

INSPECTION REPORT

Mears Ashby Church of England Endowed School

Mears Ashby, Northampton

LEA area: Northampton

Unique reference number: 122026

Headteacher: Mrs A Molcher

Lead inspector: Julia Elsley
Dates of inspection: 8th December – 10th December 2003

Inspection number: 256883
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 Aided
Age range of pupils: 4-11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 79

School address: North Street
Mears Ashby
Northampton
Postcode: NN6 0DW

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Appropriate authority: Northamptonshire
Name of chair of governors: Mrs S Littleton
Date of previous inspection: 27.4.1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Mears Ashby CE Primary is a very small village school set on the outskirts of Wellingborough. The school draws its pupils from the parishes of Mears Ashby and Harwick, Wellingborough and Northampton. The area is socially and economically well favoured. There are 79 pupils on roll, almost all of whom are of white, British heritage and speak English as their first language. Children enter school after their fourth birthday; there were 14 in the reception year at the time of the inspection. The children's attainment on entry is average but this does vary from year to year. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average; three children have a statement. There has been a higher than usual percentage of pupils entering or leaving the school within Key Stage 2.

The school received an achievement award in 2001 from the DFES for the improvement in the pupils' results in the national tests and a healthy eating award in 2002.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16892	Julia Elsley	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage, English, history, music, physical education, personal, social and health education
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21858	Elaine Radley	Team inspector	Special educational needs, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology, geography,

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a fairly effective school in which the school's good Christian ethos has a very positive impact on the personal development of all the children. The vast majority of the children make satisfactory progress though there is some inconsistency in teaching and learning in the upper part of the school. Overall, the pupils are achieving in line with their capability because the teaching, the curriculum and learning opportunities are generally satisfactory. The quality of the leadership is good because it is continually seeking improvements. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2.
- In the upper part of the school, in some lessons the quality of the teachers' planning and the marking of pupils' work are not good enough.
- The pupils achieve above average standards in design and technology.
- Individual musical achievements in Years 3 to 6 are above average.
- The children in the Foundation Stage have a good start to school life.
- The support, welfare and guidance of the pupils are very good.
- There is not a consistent approach across the whole school to the setting and management of targets to further improve the level of challenge and expectation for individual pupils.
- The governors and the headteacher provide good leadership and are well supported by all staff in order to bring about improvements. The management of pupils with special educational needs is good.

Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, notably in the Foundation Stage accommodation and resources and standards in Years 1 and 2. There have also been improvements in curriculum provision, the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work and in the analysis of test results to identify the strengths and areas for further improvement in order to raise standards. However, the school recognises that further work is needed to raise the quality of teaching to a higher level and improve the use of teacher assessment, especially when planning the individual pupil's next steps in learning.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Overall, pupils are achieving satisfactorily. The children in the Foundation Stage are making good progress. They are on course to achieve the early learning goals set out in the national framework for the Foundation Stage. They have settled happily into the routines of the school and the vast majority are likely to exceed these goals in their personal, social and emotional development, and physical development by the end of the reception year. In Years 1 and 2, pupils of all abilities work hard and achieve well. By the age of seven, the pupils attain standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are above average. In the last set of national tests, Year 2 pupils attained above average standards in English and well above average standards in mathematics.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	All schools			Similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	A	A	C	C
Mathematics	A	D	C	C
Science	A	A	B	B

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

Caution should be taken when reading these results because only ten pupils in Year 6 took the tests in Year 2003.

Because cohort sizes are small we should treat these results with caution; nevertheless, analysis of the national test data and pupils' past and current work shows that Year 6 standards in 2003 were generally in line or just above the national average. To some degree Year 6 test results are depressed by the impact of pupils' mobility; pupils leaving the school between Years 3 and 6 have generally higher attainment than those joining it. Currently the pupils in Year 6 are on course to reach the national average in English, mathematics and science with a small minority likely to exceed them. The pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall across all subjects, with the exception being the development of scientific investigative skills. They are making satisfactory progress when compared with their prior attainment. Standards in design and technology are above the national average. Individual pupils are achieving high standards in their instrumental playing. In other subjects standards are in line with those expected nationally.

Overall, pupils' personal qualities including their **spiritual, moral, and social development are good**, and enhance the quality of relationships throughout the school. **The cultural development of the pupils is satisfactory.** Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning; they are keen to please, enthusiastic and very willing to work hard and behave well. The levels of attendance and punctuality are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Overall, **the quality of education provided by the school** is satisfactory with some good features, but it also has some weaknesses in teaching. **The teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and in Years 1 to 6 it ranges from good to unsatisfactory and is satisfactory overall.** Where the teaching is good there is a level of challenge that is well planned to meet the needs of all pupils so that they achieve well. In these cases pupils are highly motivated and have a thirst for knowledge. Good use is made of resources to stimulate learning. Where the teaching is weak the lessons are not well planned or delivered, and some work is left unmarked. The school's curriculum is broad and the coverage is well balanced to meet the needs of the mixed age-phases. It is enhanced by the good range of extra-curricular activities such as visits to places of interest and sport and music. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The care, guidance and support the children receive are very good. The school's partnership with the parents, the school and the community is good. The parents support their children well. The school benefits from the links with other schools, the local community, and colleges. The arrangements for involving the pupils in the development of the school are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, **the leadership of the school is good and its management is satisfactory.** The governors help to provide a good strategic overview of the school's work. The headteacher provides good professional leadership and manages the school well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents express their satisfaction with the school. They are very pleased with the care and support their children receive, the quality of the work and the strong Christian ethos. However, a significant minority would like to see a more formal means of seeking their views by the school. The pupils enjoy school and they think they are valued and well supported.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise the quality of teaching by improving the quality of the lesson planning and the consistency of marking;
- Review the current systems of short term target setting to further improve the level of challenge and expectation for individual pupils.
- Ensure that pupils are given sufficient time to correct errors and complete pieces of written work in order to raise writing standards to the higher level; improve handwriting and presentation of pupils work in books.
- Provide more opportunities for scientific investigations and problem solving mathematical activities.

- Review the long term planning for the Foundation Stage.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The pupils in the Foundation Stage achieve well, and almost all are on course to meet the expected early learning goals by the end of the reception year. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well. In Years 3 to 6 they are making progress in line with their capabilities across all the subjects seen during the course of the inspection. Standards in all the core subjects are likely to be above average by the end of Year 2. The very large majority of Year 6 pupils are likely to achieve the national average, with a small minority likely to attain the higher level in English.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils' performance in the Year 2 tests is good.
- Standards in spoken English and design and technology, and individual pupil's musicianship are above the national average.
- Achievement in investigative skills in science in Years 5 and 6 could be improved.
- The pupils apply their literacy and mathematical skills to good effect in other areas of the curriculum such as history and geography.
- Children in the Foundation Stage achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development, and in their physical development.

Commentary

1. Since the last inspection, the school has focused on raising standards and has been successful in some areas, for example, in the above average standards in spoken English, the good focus on reading and the improvements in writing throughout the school. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are achieving well and building successfully on the recent developments in the Foundation Stage.
2. Because only nine pupils took the national tests in Year 2 and only ten in Year 6 in 2003, considerable caution must be used in interpreting the results. The test results for Year 2 were above average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics. However, there are significant variations in standards being achieved by the pupils in the current Years 3 to 6, partly because of the small numbers in each year group. The data shows some gaps between the performance of boys and girls, but in the work and lessons seen there were no significant differences. Over the past few years the school has experienced a higher proportion of pupils entering Key Stage 2 with special educational needs and this has served to depress overall performance in the Year 6 tests. There have also been significant staff changes. These factors have contributed to the downward trend over the past three years in Year 6 results. Nevertheless, the standards still remain average and above overtime.
3. In the Foundation Stage, children attain the nationally recognised early learning goals. The children are achieving well in all areas of learning but particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development and their physical development. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection. Communication skills could be further improved, however, if a greater emphasis was placed on developing clarity of speech and encouraging correct use of grammar and sentence construction during discussions with adults.
4. The levels of achievement in spoken English, the application across the curriculum of basic literacy skills, the use of independent research skills and the use of library resources and the computer for skimming and scanning text, for example in newspapers, are the direct result of the emphasis placed on these aspects of the curriculum by both the teachers and the teaching assistants. In English, for example, the teacher of the older children skilfully

matches the work to pupils' abilities so that the more able pupils are challenged appropriately. These activities stimulate debate about storylines and character and have helped to effectively support the pupils' own creative writing. A good focus is placed on spelling and the use of dictionaries. The good partnership between home and school, and the homework given, has also had a significant impact on the quality of writing.

5. Overall, in mathematics and science the children at the lower end of the school and into Years 3 and 4 are challenged appropriately. However, at the upper end of the school standards of achievement are satisfactory rather than good because not enough attention is given to informing individual pupils how they can improve their work. Although most pupils are working at levels that are well in line with their capability over the course of the year, more pupils could achieve higher standards if the quality of the teaching was improved. Higher expectations of the older pupils and better marking would increase the level of challenge in class lessons and raise standards further. There is a need to improve the opportunities for pupils to further improve their investigative skills in science across the whole school.
6. Information and communication technology is satisfactorily used to support learning in all subjects. This is a priority in the school improvement plan and good strides forward are being made to raise standards to the higher levels. In the humanities, for example, the teachers are using the interactive whiteboards to stimulate the pupils' interest and thirst for knowledge as well as encouraging them to use the computer to seek out information. The staff are skilled at developing this enquiry and discovery approach and this results in satisfactory and frequently good levels of achievement. Standards in history are in line with the expected national level. There was insufficient evidence to report on the standards in lessons for music, geography, and art and design. The standards in design and technology across the whole school are above average. The practical and knowledgeable approach to this subject generates good levels of achievement. The standards achieved by the pupils in their individual instrumental playing are above that expected of pupils of similar ages.
7. Lower attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress through a steady and well-planned learning programme. They are very well supported by their class teacher and the teaching assistants. They are proud of their achievements. This is especially evident during discussions and the plenary sessions because the staff encourage them to participate fully and contribute actively.
8. The school has prioritised its improvements in order to continue to raise standards in a manner appropriate for such a small school. The improvement is clearly mapped out and matched carefully to the professional development of all staff and the needs of the pupils. The school's self-evaluation process, performance management and the use of data analysis are areas of significant improvement since the last inspection. The regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are used extensively to bring about improvement. This has for example, had a significant impact upon the improved quality of the teaching in English and could usefully be deployed to raise the standards to the higher level in mathematics and science. These features of the school's work are now beginning to be well established and demonstrate the clear vision from the leadership of the headteacher and governors. They are very well supported by the staff who have a clear and dedicated commitment to succeed.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

All pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and their behaviour is good. The pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral and social development, are encouraged well. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The levels of attendance are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children arrive punctually to school and are eager to learn and work hard.
- Behaviour in lessons, lunchtimes and in the playground is good.
- The pupils' relationships with each other, with their class teachers and with the teaching assistants are very positive.
- The school has a marked Christian ethos.
- The children with SEN are involved in all activities and are well supported.

Commentary

9. The staff provide interesting and resourceful lessons that positively promote the pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning. As a result, they have good attitudes towards their work and enjoy their lessons and school life in general. The good relationships pupils have with their class teachers and support staff is a major factor in their learning. In discussions and in their responses to the questionnaire, pupils are positive about school life, enjoy coming to school and feel they are expected to work hard. Pupils understand that in order to learn at school and in their lives, they have to apply themselves. Children in the reception class have a very positive start to their personal development because they are given good opportunities to work and play together so that they can learn to share and work co-operatively.
10. The behaviour of the pupils is good in lessons and around the school. At breaks and lunchtimes children play well together in the playground and are well supervised. During the inspection there were no signs of aggressive behaviour. Because of the school's ethos, everyone understands that aggression is unacceptable and so bullying and racism are rare. In addition, the school's response to inappropriate behaviour is prompt and firm and well understood by pupils. The pupils have similar attitudes and values to those found at the last inspection.
11. The school's commitment to educational inclusion is reflected in the effective way that the pupils with SEN are integrated within each class. There are careful plans that identify how each child's needs are to be met and the carers and the teachers carry out these plans efficiently. This ensures that the children make good progress in their personal development.
12. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. The pupils' spiritual learning is fostered well through good opportunities for the children to express their feelings and emotions and these are used well to help explore a range of values and beliefs that affect their life and behaviour. The children are encouraged to reflect on the wonders of nature, for example, as they go about collecting ice, using the natural materials from the playground or finding out about the wonders of life in the Egyptian times. Circle time also provides a good opportunity for teachers to reinforce the idea that our actions can have an impact on others and through this pupils learn to be considerate and tolerant of one another. Through charity work pupils gain an understanding of others who are less fortunate. The school is linked through the diocese with the diocese of Bungoma in Kenya. At the harvest festival money is collected for Bungoma. Fruit and vegetables from the festival are given to house bound people in the village and tinned food is given to a centre for the needy in Wellingborough. The pupils carry out a range of responsibilities, such as taking the registers to the office, collecting and giving out books and looking after the younger pupils at playtime. They take their roles seriously and carry them out diligently. The pupils' cultural awareness is

satisfactory overall, but a more focused and systematic approach across a range of subjects would better prepare pupils for life in an ethnically diverse society.

Attendance

Pupils attend school regularly and punctually. As noted at the last inspection, there are a few parents who take their children out of school for holidays and this adversely affects the overall attendance rate. The promotion and monitoring of attendance and punctuality is good. Registers are marked promptly and accurately and lessons begin on time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2003)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.6
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.2
National data	0.4

Exclusions

There have been no exclusions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The good relationships and the good quality teamwork are influenced by the positive Christian ethos for learning throughout the school. There is a wide range of educational visits and extra-curricular opportunities in sport and music and these activities successfully enhance the curriculum.

Teaching and learning

Overall, the teaching and learning is satisfactory. It ranges from unsatisfactory to good. The quality of the assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good in the Foundation Stage.
- There is too small a proportion of good and very good teaching in Years 2 to 6.
- Not all work is varied enough to meet the needs of different groups of pupils in mathematics and science in Years 5 and 6
- In some classes work is not marked regularly enough.
- The teaching assistants make a very good contribution to support learning, particularly for those pupils who have special educational needs.
- The teachers assess the pupils' work and record their progress thoroughly but they do not yet have a consistent and common approach to short-term target setting in a manner that helps the pupils to improve rapidly.
- The good relationships and the Christian ethos permeate the school and make a significant contribution towards the pupils' successes and their enthusiasm for learning.
- Good use of homework to contribute to pupils' learning.

Commentary

13. In the Foundation Stage, the children are making steady gains in their learning because the teaching is consistently good. The teacher and the teaching assistants are well-organised and share their time very fairly between the Reception class children and the Year 1 pupils in

the same class. The termly planning and the immediate lesson plans are sharp and well focused with clear intentions of what they want the children to learn. The class teacher is a new appointment to the school and recognises that there is a need to review the overall long term planning for the reception children so that it matches more closely the national framework guidelines. The staff ensure that the children have a balance of self-chosen activities and those that are adult-led. The quiet rigour to the sessions and the wide range of interesting and creative activities keep the children very busy and motivate them to want to learn. In this way the staff are promoting the children's independent learning through enquiry, exploration and discovery very well. The adults observe the children very closely to assess how well they are progressing. The observations made and recorded on the individual children's progress are a notable feature of the team's work.

14. In Years 1 to 6 teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to good. The successful teaching in Years 1 to 6 derives from good planning. This planning is shared with the teaching assistants so that they are clear about what it is the pupils will learn. In these cases, the plans are precise and have measurable and obtainable objectives for the different mixed-age groups within the class as well as for individual pupil's needs. The quality and success of the planning reflects the staff's knowledge of the pupils and their own level of subject expertise, which is high, for example in English and in design and technology. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory the planning is often a weakness. Some lessons, especially in mathematics and science at the upper end of the school, are not sufficiently well planned to take account of the needs of different groups of pupils or to utilise time well. For example, in one science lesson the planned work was completed very quickly and the rest of the lesson was wasted with a task not even related to science, and this did not enhance or challenge the pupils' learning.
15. The lessons start promptly, and most have a lively pace and a quiet rigour. The use of the whiteboards, for example in history and ICT lessons, captivates the children's interest and focuses their attention well. The teachers' challenging questioning and the opportunities for discussion build appropriately on what the children already know. Most teachers are skilled at giving instructions to ensure that the children know what the task entails. As a result, they engage in the task quickly and quietly with minimal fuss. They concentrate well and feel confident to ask questions and seek reassurance either from the staff or their peers. Pupils are successfully encouraged to express themselves well and clearly; the older pupils readily engaged with the adults in a lively debate after having read an article in the newspaper, which gave them a good opportunity to express their views and opinions for and against the use of modern technology.
16. As a team, the staff have worked hard to improve literacy and numeracy, thereby raising the individual pupil's standards in English and mathematics. However, further work is now needed to raise the standard of work in science and other foundation subjects such as the development of art skills. The staff recognise that there is a need to focus more on the teaching of the basic investigative skills in science and problem solving mathematical activities to improve the quality of the learning experiences and raise pupils' achievements in the subjects.
17. The planned provision for the pupils with statements of special needs is good. Good guidance and monitoring of the children in the classroom by the teacher and teaching assistants enhances the individual pupil's achievements well. The support assistants are very sensitive to the individual pupil's needs and their work is valued by all teachers and by the parents. The work is well organised and individual education plans have clear targets detailing small achievable steps. These pupils make good progress because the pupils, their parents and the teaching assistants are all aware of and working towards achieving these targets. As a result, these children are developing their confidence and raising their self-esteem.

18. A strong feature of the school's work is the successful implementation of the homework policy. Consequently, the pupils have a very positive approach to homework from when they first start school. In discussions with pupils they were enthusiastic about homework and keen to talk at length about how it helps them in their lessons. For example, they enjoy doing research for history, reading and geography projects and love to share their findings both with the staff and their peers. The teachers work very closely with the parents and make suggestions in the home-school diary as to how they can support their children's learning at home. Parents find this very helpful and appreciate the time and effort put in by the staff.
19. Since the last inspection, much work has been done in improving the assessment procedures and analysing the strengths and weaknesses revealed in the test results. The school uses a range of formal assessments at the end of each year and the management of the school has usefully analysed the pupils' responses. These procedures are now securely in place, but insufficient use is being made of the resulting information to support mathematics, for example in Years 5 and 6, and to enhance the progress of individual children. There is a significant weakness in the marking; work is not checked regularly enough for the marks to be useful in planning appropriate teaching or in raising standards. However, this is not the case in English, where older pupils' written work is marked carefully with detailed comments that give clear guidance on what it is they need to do to improve further. The school has also recently introduced targets for individual pupils in English and mathematics from Years 2 to 6. Although these targets are reviewed regularly by most teachers and used well to plan future lessons, the method for setting and reviewing these targets currently varies from class to class and from teacher to teacher. A more systematic and consistent approach across the mixed-age classes would be more beneficial to the pupils. Assessment in the foundation subjects is being developed as the subjects become a priority in the school improvement plan.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 20 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	11	8	1	0	0

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

The curriculum

The school's curriculum is satisfactory. It provides a broad and worthwhile range of curricular opportunities for its pupils. The curriculum is significantly enhanced by a number of planned educational visits and extra-curricular activities such as music and sport. The school's accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented is good.
- Support staff are deployed well and effectively enhance the quality of teaching and learning.
- The long term planning for art and design does not place sufficient emphasis on the development of art skills.
- Long term planning for the Foundation Stage is insufficiently rigorous.

Commentary

20. Since the last inspection the planned curriculum for the Foundation Stage has improved significantly. However, the school recognises that it still has some headway to make in further developing the overall long term framework for learning. The termly plan and the short term objectives are good.
21. The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is well planned and all pupils receive a broad range of educational experiences. The planning utilises the national guidance well. The curriculum plan is monitored very closely by the headteacher and co-ordinators to establish a consistency in its coverage. It is revisited annually to ensure that pupils within the mixed age classes receive appropriate provision and do not repeat areas of the curriculum unnecessarily. This has improved since the last inspection. However, the school recognises and has placed in its priorities for improvement the need for a systematic approach to the development of art and design skills as pupils progress through the school. Discussions with pupils show that the children are highly motivated and have an eagerness to learn. Their enthusiasm is stimulated by a well chosen and well presented selection of topics. Good use is made of ICT and the library to support this work. Since the last inspection the provision for and the opportunities to use ICT have improved. There is now a computer suite and interactive whiteboards are used most effectively in the classrooms to support the curriculum.
22. The school has placed a strong emphasis on ensuring that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to the curriculum. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school makes good use of additional teaching programmes that are often led by the support staff. These programmes help pupils to catch up where necessary, and the individual or small group support helps these pupils to grow in confidence. For example, the school makes additional provision for those pupils who are gifted mathematicians by joining together with other local schools to provide an additional monthly lesson led by a leading mathematics teacher. It also enlists the support of a volunteer teacher to provide additional weekly tuition for these pupils. Individual tuition for music is also good.
23. Extra-curricular provision is good; it extends and supports the curriculum, particularly in history and geography. Since the last inspection the curriculum has been significantly enhanced through a number of planned educational visits such as the bi-annual residential trip to the Isle of Wight. The pupils have the opportunity to visit places such as Sulgrave Manor and many visitors to the school have supported health, drug and sex education.
24. The accommodation has significantly improved since the last inspection and the issue relating to the outdoor provision for the reception class has been fully addressed. The Foundation Stage is now housed in the new part of the school and has a good access to ensure that the children have the appropriate opportunities to work either indoors or outdoors. The school's accommodation is safe and enhanced by attractive displays. The school uses the accommodation well, although it is small. The school has also fully addressed the key issue relating to the provision for physical education. All areas of the physical education curriculum are appropriately covered, for example, by hiring the village hall for periods during the summer term for gymnastics. The school's leadership has worked hard to ensure that any shortcomings in the accommodation, for example the lack of a school hall, do not impact adversely on the curriculum.
25. Overall, resources are satisfactory. There are sufficient well-qualified teachers and teaching assistants for the numbers of pupils on roll. In most subjects, the level of educational resources is adequate. The library is well stocked. The children in the reception class, however, lack large-scale construction equipment, a range of wheeled vehicles and markings on the playground.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for the care, welfare and guidance of pupils is very good. The pupils' achievement and their personal development are monitored effectively. The arrangements for involving the children in the development of the school are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The health and safety arrangements are very good.
- The child procedures are very good.
- The children have very good and trusting relationships with adults.
- There are effective arrangements for the induction of children new to the school.

Commentary

26. The school has maintained the good level of care and support since the last inspection. The school provides a safe environment for its pupils through very good health and safety procedures. All statutory safety checks are observed and statutory tests carried out. Risk assessments are done on the school building and also outside school when preparing for educational visits. Health and safety records are well maintained.
27. The headteacher is responsible for child protection matters and all staff is aware of the school's child protection procedures. Although child protection issues are infrequent in the school, procedures for handling these are very good. Staff are alert to any signs of distress in children and do not hesitate to share any concerns with the head.
28. A survey to consider access for the disabled has been completed and the school can accommodate disabled pupils through the provision of suitable ramps and an appropriate toilet. There are qualified first-aiders in the school and the staff have been well trained.
29. The school has satisfactory systems for seeking the views of pupils on school improvement and involves the children in individual projects such as gardening and keeping healthy. There is no School Council because it is a very small school. The personal, social and health education programme allows opportunities for the children to express any views or share concerns.
30. The arrangements for welcoming new children into the school are good. There is an initial meeting for parents to show them around the school and to answer any questions. There are two days at which children can stay for the whole of an afternoon session to familiarise themselves with staff and the school. Parents with children who have special educational needs know that their child is given very good support and is well looked after by their carers.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents and the links with other schools and the community are good. Standards in this area have been maintained since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides good information to parents and this has a positive influence on the pupils' work and achievements.
- The arrangements for transferring Year 6 pupils to the next stage of education are well organised.
- Parents hold the school in high regard and are very pleased with their children's progress.

Commentary

31. In the parents' questionnaire, the pre-inspection meeting for parents and conversations with parents during the inspection, most parents indicate positive views on the school. Parents are very pleased with their children's progress and say that their children are happy in school. The school welcomes the views of parents. The school does have a formal means of seeking their views and regular newsletters are sent home to parents. However, a very small minority of parents consider that the school does not always take account of their views.
32. The communications between home and school are generally good. There is an appropriate welcome pack and a well established induction programme for children in the Foundation Stage to which the parents make a valuable contribution. This ensures that the children settle very quickly into the school's routines. To keep parents advised of school events there are weekly newsletters from the headteacher and also curriculum newsletters twice a term from class teachers.
33. Well-attended meetings where parents have an opportunity to discuss their children's progress are held each term. Parents having concerns about their children can see class teachers briefly at the end of the school day but appointments can be made for further discussions. Parents are fully involved in the procedures for special educational needs. They are kept well informed about the progress of their child and the dialogue helps them to support their child's needs at home. Through the home-school agreement the parents have a clear idea of what the school expects from them. Homework is well established and is making a good contribution to the pupils' progress. The reading record books present good opportunities for parents to make comments directly to class teachers.
34. The transfer arrangements to ensure that Year 6 pupils leaving the school have a smooth transition to their next stage of education are good. There are a number of possible receiving schools in the area that children can go to and contacts are good with all of them. All the secondary schools have induction days and all visit Mears Ashby to meet children at the end of the summer term. The school has a linked scheme of work that begins in the primary school and is completed at the secondary school. Last year the subject was science.
35. The school has good links with the community through its contact with the village church, which is used for celebrations at Easter, Harvest time and Christmas. It is also used for a leavers' assembly when Year 6 pupils leave at the end of the summer term. A local garden centre donates a tree at Christmas and also flowers for the school's borders. Through an association with a national bank parent volunteers and children have developed the school's wild life garden.
36. A very active association of friends of the school organise fund raising events. Donations given by the association have enabled the school to purchase equipment and material, which aids children's learning. The association also serves a very useful social function within the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are good. The governance of the school is good. The leadership of the headteacher is good. The management of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governing body works effectively alongside the headteacher to shape the future direction of the school.

- The headteacher makes good use of the performance data and self-evaluation to drive the work forward in order to bring about improvements.
- Professional development, including that of the teaching assistants, is closely linked to the school improvement plan to ensure the school makes progress towards its priorities.

Commentary

37. Since the last inspection the leadership and management of the school has changed but nevertheless the inspection findings indicate that the good level of leadership and management has been maintained.
38. The governing body is very supportive and works systematically to ensure continuing improvements. Although they do not have a full complement of governors, those appointed bring a wide variety of experiences and expertise that is effectively deployed within the existing structure of committees that manages each aspect of the school's work. Discussions with governors revealed that they have a good understanding of the school's many strengths but they are diligent in challenging the staff on what does need to be done in order to bring about improvement, in addition to supporting the school team. A good example of this is the work for special educational needs. A committee of governors has worked closely with the headteacher to devise a well thought out school improvement plan, which is realistic for a small school and has a rolling programme of priorities. The plan is manageable and is used to inform discussions at the full governing body meeting. The governors and staff responsible for particular areas are expected to present progress reports and the remaining governors question and hold them to account. They are very clear about the constraints of the size of cohorts and the impact this has on the outcomes of test results. Nevertheless, they are not complacent and challenge the headteacher and staff about the outcomes and the reasons for the trends over the years. They make regular visits to the school so that they can see for themselves how it operates and how effective it is.
39. The governors ensure the school meets all statutory requirements, for example, in respect of its race equality policy, health and safety matters and the annual reports to parents.
40. The headteacher provides good leadership for the school. The staff, parents and governors value her work, commitment and the Christian ethos and values that she promotes. She sees herself first and foremost as a lead professional in teaching in order to ensure that the pupils progress as well as they can. She has good support from the assistant headteacher in leading curriculum developments. The school development plan is based on the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work year by year. Because of the school's small and varying cohorts, it takes full account of the analysis of individual pupil's progress. The headteacher identifies issues and areas for improvement. This process has helped, for example, to focus on raising standards in writing, which have as a consequence improved. However, she still feels that whilst the strategy is working well the pupils can achieve more. The governors have had on-going difficulties in appointing the part-time teaching post. Consequently there have been substantial periods of time where the headteacher has been teaching full-time. She has also had to give a considerable amount of time to training the new staff and supporting the work in class. There is however, a strong commitment to maintain and extend the school's improvement by all staff, including the teaching assistants who achieve more than could reasonably be expected of them.
41. Overall, the management of the school is generally satisfactory but with some good features. The management of the provision for special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator has developed effective systems for maintaining and updating pupil's individual plans and the quality of support provided by the teaching assistants and other colleagues who visit the school is very good.
42. The school has come a long way over the past four years. New initiatives have had a positive impact by encouraging parental support, vastly improving pupils' behaviour and

establishing a clear forward direction for the school. The school now recognises that its central objective is to improve the quality of teaching. A sound programme of performance management is linked effectively to individual teacher's professional development and the whole school's work. Through close monitoring and the setting of targets the school is attempting to improve the proportion of good and very good teaching. The headteacher and governors evaluate the impact of what they are doing on the quality of pupils' learning. They understand the need to maintain successful aspects of the school's work, but see that some strategies and the way that some finances are directed may need to change so that the whole school benefits. They manage the school's budget prudently but with care and consideration, linked to the school's priorities. There is a large carry over figure but this is carefully earmarked for further building works and resources to support the good work in the Foundation Stage and ICT and the outcome of the new workload agreements of staff.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	233250.00
Total expenditure	240087.00
Expenditure per pupil	3039.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	40640.00
Balance carried forward to the next	33800.00

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

At the time of the inspection, the 14 reception class children have been attending full-time following the first half term when they attended for mornings only. These pupils are taught alongside the Year 1 pupils.

The majority of the pupils are still four years old and few have attended pre-school nursery/playgroup. Early assessments indicate the majority of the children perform in line with the expected levels. Taken overall, the children are achieving well and have made good gains in the short time they have been in school. The majority of the children are on course to reach the expected goals by the end of the academic year and a significant number will exceed them in their personal, social and emotional development and their physical development. However, it is important to state that the attainment of the children does fluctuate from year to year because of the small cohort sizes.

The previous inspection reported that the Foundation Stage required improvement. Since then the school has addressed the issues raised. It has made good headway with regard to the accommodation and has increased the levels of resources to enable the children to have access to an appropriate indoor and outdoor curriculum provision. The current medium and short term planning is good. However, there is a need to review the longer term planning to ensure that the framework for the Foundation Stage Curriculum is fully covered independently of the Year 1 programmes of study.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children are achieving highly in their personal, social and emotional development.

Commentary

43. The children have a very positive start to school life. They are secure, well settled and happy and have made good friends both with peers and Year 1 pupils in the same class. Relationships with their class teacher and other adults have been firmly established. A significant feature is the way in which the adults are skilled at reinforcing socially acceptable behaviour and mutual respect as the children go about their work. The children share equipment, taking turns in its use both indoor and outdoors, for example, when using the sticky tape to wrap up a parcel, bowling or riding wheeled toys. Another good feature is how they seek each other's views. One child when using chalks on the playground asked another child's opinion of her yellow road; 'Bends a bit' she said and then proceeded to change its direction. Further consultation followed and was approved. A good emphasis is placed on personal development and as a result the children show a good sense of responsibility for their personal hygiene and putting on their own outdoor clothing. As a result, all children including those with special educational needs are raising their self-esteem and self-confidence. Because of their astute understanding of the needs of all the children staff interact sensitively with the children to support learning very well. As a result, it is likely that the majority of the children will exceed the early learning goals set out in the national framework by the end of the reception year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

The provision for the children's skills in communication, language and literacy is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good role-play activities enable the children to make good gains in their early speaking, reading and writing skills.
- Adults do not intervene enough to correct grammatical errors and clarity of speech

Commentary

44. The majority of the children are well on course to reach the expected early learning goals by the end of the reception year, with a small minority likely to exceed them. This is because the adults give the children good opportunities to listen to stories and rhymes both independently and at group times. A significant feature is the way in which the staff enable the children to follow the story lines through their role-play activities, for example, the need to write letters to Humpty Dumpty who is 'bored' being in hospital and wants to be cheered up with some news and a joke. The children enjoy speaking about their work, often at length. However, more could be done to correct the grammatical errors within the context of the lively discussions. In some cases a greater focus on the clarity of speech by slowing down the enthusiastic responses would help the individual child. Most children take a great sense of pride in their contribution, being able to confidently express their thoughts and ideas and feelings.

45. The planned opportunities for the development of reading are good. During their free-flow play activities children were often seen looking at and handling books with care and sharing them with each other for sustained periods of time. The group sessions are well targeted at developing the early reading skills of picture cues and reading simple familiar words from left to right. The staff provide a good home-school booklet for parents and the positive dialogue enables the parents to support the development of reading skills at home.

46. The significant feature of the school's work is the numerous opportunities the staff provide for the development of writing. The children are being fostered as confident and independent writers and being encouraged to develop their imagination and creativity. Writing related activities permeate the children's play and augment the more formal early handwriting practice and the use of word banks for the higher attaining pupils to spell simple words and write short sentences. The children turn readily to 'mark-making' as they prepare the labels for their parcels, or write a letter to Santa. Most children recognise their name and can write it well because a good focus is being placed on the pencil grip, posture and the size and formation of letter shapes. The opportunities for writing numbers are presented in the same way as they address the envelopes.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision of role-play activities enables the children to achieve well in their understanding of number and shape and the notions of volume and capacity.

Commentary

47. The imaginative approach to the teaching of mathematics is good. The staff plan the activities carefully with a good focus on the use of subject specific vocabulary, which enables the children to repeat the words accurately and confidently in the appropriate context. For example, when using some paper to wrap parcels a constant questioning by the adult ensures that the children are beginning to understand the concept 'longer than' and 'shorter than'. The level of questioning is of a high quality and so the children make good gains in their mathematical learning. However, on one occasion the children's attention wavered because they just wanted to get on with the task themselves. Sequencing numbers from one to ten and organising them within the skittle game was another example of a good use of number. 'This is fun - mine is higher than yours,' said one child as she knocked down the number and called it out to her friend. As a result, the children go about their mathematical learning with a quiet rigour and this allows them to explore, enquire and discover through the enjoyment of first hand experiences and have a good sense of achievement from their efforts. Staff constantly use every opportunity to bring mathematical learning into all activities for example; 'What shape is your boat, what shape is the wheel'; 'Is that bottle full, half full or empty?' as the children play with the equipment. These thought provoking questions challenge the children's mathematical thinking. This is extended at home because the teacher ensures that the parents are fully aware of what the children are learning in mathematics. The home-school booklet includes questions like; 'When out shopping this weekend see if the children can spot a cylinder, a cube...' Consequently most children are well on course to achieve the expected levels by the end of the reception year and it is likely that a small minority will be working well within the early stages of the National Curriculum.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good foundations are being laid in the children's scientific, historical and geographical knowledge and understanding
- Adults do not intervene enough to support children when they are using computers.

Commentary

48. Most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. This is because the staff actively use first hand experiences to promote the children's curiosity about the world around them. For example, the staff and children took the opportunity to gather some ice from the playground and left it to melt near a radiator. They also put some water in the fridge to see what would happen. The children were asked verbally to predict the outcomes. In this way they are discovering and using scientific vocabulary in its natural context. The displays are good and are used well to promote interest, enquiry and discovery. The children have good opportunities to use the computers and are well supported by an adult in the development of these skills. On one occasion the adult demonstrated clearly how to use different icons during a group session around the computer but, as yet, when left alone the children are not confident enough to use the computers. They prefer to spend longer periods of time at the water tray, cutting and sticking activities, play-dough and construction toys which are planned well to extend and challenge the children's learning. The photographic evidence shows that the children have in the past had good opportunities to study the local environment.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children make good gains in their finer physical and large mobility skills.

Commentary

49. Most children are already exceeding the early learning goals in their physical development. This is because many children have brought these skills from home and the staff have successfully built on them through good teaching and the opportunities presented both indoors and outside. The children handle equipment, tools and materials safely and with good control. Most of the children enjoy setting themselves challenges and show pleasure in their achievements for example, when cutting the large paper in a fairly straight line, the string or steering the wheeled toys. They move around a small space carefully when involved in creative dance to avoid any collision.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Taken overall, the provision for the children's creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The use of role-play to extend learning is very good.
- There is not enough focus on the development of skills in art.

Commentary

50. The significant feature of this area of learning is the use of role-play and the high level of adult participation alongside the children to extend both subject specific language and co-operative play. As a result, most children are exceeding the early learning goals in this aspect of their creative development. The planned opportunities presented stimulate imaginative and creative first hand experiences. For example, in Santa's workshop the children were seen wrapping the parcels, writing labels and tying them to the parcels, then putting them into a basket and sending along a pulley, down the chute and into the sorting boxes. This went in sequence and the focused collaborative play was purposeful, busy and carried out effectively with a shared understanding of the process. This type of activity helps children make sense of the world around them.

51. In the art and design and design and technology elements of the curriculum the children are making satisfactory progress but their achievements could be better. Whilst a positive start has been made, for example in developing colour mixing, not enough time is spent developing specific art skills. Children have plenty of opportunity to explore different techniques, materials and equipment. The classroom has an appropriate range of resources, which are easily accessible, but the children do not have enough opportunities to select, make decisions and express themselves freely in paint and collage work. All work is highly valued by the staff so that every child feels comfortable with what they have achieved. This motivates them further to extend the work or to experiment and discover in other ways. Evidence from previous work shows a strong link with literacy and mathematics in most of the artwork. For example, some activities have suitable opportunities for the children to begin to develop pattern and repeated printed patterns. No musical activities were seen.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

The provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in speaking and listening are above average. The pupils are achieving well because the teachers promote these skills effectively.
- Pupils are achieving well in Years 1 and 2
- Literacy skills are well used in other curriculum areas.
- The use of library skills to support independent research is good in Years 3 to 6.
- The approach to target setting is not systematic and consistent enough to effectively support and enhance pupils' achievements. More time needs to be given to the correction of errors and completion of unfinished work.
- Handwriting and the presentation of work by the lower attaining children could be improved.

Commentary

52. According to the 2003 national tests standards of attainment in reading and writing at the end of Year 2 were above the national average and are comparable with those of similar schools. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection in test results as a result of professional and curriculum development undertaken by the teachers and teaching assistants. These improvements are being sustained and in the current Year 2 standards are on course to be above average by the end of the year. In the 2003 national tests standards at the end of Year 6 were average compared to all and to similar schools. The current Year 6 has a wide range of ability but most are working confidently and competently towards the national average, with a small minority who are likely to reach the higher level 5.

53. The standards of spoken English are good. The pupils confidently articulate their thoughts, views and opinions using quite complex sentence construction in some cases. They often challenge the adults with probing questions, for example in science and history. In discussions, they enter the conversation with an interest, enthusiasm and willingness to contribute confidently and fluently, although at times this can be detrimental to their listening skills, because they can forget to listen to what others are saying. The staff constantly have to remind them to listen to each other. Paired discussions play a significant role in improving this aspect of their work. However, in the introductory sessions to lessons they listen well, for example when being given instruction, and confidently seek reassurance to ensure that they know what it is they have to do.

54. Pupils have good opportunities for reading both individually, in groups and from class books or newspapers. By Years 2 and 6 most pupils are competent readers and the more able pupils read expressively and with confidence, often with good intonation which shows a clear understanding of the text. The older pupils have the ability to skim and scan the text, for example in a newspaper article, and recall the salient features or facts. This often leads to a very lively debate that is entertaining and illuminating. All pupils use the library well and the Internet to research for information. This approach to supporting reading motivates the pupils to read widely and is supporting the raising of standards in their writing. Lower attaining pupils are given very good support through well planned and presented special programmes; consequently, they make good progress, have a good sense of achievement in their successes and are not afraid to make a mistake. However, there is too little focus on improving the quality of their handwriting. The children write reviews of books, identifying the characters within the text, the sequence of the story, or interesting facts that they have

learnt. A good homework diary with teachers' comments helps the parents to support their child at home.

55. Overall, the achievements of the pupils in writing are good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6, but steadily improving. This is because the teacher's planning indicates a systematic approach to the teaching of writing and to developing a wide range of writing for different purposes and in a range of contexts. A significant feature to help improve the writing has been the use of the reading logs. For example, the pupils note down in these books how a story unfolds as they read, and this has helped to improve their own story writing. The use of descriptive language and subject specific language from non-fiction texts is also becoming more evident in their writing. The pupils are making good progress. Another strong feature is the constant reminding by the teachers of the differences between nouns, verbs, adjectives and connectives as the children go about their writing. Spelling is satisfactory and improving rapidly because they use a good phonetic approach. More significant is the continual use of a dictionary from a very early age and weekly spelling sessions to support this work. The tasks are well matched to the pupils' abilities across the mixed-age classes; this is an improvement since the last inspection. The use of assessment has also improved since the last inspection. Much of the marking gives positive and encouraging comments and targets are identified in small obtainable steps. However, because there is a wide range of ages in each class it would be more beneficial to have a systematic approach throughout the school to the way in which targets are set to ensure that pupils are challenged. In some instances it would be helpful to put aside time to allow the pupils to correct errors or extend the piece of work.

56. The subject is very well managed and the literacy co-ordinator has gained the commitment of all staff. The teaching assistants play a significant role in supporting the teachers and the pupils and this helps to improve the individual pupils standards of attainment in English.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. This is a strength of the school. The pupils' strong literacy skills are used to good effect across the entire curriculum. The basic skills of punctuation, grammar and spelling are well applied across the other areas of the curriculum, notably in geography and history. The pupils are able to carry out research, for example about the Victorians and the Ancient Egyptians, create factual accounts and record accurately and confidently through the use of reference books and ICT. The teaching of handwriting is systematic but the skills the pupils acquire are not always consistently applied. Handwriting is an area for improvement with the lower attaining pupils who have difficulty in co-ordinating the correct shape and sized letters as well as the presentation of their work. Handwriting also sometimes lapses with other pupils when it is necessary to write at speed.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall although there are unsatisfactory elements in the teaching of Years 5 and 6
- Assessment is not thorough enough and not used effectively to match the tasks to the needs of individuals in Years 5 and 6
- Numeracy skills are reinforced well through other areas of the curriculum, particularly in science and geography.

Commentary

58. Standards achieved at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 vary from year to year due to the small size of each cohort. However, from an analysis of pupils' work it is likely that pupils in both years will achieve standards in line with national averages at the end of this year, with a small number of pupils achieving the higher level. Last year pupils in Year 2 achieved standards that were in the top five per cent nationally while pupils in Year 6 achieved standards that were in line with national standards and with schools with similar intakes. Boys and girls are currently making similar progress and the few pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve similarly to other pupils.
59. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily and make reasonable progress. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants and achieve well. Nevertheless some pupils in Years 5 and 6 do not achieve as well as they could. This is because the work planned does not take sufficient account of the ability level of each pupil, with pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 often completing the same work. Much of the pupils' work is unmarked and therefore the teacher does not have a clear picture of what it is the pupils can do and what they do not yet understand.
60. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory overall and, although there was no unsatisfactory teaching of mathematics seen during the inspection, it was evident from pupils' work that teaching for the older pupils has been unsatisfactory in the past. In the best teaching seen the teacher challenged the more able pupils in the class by extending an adding activity to include larger numbers. Pupils were required to throw bean bags into numbered hoops and add up their scores. The activity was well planned and successfully combined the elements of accuracy in throwing with learning to add three numbers together, using a range of mental calculation strategies. The most able Year 1 pupils could use the strategy of doubling numbers to add $6+6+4$, whilst other pupils were able to count on using a number line. In all teaching good use is made of the teaching assistants to support those pupils with special educational needs. Activities are well matched to the needs of the lower attaining pupils and the teaching assistants often lead tailored small group sessions at the beginning of lessons. This ensures that the least able pupils achieve well and handle numbers confidently.
61. All pupils in Year 6 have a good grasp of place value and can record and read numbers such as 10, and 168 accurately. They are able to work out simple percentages such as 50 per cent and 25 per cent but only the most able pupils can find 12 per cent of a given amount. Although pupils have a clear idea of how to multiply small numbers mentally, they are less sure of how to record a formal multiplication sum such as 46×51 and struggle to calculate 40×50 .
62. Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to improve procedures for assessing how well pupils are achieving. The subject leader has carefully analysed test results and identified areas of mathematics where pupils are having greater difficulty. A greater emphasis has now been placed on these areas in the teaching and pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 are now being more successful when tackling written problems in mathematics. Systems for setting targets for individual pupils have also been introduced but these are not yet used consistently throughout the school and have yet to have an impact on standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. Pupils make good use of their numeracy skills in other subjects. Teachers work hard to ensure that there are planned opportunities for pupils to apply their skills, for example when measuring temperatures in science or interpreting data charts in geography. Good use is also made of ICT to develop pupils understanding of databases and the nature of different types of data.

SCIENCE

The provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at Key Stage 1 are good.
- Overall teaching is good in KS1 and lower KS2, but the lesson seen in Years 4, 5 and 6 was unsatisfactory
- Assessment is not always used well to inform the teacher's planning and the pupils are sometimes set the same work
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop investigational skills and learn how to plan a fair test.

Commentary

64. The attainment of the pupils at the end of Y2 in 2003 was very high and it is expected that the current Year 2 will maintain this standard and achieve above the national average. All the Y6 pupils attained standards in line with the national average with a significant minority achieving the higher level. It is likely that the current Year 6 will attain standards in line with the national average. The data for small cohorts should be treated cautiously but when taken overall it is clear that the pupils are making better progress than when the school was last inspected.

65. In two of the lessons seen during the inspection teaching was satisfactory but evidence from the work scrutiny suggests that the teaching overtime is good. In the best lessons the teachers are very clear about the learning objective and they have planned interesting activities to help pupils achieve well. In one successful lesson in Year 1 the teacher skilfully questioned the pupils to lead them to identify the similarities and differences in a range of carefully selected objects. Pupils were able to identify that some of the objects were shiny. The teacher using a light box then allowed the pupils to discover that these objects reflected light. In the one lesson where the teaching was unsatisfactory the planned activity was not challenging and pupils completed the task quickly and easily. The teacher had not planned any further work and the rest of the lesson was not used productively. The evidence of work completed indicates that the teaching does not always take sufficient account of what pupils already know and older pupils sometimes complete the same work. Consequently, not enough of the most able pupils are currently on course to achieve the higher level 5.

66. The procedures for assessing what pupils know and understand are not well established and although many of the activities in science, particularly in the upper school are testing pupils' knowledge, the information this provides is not used effectively to plan future lessons. The school has already identified that improvement is needed in this area and plans to undertake a detailed analysis of the end of year tests. This will successfully identify areas in which pupils' knowledge is strong and areas in which the school will need to focus to improve pupils' performance.

67. The science curriculum is well covered but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their investigational skills and learn how to plan a fair test. By Year 6 only the most able pupils understand that only one element can be variable when conducting a fair test. However, the school has recognised the need to place more emphasis in this area and good use is made of an additional teacher to provide an appropriate level of challenge for the older and more able pupils in the Year 2, 3 and 4 class.

68. The curriculum is well planned in the lower school and good links are made to other subject areas. Numeracy skills are well reinforced and applied when pupils record temperatures of cooling liquids, and science learning is well reinforced through literacy. In one successful

lesson the pupils identified the features necessary for a healthy and safe lifestyle, by writing a report. The teacher focused on the aspects of writing a clear and interesting report and pupils reinforced their previous learning in science.

69. The science leaders are clear about what needs to be done in order to raise standards and this action is identified in the current school improvement plan.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is good and this is well supported by the introduction of a new scheme of work.
- The curriculum is covered well for most areas but there are currently limited opportunities for pupils to use ICT based models or simulations.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

70. By the end of Years 2 and 6 most pupils will achieve standards that are at least in line with national expectations. Pupils achieve well and make good progress as they move through the school. This achievement is supported by the good access to computer facilities that pupils have, both at school and at home. Pupils frequently access the Internet to research information about a variety of subjects, such as finding daily temperatures in different parts of the world and gathering information about the life and books of author Jacqueline Wilson. The school places a strong emphasis on using the Internet safely, giving clear guidance to pupils on what to do if they should come across inappropriate material. Small groups of younger pupils are regularly supported on the computers to practice and develop their spelling strategies.

71. The quality of teaching is now good; there has been recent improvement in the teaching largely due to the introduction of a new scheme of work. The scheme places an appropriate emphasis on the direct teaching of skills and this has helped teachers to plan work, being very clear about what it is they want pupils to learn. In the best ICT lesson seen work was planned according to the age and ability of the pupils. Clear materials were provided which prompted pupils on how to interrogate a database, and a teaching assistant was well deployed to support the older and more able pupils, who were searching the Internet for information in the computer suite.

72. Assessment of pupils' achievements is at an early stage of development and the school intends to develop an assessment model that complements the new scheme of work. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 save their work onto their own floppy disc, but do not always routinely print off their work. There is evidence that pupils' work in ICT is appropriately displayed around the school. The school should consider building a profile of assessed work to support all teaching staff in making judgements about pupils' level of skill. Whilst the curriculum is fully covered the school has recognised the limited opportunities that pupils currently have to use ICT based model or simulations.

73. The subject is well led and managed. The headteacher has a clear vision for the future development of the subject and the school has a clear plan for the provision of new and updated hardware. The school has kept pace with advances in technology and has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

74. The school is making positive strides forward in the use of ICT across the curriculum. Interactive whiteboards in the classrooms are being used well, a notable feature is the pupils' ability to search the Internet for projects and there is a good focus on developing the basic skills right from when the children first start school. However, they do recognise that they have some headway to make and this is very clearly prioritised on the current school development plan.

HUMANITIES

During the inspection it was possible to observe only one lesson in history. Additional information was gathered from an examination of the pupils' previous work, a scrutiny of the teacher's planning and discussions with the staff and pupils. No lessons were seen in geography.

75. In geography, the younger classes pupils learn about the different countries of the world by following Barnaby Bear on his travels as he goes on holiday with different pupils. In the older class pupils are encouraged to keep a diary of their holidays. This is used to form the basis of their geography work during the first two weeks of term. Pupils study the differences and similarities between two contrasting holiday destinations. They use the Internet to discover more detailed facts about the two places such as hours of sunshine, population details and the national flag. This work in geography also provided a good opportunity for pupils to reinforce their numerical skills by recording the data gathered in line graphs. Teaching is planned to ensure that all Year 4 pupils regardless of the class they are in will cover the same curriculum. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 have learnt about rivers, they can label a diagram showing the course of a river and they have considered how we get power from rivers. However, much of the work is completed on photocopied sheets and is the same for all age groups.

76. Standards in **history** throughout the school are in line with those expected nationally. The pupils make satisfactory progress by the end of their time in school. This is because the school makes appropriate use of the national guidelines in planning. These plans are well adapted to meet the needs of the wide ranging mixed-age classes and to ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum.

77. In the good lesson seen in the lower school, the planning was thorough and resources were well prepared. The interactive whiteboard was used creatively to ensure that the pupils could clearly see the differences in the photographs of Egypt 'then and now'. This enthused the children. Their probing questioning of the teacher showed how they pursued this theme with a real thirst for knowledge. The teacher, and teaching assistants ensure that all pupils contribute their views and opinions. However, at times, in their excitement to offer their views pupils did not always listen to what others were saying. Their keenness was further enhanced by the knowledge that they would be given the opportunity during a reading session to use the Internet and books to seek further information about the Egyptians and to share with each other what they found out.

78. It is evident that the children take great care and pride when recording historical facts in their books about, for example, the Victorians and Henry VIII. Their good literacy skills are employed well in the variety of recording methods used. In conversation, they display a real enthusiasm for history and their verbal understanding by far outweighs the written evidence in books.

79. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in monitoring the curriculum and assessing pupils' learning, though the school recognises that it still have some way to go.

More visits now take place to support the curriculum, for example, to places such as Rockingham Castle, Sulgrave Manor and museums.

80. One lesson was observed in design and technology and one in physical education. A wider sample of the pupils' work was examined in art and design, and design and technology. Guitar and violin sessions were observed but no judgements can be made on standards in class music lessons or in art and design.
81. The school has no hall for **physical education** but makes appropriate arrangements to ensure that the requirements of the physical education curriculum are fully met. Pupils' achievements in swimming are good. The curriculum is suitably planned and is supported by an appropriate range of extra-curricular sports and clubs over the course of each year. The Year 2, 3 and 4 outdoor skills lesson was satisfactory and in line with the national expected level. The teacher explained the aims clearly and managed the class well. However, more emphasis on the example of the pupils who were achieving the aims of the lesson would have raised the challenge and expectation to a higher level. The teaching assistants provide invaluable support and ensure that those pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in the activities.
82. Standards in individual pupil's musicianship exceed the national average. They have a good mastery of the instrument, and the basic rudiments of music. They are taught well and show real enthusiasm for the playing of the guitar and violin. Many pupils play the recorder and ocarina and participate in the school choir at events such as harvest festival and a carol service held in the local church. A display of a composition in one classroom indicates that pupils have suitable opportunities to compose, perform and experience an understanding of terms such as pitch, texture, timbre. The graphic scores produced show that they have understood how to use them.
83. It is evident from the teachers' planning and from the work on display that teaching in **art and design** and **design and technology** is very closely linked. Pupils plan their work carefully, creating a design and selecting the appropriate materials. They draw on a range of different stimuli to develop their own ideas. For example, the older pupils, when making masks, looked at ancient Greek masks, masks from The Lion King and masks worn in the Venice carnival. They then selected a range of materials to use to decorate their masks and, having made the mask, they then evaluated its quality and considered how they might improve it. This approach is followed with all design projects in both subjects and leads to pupils being very clear about the effects they are trying to achieve. However, the work in art and design is less well planned to ensure a build up in pupils' artistic skills. They have limited opportunities to experiment with techniques such as printing, painting and accurate drawing and their knowledge of the work of other artists is not as well developed.
84. The pupils have been taught to use a wide range of skills, for example, they measure and cut wood accurately and safely. They join wood securely and are beginning to draw detailed designs that show how a mechanism will work. They understand how a CAM will work to make a toy move and they can discuss the different shapes of the CAM and the different types of movement that will result. The curriculum in design and technology is well planned and pupils get good opportunities to practise and refine their skills. This leads to pupils producing work that is of a good standard; by the end of Year 6 standards are above national expectations in design and technology.
85. The overall leadership for design and technology is good. The subject leader for art and design is beginning to collect a portfolio of art work which, if it was labelled would provide a useful tool for assisting teachers in assessing pupils' levels of skill. She is already aware of the need to improve the quality of pupils' drawing and this is identified as an area for action in the current school improvement plan.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children are developing good working partnerships with each other.

Commentary

86. The school sees the pupils' personal development as an important part of its work, with lessons time-tabled for each class. The school has recently begun to teach personal, social and health education as a discrete subject. This emphasis has supported the pupils in considering more closely the impact of their actions on others. In one lesson during the inspection pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 sensitively shared their observations on the achievements of other pupils within their class. One pupil described how two others had supported him by including them in their games, when his best friend had moved away. A significant strength is the children's ability to work and share their views, opinions and sustain a dialogue on a whole range of issues such as the natural world, differences between right and wrong or, as in the case of the very youngest pupils, how important it is to be kind to each other.

87. The planned programme for PSHE is good and includes initiatives such as "Health Eating", sex education and drugs awareness. This programme helps them to develop a safe and healthy life style, gain confidence and interact with others. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes indicate strongly that the school's provision for PSHE has a beneficial influence on their moral and social education.

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	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
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	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
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 (with some good features e.g. management of SEN)	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).

