology for this purpose. Some of the work is of high quality such as that observed in a Year 6 lesson. Here the pupils were challenged to find the best material for the soles of the slippers they were designing in their design and technology work. This was a well-planned and well-managed lesson that gave good opportunities for all groups of pupils to develop their investigative skills.
53. There is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 6. Their language difficulties are well supported by the teacher and classroom assistants so that their progress matches that of the rest of the class. Other junior classes also have high numbers of pupils with special educational needs and this shows in the overall presentation of work. It often lacks neatness, the spelling of common words is inaccurate and the standard of handwriting falls below expectation. This often detracts from the scientific content of the pupils' work, which is often better than appears at first sight. This is an area of development for the school.
54. The overall quality of the teaching has been improved since the last inspection. It is one of the major reasons for the rising standards. The pupils are clear about what they are learning as the teacher sets out the learning objectives for them at the beginning of the lesson. Skilful questioning enables all groups of pupils to play a meaningful part in discussions and further enhances their learning. The great majority responds to the challenging activities planned for them and shows positive attitudes to their science work. This was particularly evident in a very good Year 1 lesson where the pupils were set the practical problem of 'keeping light out of the baby's bedroom'. They came up with their own ideas of how to test the materials they could use, and all achieved well during the lesson in developing their understanding of the properties of different materials.
55. The subject is led well by the coordinator, who has improved resources from the time of the last inspection. These are well organised and accessible and are having a positive effect on teaching

and learning. The school has rightly identified investigative work as an area of improvement and has plans in hand to support the subject with further staff training.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have risen across the school
- The quantity and quality of resources have improved
- Some good teaching capitalises on the knowledge and skills that pupils acquire at home

### **Commentary**

56. There has been good improvement in this subject since the last inspection. The creation of a small suite of computers and a programme of staff training have led to a situation where the teachers are now sufficiently knowledgeable and confident to teach the subject. For instance, in the three lessons observed during the inspection, two were judged to be good and the third was satisfactory.

57. In Years 2 and 6, the pupils reach standards that are now in line with the expected levels across all the programmes of study. They have clearly improved on those described in the last inspection report. For instance, in addition to the widespread use of word processing skills, the pupils employ the power of new technology in a far wider range of settings. In Years 1 and 2, for instance, the children use programs such as "Splosh" to explore and re-create some of the designs they have drawn in art. This is further extended in Year 3 when they investigate the creation of patterns on carpets and wallpaper using "Fresco." As part of their research into Anglo-Saxons, the vast majority of the Year 4 pupils are adept at trawling for information in an encyclopaedia stored on a CD-ROM. Similarly, all pupils have safely monitored access to the Internet. Conversations with the Year 6 pupils show that, by the time they leave school, most of them are familiar with and can use a good range of search engines. Many have strong preferences such as "Google," "Ask Jeeves," or "Yahoo" that they use in their research for information on the web.

58. Particular weaknesses identified in the last report lay in the areas of modelling and control technology. Discussions with a group of Year 6 pupils suggest that there has been a thorough and successful response to those criticisms. Some pupils explained how their earlier work in Year 2 using an electronic programmable toy had been useful when faced with the challenge of orientating the on-screen cursor in the program "Black Cat Logo." Significant investment in resources, such as electronic sensors that can detect temperature change and magnifiers that transmit an image to a computer screen, has also paid dividends because the pupils now know how carry out simple investigations using this equipment.

59. Although only a limited sample of teaching was observed, it is evident that some teachers are taking full account of the pupils' frequent use of computers at home. For instance, in a Year 6 lesson to introduce the program "Powerpoint", the teacher swiftly established that several pupils had some prior knowledge and that one was well advanced in its use. She challenged these higher attaining pupils by asking them to expand their work beyond the scope of the introductory tasks prepared for the majority of the class. By careful observation and thoughtful questioning, she then assessed these children carefully in order to establish what fresh challenges would be required to push them on further.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

60. The recent improvements in provision have resulted in the school making satisfactory use of ICT across the curriculum. Word processing continues to be used effectively to support the pupils' work in literacy and there are effective examples of the use of digital photography to record drama activities related to classic poems such as "The Highwayman." Science work benefits from the use of electronic magnifiers that project images of insect life to the screen and the pupils speak confidently about using programs such as Excel to create simple spreadsheets. They frequently carry out independent research in history and geography using electronic encyclopaedias and the Internet. However, these illustrations are examples of the initiative of individual teachers and as yet there is no agreed coherent programme that sets out where and when ICT will be deployed within the other subjects of the National Curriculum.

## **HUMANITIES**

61. No lessons were seen in **geography** and only one lesson was seen in **history**. This was due to the way these subjects are taught in blocks of time over a two-year cycle. A scrutiny of the work in Years 1 to 6 shows that in both subjects the pupils receive a good grounding in basic skills, knowledge and understanding and achieve well to reach standards that are broadly as expected in Years 2 and 6. This results from the good emphasis on practical activities and discussion. There is also a good programme of visits and visitors to enhance both subjects. For example, the infant pupils use the local village area for work in geography, the juniors visit Lapworth Canal for their history topic and the year 6 pupils visit Charlecote House in support of their work on the Victorians. The Year 2 pupils have made a frieze of pictures telling the story of the Great Fire of London and the Year 3 and Year 4 pupils have produced a bright and colourful display of their work on India. These activities enliven the curriculum and add to the interest and enjoyment of the pupils. Links with other areas of the curriculum, especially information and communication technology, are not so well established and this remains an area of development for the school. The leadership and management of both subjects are satisfactory.

## **Religious education**

The quality of provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school's provision in religious education has improved since the last inspection
- The planning, which reflects the requirements in the Locally Agreed Religious Education Syllabus and national guidelines, is clear and being used increasingly effectively.
- The resources and artefacts have been improved since the last inspection.

## **Commentary**

62. It was only possible to see two lessons during the inspection, but additional information was gathered by looking at previous work, planning, and talking to the teachers and the pupils. Religious education is taught in accordance with the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus and is further enhanced by the new scheme of work for personal, social and health education that the school has recently adopted. By the end of Year 6 and Year 2, most of the pupils reach standards that are in line with those expected for their age as set out in the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Their achievement is satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. An examination of the teachers' planning over the course of a year indicates that much discussion takes place about various religious festivals such as Divali, Christmas and Easter. The school assemblies build up the pupils' awareness of their own religion and the beliefs of others. The pupils have visited the local church and the minister is a regular visitor to school. The infant pupils have visited a Hindu temple and have produced a

striking display of their work on the life of a Buddhist monk. However, the older pupils have little or no first-hand experiences of the places of worship of other faiths, and most of their knowledge and understanding comes from secondary sources. This is an area of development for the school.

63. Overall, the quality of the teaching observed was satisfactory, which is another improvement from the last inspection. A good lesson was seen in Year 5, where the subject coordinator led the pupils skilfully and sensitively through the life story of Martin Luther King. Careful questioning gave them good opportunities to develop their understanding of his idea of being able 'to make a difference'. Conversations with the older pupils show that they enjoy the use of religious artefacts in lessons. Generally, the resources have also been improved since the last inspection and are now being used more effectively to 'bring the subject to life'.
64. The subject leader is enthusiastic and knowledgeable, but has not yet been able to monitor teaching and learning across the school.

### **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

65. Only one lesson was observed in **art and design** during the inspection and it is not possible to make a judgement about the provision or standards in the subject. Evidence from discussion with teachers and pupils, the planning records and displays shows that there is an appropriate curriculum for the subject. The pupils' sketchbooks indicate that skills, such as the use of pattern, design and perspective, are taught. There are some good examples of imaginative and careful artwork on display, some in the style of different landscape artists ranging from Constable to Klee. The pupils learn about art from other cultures and Year 3 and 4, for example, have experimented with Indian design. In their lesson, pupils used chalk and charcoal to design sculptures on the theme of improving the environment. Much of the artwork is linked to other subjects and the pupils use a range of media including colourwash, collage, montage and marbling. The range of resources available is satisfactory and the curriculum is enhanced with a range of visiting artists and visits in the locality.
66. No **design and technology** lessons were observed during the inspection and it is not possible to judge standards or provision in the subject. Discussion with the subject leader, scrutiny of the teachers' planning and discussion with pupils indicates that pupils have access to all aspects of the curriculum. In addition, the school has good links with Southam Technology College and a teacher with advanced skills supports the school. Examples of work around the school, including glove puppets in Years 1 and 2 and alarm and container designs in Years 3 to 6, indicate that pupils are competent in the conventions of planning, designing, making and evaluating their work.
67. No **physical education** lessons were observed during the inspection. It is not possible, therefore, to judge the teaching, the provision and the attainment of the pupils in these classes. However, the well above average standards achieved by the children in the Foundation Stage and the very good range of sporting activities provided by the school would suggest that pupils have access to a strong curriculum that enables them to achieve well. The school uses a good published scheme of work for gymnastics and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidance for dance, swimming and athletics. The B.B.C. lesson tapes are used to support work in dance. The older pupils have outdoor and adventurous activities during their residential trip. The pupils in Year 3 and 4 go swimming and most pupils swim in their out-of-school time.
68. The very good range of extra-curricular sporting activities is a strong feature of the school's provision in this subject. There are netball, football, athletics and cross-country clubs. The pupils participate in local football and netball tournaments, and the school team won the boys and girls cross-country shield. A pupil received the improver's medal and the special

achievement award was awarded to a pupil with special needs demonstrating very good inclusion. The Years 3 to 6 pupils take part in the Southam Sport events and the county championship at Edmonscote Sports Stadium. There is an annual sports' day and physical education is to focus for the Healthy Living Week. The pupils and the community enthusiastically support all these activities. A professional footballer coaches the football team and qualified coaches run the football club. There were anxious moments after school when pupils feared that the snow would prevent the football club from taking place. Discussions with the pupils show that sport is very popular in school and the subject leader is enthusiastic and determined to maintain these activities. Although she scrutinises the teachers' planning, she no opportunity to observe the teaching and learning that are taking place throughout the school. Consequently, she is unable to form an overview of the standards that the pupils attain.

## Music

The provision for music is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is very good
- Standards are above average
- There is a very good range of musical opportunities

### Commentary

69. Two music lessons were observed during the inspection and in both cases the teachers had very good subject knowledge and high expectations of their pupils. A keyboard lesson given by a peripatetic teacher and an advanced Year 4 recorder session taken at lunchtime were also observed.
70. In a very good lesson for the Reception children and Years 1 and 2, the pupils showed considerable skill in both clapping the rhythm of nursery rhymes [without words] and identifying a rhythm clapped by the teacher. Their musical knowledge and vocabulary are impressive. They were shocked when the teacher deliberately referred to the rhythm as the "beat" or the "pulse" and they soon put her right. This teaching approach generates in the pupils a sense of responsibility and pride in their achievements. The pupils strive to perfect their performance and skilfully adapt their singing to reflect the mood of the music. At the end of the lesson, "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" was sung gently and sweetly, in contrast to the lively rhythmic singing earlier. This was unprompted and demonstrated a sensitivity and subtlety well beyond the children's years.
71. The Year 4 and 5 pupils compose, evaluate and amend their music using graphic scores in the form of symbols in a grid. They are complex, requiring great concentration as pupils perform them and demonstrate a good understanding of the conventions of pace, dynamics and rests. Some pupils introduced interest by stressing a beat, surprising the listener. This lesson was very well organised, and made full use of teaching assistants to support groups as they developed their performance. The outcomes were impressive and appreciated by all. These pupils are working well within the levels expected at the end of Year 6, and are achieving well.
72. The school provides a very good range of peripatetic music lessons through the county music service. Sixty-two pupils take string, woodwind or keyboard lessons. In addition there are four recorder lessons for Years 3 and 4, catering for the full range of abilities, a choir and an "occasional" orchestra. There is a weekly music club for all Year 3 to 6 pupils and an annual musical evening. Regular performances by visiting musicians, such as a string quartet, a woodwind group and "Rock Me", provide live music of good quality and the pupils take part in the



Leamington Chamber Music Festival and the county "Feel the Buzz" event. The Year 1 and 2 pupils sing to the Wednesday Club at Christmas and the school goes carol singing with parents in aid of Shelter. The good curriculum, the rich range of musical experiences and the very good teaching enable the pupils to achieve well. However, there are few opportunities for the pupils to use information and communication technology to compose and develop musical skills. This weakness has been identified by the subject leader and is part of the plan for development.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

73. No specific lessons in personal, social, health education and citizenship were observed during the inspection. However, the evidence gathered and evaluated throughout the report indicates that personal, social and health education and citizenship is well embedded in the school's curriculum. It links well with the religious education curriculum. An examination of the teachers' planning and discussions with staff and pupils show that pupils have good opportunities to develop knowledge and skills to support them in making decisions about issues that affect their lives.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

