

INSPECTION REPORT

Roxton VA CE Lower School

Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire County Council

Unique reference number: 109625

Headteacher: Mr Andrew Callow

Lead inspector: Paul Missin 19227

Dates of inspection: 13th – 14th October 2003

Inspection number: 257368

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 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	40
School address:	School Lane Roxton Bedford
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body, Roxton VA CE Primary School
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Eileen Gosling
Date of previous inspection:	30 th October 2001

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Roxton Lower School is a CE Voluntary Aided Primary School. It serves the village of Roxton, some eight miles east of Bedford. There are 27 boys and 13 girls on roll. This is much smaller than most other schools. At the time of the inspection, seven children attended the Foundation Stage: five were full-time and two were part-time. There are two classes in the school. Twelve pupils are on the school's special educational needs (SEN) register (30 per cent) and two have statements of special educational need (five per cent). These proportions are above average. The most common area of need is in moderate learning difficulties. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. When they enter the school, most children are achieving standards that are below those expected for their age. The school has experienced significant changes in the last few years. In 1999, the school was placed in Special Measures and, since then, the number on roll has dropped continually each year. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2002 after a period of acting as senior teacher. Over the last three years, all the teaching staff have changed. An inspection in October 2001 removed the school from Special Measures. The school received an Achievement Award in 2003 for progress made.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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16492	Bob Lever	Team inspector	Mathematics, science, information and communication technology, history, geography, music, physical education. Pupils with special educational needs.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Roxton VA C of E Lower School is an effective school which gives good value for money. The school is very well led by the headteacher who is well supported by an active and involved governing body. The very small year groups make the analysis of statistical data unreliable. There is a significant variation between the standards achieved by different year groups. Broadly, children in the Foundation Stage and those in Year 2 achieve average standards. In the current Year 4, because of the very high proportion of pupils with SEN, standards are below average. Across the school, teaching is good and this enables pupils to achieve their full potential. A strength of the school is the way that the needs of pupils of all abilities are met well. The school is on an upward and improving trend.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very good leadership of the headteacher and the good support and challenge provided by the governing body give this improving school a clear sense of direction.
- The good teaching across the school enables pupils of all abilities to achieve well and make good progress.
- The very good relationships evident in the school, pupils' very good behaviour and their good attitudes to work, contribute well to effective learning and provide an important sense of belonging.
- The school provides a safe, caring environment where all pupils are well cared for and valued.
- The effective links with parents and the very good links with the local community enhance and support the school's work well.
- In the school's improvement plan, it is not sufficiently clear how the success of the initiatives will be measured and evaluated.
- The management of science and the profile of the subject across the school have some shortcomings.
- Literacy skills are not used sufficiently and consistently across other areas of the curriculum.

The school has made good overall improvement since the last inspection. Standards have continued to rise, particularly in writing which has been a school focus. The quality of teaching has improved and the school's work in devising a teaching and learning policy and in improving the quality of teachers' marking has been good. There has been a substantial change of staffing recently but the headteacher has done his best to provide stability and continuity. Strengths in leadership have been developed and consolidated.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

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

Great caution should be exercised when analysis data from very small schools.

The table shows that there is significant variation between the results of different Year 2 groups. For example, the results in reading changed from the lowest five per cent nationally in 2002 to being well above average in 2003. Pupils in the current Year 2 attain average standards in reading,

writing, mathematics, science and in the other subjects which were inspected. The very high proportion of pupils in Year 4 with SEN limits their ability to reach high standards compared with national averages. Currently, they are achieving standards that are below average in English and science and well below average in mathematics. Across the school, pupils achieve average standards in information and communication technology (ICT).

Pupils achieve well across the school. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well in their communication, language and literacy work and in their mathematical development. Pupils in Years 1 to 4 make good progress in their literacy and numeracy work. Higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in science. Pupils with SEN make good progress towards meeting their individual targets.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave very well in lessons and around the school. Overall, attendance is satisfactory. The school does all it can to make sure pupils come to school regularly.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. A strong feature is the way in which the needs of pupils of all abilities are met well. **Across the school, teaching and learning are good.** The Foundation Stage teacher provides a separate and distinct curriculum for these young children within the mixed age class. The teacher and her assistant co-operate very effectively. Teachers manage pupils well. They give instructions and explanations clearly and pupils are involved well in their lessons. Pupils are well behaved, interested in their work and keen to do well. This has a good influence on the quality of their learning. Care and welfare procedures are very good. The good links established with parents and the very good links with the community positively support the school's work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, **leadership and management are good.** The headteacher's contribution to the school's leadership is very good. Since his recent appointment, he has brought a sense of purpose and direction to the school. He is an effective manager and good class practitioner. He combines these roles well. Governance is good. Governors are committed to the school and work hard to support and encourage staff. The lack of appropriate criteria in the school improvement plan makes it difficult to evaluate its successes.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views of the school and the school has clear and effective procedures for involving them in its work. Pupils are happy with most aspects of the school. They are particularly pleased with the way in which their teachers help them to do better.

IMPROVEMENT NEEDED

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

- Further develop the effectiveness of school improvement planning.
- Raise the profile of science across the school.
- Ensure that literacy skills are used more widely across other curriculum areas.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Children in the Foundation Stage and pupils in Year 2, where it is possible to make judgements, attain average standards. Pupils in Year 4 attain standards in English and science that are below average and in mathematics that are well below average. The lower standards being achieved by this group is a reflection of the very high proportion of pupils with SEN. In the current Year 4 group, over 70 per cent are on the school's SEN register. Across the school, pupils' achievement is good. There is a significant variation in the overall ability of the different year groups in the school, but broadly, children enter the school achieving standards which are below those expected for their age. Children in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 make good progress. The progress which is currently being made by the high proportion of pupils in Year 4 with SEN is good, although the standards achieved are below average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2003, when compared with similar schools, pupils achieved standards in writing and mathematics that were well above average and in reading that were among the top five per cent nationally.
- Pupils achieve well and reach good standards according to their abilities.
- Pupils with SEN and the children in the Foundation Stage achieve well and make good progress.

Commentary

1. The small number of pupils in each year group, and the differing proportion of pupils with SEN make the statistical analysis of the results of National tests very unreliable. For example, the results of the 2002 National tests for seven-year-olds showed that the standards attained were among the lowest five per cent of all schools across each subject. In 2003, standards were well, above average. The table below shows that the standards achieved in Year 2 in 2003 were significantly higher than those of the previous year.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.5 (12.3)	15.8 (15.8)
writing	15.5 (11.3)	14.4 (14.4)
mathematics	17.5 (12.0)	16.5 (16.5)

There were 4 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year
Great care should be taken when analysing data from very small year groups.

2. The school's good assessment and tracking procedures give teachers a clear view of the standards achieved by all groups and individuals in each class. The relatively small class sizes and the way that all teachers know all the pupils enable them to provide the support and challenge that individuals require. Individual targets are set for pupils and these are amalgamated to provide year group targets. More able pupils and gifted and talented pupils are identified and their needs are met well. For example, three pupils in Year 2 who are more able mathematically join the Year 3/4 class for their numeracy work. This is successfully ensuring that they are being sufficiently stretched. Teachers are also aware of the gender imbalance in the school and promote and encourage girls' contributions in their lessons.

3. By the end of the Foundation Stage most children make good progress in their communication, language and literacy and mathematical development to attain average standards. The teacher and her assistant encourage children's speaking and listening skills wherever possible and follow a structured approach to the development of early reading, writing and counting skills. Good attention is paid to children's personal, social and emotional development. Children feel safe, secure and valued and are soon ready to give of their best. Children make satisfactory progress in their creative and physical development. Better progress is limited by the lack of regular opportunity to use a wide range of painting and modelling materials and to have access to an appropriately resourced outside play and activity area. Overall achievement in the Foundation Stage is good as children make good overall progress by the end of the Reception year.
4. In Year 2, pupils are on line to achieve average standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science and ICT. No clear overall judgements were made at the previous inspection. The inspection findings are that there is a wide range of ability within the Year 2 group. This is confirmed by the school's own assessment and tracking data. For example, the proportion of pupils expected to reach the higher Level 3 in reading is well above average, but the proportion unlikely to reach the average Level 2 is also well above average. There is a similar distribution in mathematics. Pupils in Year 3 continue to be well challenged and this group is achieving standards that are well above average.
5. In Year 4, pupils achieve standards in English and science that are below average and standards in mathematics that are well below average. In English, there has been a successful focus on improving writing and pupils are given good opportunities to write freely and imaginatively. The development and assessment of reading are important priorities but there is insufficient emphasis on a structured programme to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Literacy skills are not used sufficiently across other curriculum areas. In mathematics, pupils are taught all elements of the subject and there are appropriate opportunities for them to use and apply what they have learned. Standards in science are satisfactory, but higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. The school uses its computer resources well and standards are in line with those expected for pupils' ages across the school. Computer skills are used well in other curriculum areas.
6. The school makes good provision for pupils of all abilities. Pupils with SEN make good progress against specific targets and goals. They do well when receiving extra support and benefit from the small classes, particularly in Years 3 and 4, where they receive teaching well matched to their needs. Regular reviews of individual education plans show they generally achieve their targets. Higher attaining pupils are challenged well, particularly in mathematics and English, but less so in science. A small number of gifted and talented pupils have been identified and their needs are met well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are good and behaviour is very good. Their attendance is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attendance is higher than the national average but has fallen since the last inspection. Unauthorised absence is higher than the national average.
- Pupils show positive interest in learning and behave very well in lessons and around the school.
- Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults, are very good and there is a high degree of racial harmony.
- Pupils have a good awareness of right and wrong and show very good respect for others' feelings and beliefs.
- Pupils' appreciation of cultural diversity is good.

Commentary

7. Overall, attendance is satisfactory. This is because although actual attendance is above the national median unauthorised absence is higher than the national average. Staff monitor attendance appropriately and receive support from the education welfare service who visit families when requested. Although the school does not always call parents on the first day of unexplained absences, pupils whose attendance is of concern are identified and the school works hard to ensure that they attend school more regularly. The great majority of parents ensure that their children attend regularly and arrive at school punctually. There have been no exclusions during the past school year.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.2	School data	0.7
National data	5.4	National data	0.5

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	27	0	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0

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

8. Pupils show interest and curiosity in lessons and concentrate well on their work. Behaviour is very good in lessons, around the school and on the playground. The management of behaviour is consistent and pupils are supervised very well. This is having a very positive effect on pupils' learning. Moral development is good. Pupils are aware of the school and class rules and fully understand the difference between right and wrong. At their pre-inspection parents' meeting, parents confirmed that behaviour was very good and that there was no bullying at the school. Pupils from different backgrounds mix together very well.
9. Pupils willingly accept opportunities for taking on additional responsibility and respond well to them. They are encouraged to join the school council and contribute constructively to the management of the school. Pupils are very happy at the school and feel secure and well cared for.
10. Pupils have a high level of respect for the feelings and values of others and are given opportunities to reflect on these feelings. They are encouraged to think of others by raising money for charities and collections for Harvest Festival and by being hosts to children from a special school. Pupils' social development is good and relationships between pupils and with all the staff are very good. Pupils get on well and are able to work and play together collaboratively. They show understanding of, and respect for, other pupils who have complex needs and benefit significantly from being taught alongside them.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The good teaching across the school enables pupils to learn effectively and make good progress. Other important strengths are the good provision for pupils with SEN, the very good care and welfare procedures and the very effective links provided with the local community.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers manage pupils well and ensure that they feel safe and secure and are keen to learn.
- Assessment data are collected and used well to set individual targets for pupils.
- Teachers' marking is effective in showing pupils how to improve their work.
- The teaching of pupils with SEN is done well.
- Pupils have very positive views of their teachers.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 12 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	1	4	7	0	0	0

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

11. The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is good. The class teacher skilfully integrates the young children fully into the mixed age class, but also ensures that other approaches are separate and different. An important strength is the co-operation between the teacher and the specialist teaching assistant who makes a significant contribution to the children's learning. Children are welcomed warmly to the class and settled quickly so that they are soon ready to learn. They are given opportunity to share their news and to talk about issues that concern them in their small group before joining the main class. The teacher's planning shows clearly the activities organised for the Foundation Stage children, and while these are often linked to the work of the whole class, they are appropriately matched to national recommendations.
12. The quality of teaching across the school is also good. Strengths are the way in which teachers manage pupils. Expectations and instructions are made clear. Lessons are organised well, with an introduction, group work and a summing up at the end. Pupils are involved well through the careful use of specific questioning in class discussion and through appropriate activities. For example, in an effective literacy lesson in Years 3/4 where pupils were looking at the poem 'Take Two', the teacher quickly gained pupils' interest. All pupils were encouraged to contribute their opinions as to how some of the verbs used in the poem could have been made more powerful. The effective plenary at the end of the lesson gave pupils the opportunity of sharing their work with others and showed results which were lively and well written.
13. A numeracy lesson to pupils in Year 3/4 illustrated several other features of very effective teaching. The teaching assistant was used very well to ensure that the needs of all pupils were met well. The age and ability range of pupils in the class was very wide and included older pupils with SEN statements and more able pupils from Year 2. The session began with a mental activity which was done at pace and challenged the pupils well. The main activity of knowing the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes was introduced clearly with suitable reference to

pupils' previous work. Pupils were challenged with questions like, 'What makes a square a square?' The group tasks were carefully matched to pupils' different levels of ability and all were challenged and productive in their work. Overall, pupils were interested and challenged by imaginative teaching and made good progress in their learning.

14. The teaching and assessment of pupils with SEN are good. Teachers use appropriate methods, which enable pupils identified with special educational needs to learn effectively. Teachers take account of the targets set out in pupils' individual learning plans, which are sufficiently practical to implement when support staff are not present. Both classes have a teaching assistant and they provide good support, which helps pupils to achieve well in learning basic skills. Assessment arrangements are good and records are thorough and well maintained. The school uses assessment data from teachers and standardised tests to inform target-setting procedures in individual learning plans. Assessments made on entry to school enable early identification of pupils needing extra support. The school uses a range of specific tests to monitor individual progress
15. Assessment procedures across the school are good. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The teacher and her assistant in the Foundation Stage make regular assessments of children's progress in meeting the goals children are expected to reach by the end of Reception. They make useful comments on targeted children. The newly introduced assessment booklets are good. Information is already being prepared for the end of year profile. Good assessment procedures have been adopted to monitor and track pupils' achievements in Years 1 to 4. Careful records are maintained of the acquisition of key early reading words and sound blends and of the results of standardised reading, spelling and comprehension tests. Good use is also made of the results of the optional tests available for pupils in Years 3 and 4. A further strength, particularly in Years 3/4 is the approach to assessment through teachers' marking. Marking is done regularly and the teacher makes helpful comments which both encourage pupils in their work but also shows them clearly how to improve. Marking is also used to set more specific learning targets. This good practice involves pupils well in their own learning, shows them how a piece of work could be improved and shows how teachers value their contributions. Assessment data are used well. The results of the school's internal testing and teachers' own assessments of pupils' abilities are used well to provide individual targets for improvement. The school has a clear view of the ability of individual pupils and whole year groups which ensures that targets are appropriate and all pupils are well challenged.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good overall, but satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. It is broad and balanced and is planned to ensure progression in pupils' learning. Opportunity for enrichment through visits, visitors and extracurricular activities is good. The school's accommodation and learning resources support the curriculum well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for pupils with SEN is good.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to participate in extracurricular activities.
- The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources at the school meet the needs of the curriculum well.

Commentary

16. The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced and is planned to build on previous learning and to become more demanding. Time allocations are in line with recommendations. The numeracy and literacy strategies are in place. Work is well matched to pupils' needs. All pupils are challenged to achieve higher levels.

17. Curricular provision for SEN is good. The curriculum is well organised for those identified with SEN and no pupils are disapplied. Arrangements for using individual education plans are effective in ensuring needs are met whilst still enabling pupils to have access to the whole curriculum. The provision of support assistants is good and they give effective support. They are experienced and receive training within the school. Accommodation is good. There are shared areas where pupils can be withdrawn to be taught individually or in groups, but much support is within classrooms. There are disabled toilet facilities and the building easily enables disabled access. Resources for SEN in terms of books and materials are good and provide well for the range of needs.
18. The curriculum is enhanced by clubs and a good range of visits and visitors. There is a club every lunchtime and a weekly football club. Pupils make visits locally and further afield. They have visited the local church and the Gurdwara in Bedford to support what they are learning in religious education (RE). Older pupils have visited the National Gallery and received a visit from the Bedford Outdoor Centre team. They have the opportunity to take part in a residential weekend. Pupils have taken part in an expressive arts day held at the middle school, a World Book Day and enjoyed a visit by a puppet group. Pupils take part in a range of activities held with other schools and have enjoyed great success in The Bedford Music Festival.
19. The school's accommodation is good. The recently painted classrooms and corridors are bright and welcoming. Strengths are in the space available in the nursery, the computer suite and the group/parents' area. These are all significant strengths for this small school. The overall level of resourcing is good. For example, reading books are new, and are accessible to all pupils and attractively displayed. A weakness is that the enclosed area next to their classroom is not used sufficiently to develop the physical skills of children in the Foundation Stage

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety throughout the school, is very good. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring of pupils' achievement is good. The involvement of pupils through seeking and acting on their views is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good procedures for health and safety, child protection and first aid.
- Adults know pupils very well and provide very good levels of care for their well being.
- The induction arrangements for pupils in Reception are good.
- The involvement of pupils in the school's work and development is good and their views are sought throughout the school.

Commentary

20. The school has very good health and safety procedures in place. Governors and staff make regular health and safety checks and make full risk assessments. Regular hazard checks are made of grounds, buildings and equipment. The headteacher is the nominated person for child protection and other members of staff have been trained. Members of staff are aware of the need to inform the headteacher should they have any concerns. Arrangements for the administration of first aid and for the care of children who are unwell are very good. Pupils feel safe and secure at school.
21. All adults who work in the school form close and trusting relationships with the pupils. They know them very well and provide good role models for behaviour. Discussions with pupils show that they feel safe and secure and can turn to a number of adults if they need help or comfort.
22. There are good induction arrangements for pupils when they start at the school, which are enhanced by the good relationships with the pre-school that also uses the school premises. These procedures include opportunities for parents and children to visit the school in the term

before they start, informative booklets and good opportunities for children to visit the class before they are admitted. As a result, children get off to a flying start at school, settle in quickly and happily and make good progress. There are good procedures for monitoring their achievement on a day-to-day basis.

23. Pupils' views of the school are taken seriously. The school council meets regularly and discusses whole school issues. Pupils have responsibilities in class and across the school to act as monitors.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are good and with the community are very good. There are very good links with other schools and pre-schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school develops an effective partnership with its parents.
- The school provides parents with good information about the curriculum and how to help their children at home.
- Very good links with the pre-school and other local schools encourage smooth transfer procedures.
- The school develops very strong links with the local community.

Commentary

24. Wherever possible, parents are encouraged to take a full part in their children's education. The school works well with parents, encouraging them to support the school through the Friends' Association and to help their children at home. Parents appreciate the secure and safe environment, the full involvement of all pupils, the treatment of pupils as individuals and the friendliness of the school. Parents are welcomed into school and are able to enjoy an area of a classroom where they can meet to await the dismissal of their children at the end of the day. In almost all of the responses in their pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated very high levels of support for, and confidence in, the school.
25. The school provides a good range of information for parents about the curriculum and how they can help their children at home. Parents are encouraged to attend the weekly assemblies in church and the major festival services. There are good opportunities for parents to meet staff formally and informally to discuss their children's progress. Written annual reports for parents are satisfactory. They inform parents what their children, know, understand and can do, and give some areas for development.
26. There are very good links with the local pre-school group, which is based on the school site, and with the receiving middle school. Children from the pre-school group visit the main school for assemblies and lunchtimes. Staff and pupils make visits to the school prior to transfer, which allows the children to adjust to the changes easily. These procedures help to prepare pupils for the next stage in their education and help to ensure that the pace of learning is not slowed down by the transfer process. The head-teacher and staff meet staff of other schools regularly as part of the local cluster group of schools.
27. The school has very good links with the local community, especially with the local church. Pupils attend the church for regular morning assemblies and for important Christian festivals. The vicar is a regular visitor to the school. There are ambitious plans for a community multi-use games area to be situated at the school, which will provide useful resource for the school and for the village. The school has very good links with local care and health services as well as the local education authority (LEA) and the diocese. The school has been involved with the LEA in piloting the use of a new computer based purchasing and accounting package. There is a range of visitors to school to support pupils' health and welfare as well as adding to the enrichment of

the curriculum. The children make several trips into the community, including visits to places of worship.

28. Parents of all pupils who have SEN have very good links with the school. All parents of pupils with SEN are involved in setting and reviewing their children's targets and individual education plans. There is good contact with the special needs staff of the middle school. The level of liaison is good and ensures a smooth transition to the next school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher's leadership is very good and he is well supported by other staff. The management and governance of the school are also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides the school with direction, a sense of purpose and stability after a period of significant changes of leadership.
- The headteacher leads very well by the example he sets as a class teacher and subject co-ordinator and in the supportive way he manages pupils, parents and staff.
- The school improvement plan has weaknesses, for example, in the way that it is organised and lacks specific success criteria.
- Governors give the school good encouragement and support.

Commentary

29. The headteacher's leadership of the school is very good. Since his recent appointment, he has made a very effective impact on the school. After a time of significant staffing change when all of the teachers in the school including the headteacher left he has brought stability and continuity to the school. He has made the transition from being a class teacher to headteacher very well, and he skilfully combines the role of class teacher and whole school manager and leader. The headteacher has brought a new vision for the school which brings together well the school's spiritual and community aims with the important drive to raise standards. There is a strong school ethos which includes all pupils and ensures that they receive individual attention. The headteacher has quickly secured the confidence of governors and parents and has been effective in supporting teachers new to the school and sharing his vision with them. The headteacher is a very good role model. He is a very good classroom practitioner and uses his strengths well to support and develop the effectiveness of basic skills teaching across the school. His supportive and encouraging approach to all staff has positively helped to raise morale.

30. The management of the school is good. The headteacher's attitude and approach are realistic and he manages the overall resources available in this small school well. All staff are involved in the process of school improvement planning and the priorities identified are part of teachers' performance management objectives. A strength here is the way in which these procedures have been extended to include other support staff and this has helped to increase the effectiveness of their contribution to the school and improve their commitment to its work. The current school improvement plan has several strengths. It is the first one which the new headteacher had devised and the first the school had needed since the more formal requirement to follow an OFSTED Action plan had been removed. The plan usefully contains clear reference to the school's aims and objectives. It extends well beyond the current year and details the development priorities in curriculum areas and other aspects of the school's work. Its weaknesses are that the impact of raising standards is not sufficiently clear. Additionally, the lack of explicit criteria make the evaluation of the success of initiatives hard to assess.

31. The governance of the school is good. Governors are committed to the school and have worked hard to encourage and support the staff. They have helped to ensure that the school's

position in the community and its relationship with the parish church have been maintained and strengthened. A scrutiny of the minutes of previous meetings shows that effective work is done in the two main committees, Education and Business, and that these detailed discussions give governors a good view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are beginning to be further involved in the process of school improvement planning and they regularly review the working of the school's policies. Governors make useful visits to the school and make evaluative comments on what they have seen.

32. The leadership and management of provision for pupils with SEN are good. The headteacher takes the role of special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and manages the provision of SEN well. He is experienced and has attended relevant courses. He keeps accurate records of pupils' progress and keeps the required documentation in good order.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	233,373	Balance from previous year	30144
Total expenditure	144,945	Balance carried forward to the next	32869
Expenditure per pupil	2898		

33. The management of the school's finances is secure. There is effective co-operation between the headteacher and the administrative officer over the drafting of the budget. An LEA finance officer provides specialist support. The governors are involved well in the formulation of the budget and monitor spending carefully. Financial reserves are within the recommended levels.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. At the last inspection, provision was judged to have been sound.

34. At the time of the inspection five children attended the Foundation Stage full-time and two were part-time. They are taught in a mixed-age class which contains Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. Reception children have use of the on-site Nursery for morning activities. The class teacher is very new to the profession and had undertaken her newly qualified teacher training at the school. The results of recent assessment on entry to the school tests have shown a significant variation between different year groups. Analysis of the profile produced at the end of the Foundation Stage last year shows that the previous Reception group were attaining standards that were in line with county averages in most areas of learning, except in children's creative development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Indications are that the current Reception group was attaining standards below those expected for their age when they entered the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and children's learning is good.
- Within the mixed age class, the teacher provides learning experiences for the children which are distinct and separate wherever possible, and which are clearly matched to recommendations.
- The specialist teaching assistant, and the other teaching assistants work effectively to support and encourage children's learning.
- The overall level of resourcing and the accommodation are good, but there is insufficient riding, climbing and clambering equipment in the outside play and activity area.
- The recently introduced assessment procedures are good.
- There are insufficient opportunities for children to make their own learning choices, particularly in creative and physical activities.

Commentary

35. A strength in provision is the way in which the teacher has provided a curriculum and approach which is clearly matched to the needs of these young children within their mixed age class. The leadership and management of this area are good. The teacher skilfully manages the class to include times when Reception children are included as part of the class, and times when they undertake their own separate activities. This ensures that good attention is paid to the promotion of children's personal, social and emotional development. For example, when they enter the classroom in the morning, the Reception children are greeted warmly by the teacher. They then move to their own area of the room where they talk with the specialist teaching assistant about things that concern them in the security of a small group while their register is taken. They are encouraged to help and support each other. This was seen very vividly as they all collected in a line with their painting aprons on so that they could all help to fasten the apron of the child in front. Indications are that the individual support and attention that children receive enable them to make good progress in this area of learning and most are likely to attain average standards by the end of the year.
36. Good attention is given to promoting children's communication, language and literacy development. During their separate language times, Reception children are taught the names and sounds of different letters and collect words that begin with a given letter. During an activity observed during the inspection they knew that lion, lemon and lime all began with the letter 'l.' They then learn to 'draw' the letter in the air using their 'magic finger' and then on their whiteboards. They join with older children for part of their literacy lesson. During the inspection they were being introduced to stories such as the 'Little Red Hen' and 'Hen, Rat and Cat'. Most

were using emergent writing skills as a means of recording and communicating information. Indications are that children are on line to achieve average standards by the end of the year.

37. Children's mathematical skills are also developed well. Children are beginning to consolidate their appreciation of the numbers from one to five as they make coloured patterns and count and record objects. Activities are made appropriately practical as they 'discover' five objects placed in a box or hidden in the sand. They demonstrate in a practical way that they can jump in the air five times and clap their hands three times. The teachers and her assistants make counting fun. As the children join in counting songs, they place pictures of elephants on a large spider's web. Indications are that children are likely to achieve average standards by the end of the year.
38. Work displayed in the classroom indicates that children's knowledge and understanding of the world are developed as they look at old and new toys and think about where Barnaby Bear has been for his holiday. Children develop their understanding of the properties of materials as they fill different sized containers with sand. Children's creative development is sound but better progress is limited by the lack of regular opportunities to have access to a wide range of drawing and painting materials. Sometimes activities are too directed by the teacher. For example, in a finger painting activity observed, the task of putting one more finger print in each circle was too restrictive and the activity was soon extended wisely to allow full hand painting exploration of colour and texture. Children have opportunities to use construction kits to make models of insects and animals but the further development of their physical skills is limited by the lack of regular access to a suitably resourced outside play and activity area.
39. Overall, teaching is good, and the well managed activities and the sensitive approach adopted by the teacher and her assistants lead to effective learning. Children are settled well, feel safe, secure and valued and are soon ready to continue with their learning. The use and contribution of the specialist teaching assistant are good. The class teacher also ensures that she focuses separately and regularly on the Reception children in the class. The accommodation provided by the on-site Nursery, which is used each morning is good. The recently introduced assessment booklets which are completed by teachers and their assistants are also good. Work has begun on the completion of the Foundation Stage profile.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is good. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in this subject.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's focus on writing has helped to raise standards but literacy skills are still not fully used across other curriculum areas.
- The subject is led very well by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator.
- Resources for the subject are good.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' achievement in the elements of the subject are good.
- Teachers' marking is good so that pupils know clearly how to improve their work.
- There is currently no programme to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills systematically.

Commentary

40. In Year 2, pupils attain standards in reading and writing and in speaking and listening that are average for their age. The improvement noted at the last inspection has been maintained and improvements in writing have been good. Reading skills are developing well. The newly introduced scheme to teach the sounds of letters through a fun, action based programme is helping to improve pupils' early reading skills. Most pupils receive good support from home. Several reading diaries showed that a good number of books had been read already this term and that parents were supporting their children's reading well. Pupils talk confidently about books they have read and are developing an interest in literature.

41. In Year 2, pupils' handwriting skills are being improved through the implementation of a structured scheme. Some higher attaining pupils are already writing in clear, joined script. Pupils' writing shows appropriate attention to grammatical forms such as full stops and capital letters. They are given opportunities to write for a variety of purposes, such as a list of ingredients for making a gingerbread man, imaginative poems such as Baa Baa Rainbow sheep, and a description of the best day of my holiday. Pupils join in willingly in class discussion and most speak clearly and confidently. Good opportunities are provided during the summing up at the end of the lesson for pupils to share what they have done. Further good practice was observed during the inspection as a small group of pupils performed their own version of the story of the Little Red Hen with puppets.
42. In Year 4, pupils attain standards in reading and writing and in speaking and listening that are below average. This is a reflection of the very high proportion of pupils in Year 4 with SEN, several of which are related to language acquisition. Reading remains a high priority and time is spent in reading in class in group reading and personal reading times. Good, clear records are kept of books read and progress made. Most pupils receive support from home, but the number and range of books which they have read are more limited. Some readers read accurately, but do not always have secure procedures for sounding out unknown words. Most are aware of the importance of alphabetical order in dictionaries but are less sure how to locate and use resource books in a library.
43. In Year 4, pupils' writing is also below average. Not all pupils use a clear, joined handwriting style and work is not consistently well structured and organised. Teachers make the writing tasks interesting. Pupils write at good length for their age, on topics such as how to ride a horse safely, the Silver unicorn and the Dark House. A feature which has been introduced as part of the school's recent focus on writing have been the increased opportunities for older pupils to undertake free writing. These topics are self-chosen and a scrutiny showed that these activities were highly valued by the pupils and involved written projects such as plays that extended over several lessons. Opportunities are provided for pupils to talk and question in class discussions and important informal conversation takes place in the groups as they work. Pupils take part in assemblies and are encouraged to share prayers at the beginning of lunch. However, there is no agreed programme for the systematic development of pupils' speaking and listening skills. Several pupils' speech is indistinct and they lack confidence in speaking in class.
44. Teaching and learning are good, with some very good features in Years 3 and 4. Across the school, teachers are very skilled at ensuring that activities are well matched to each pupil's ability. The relatively small number in each class and the effective use of the teaching assistants mean that pupils' individual needs are met well. Teachers manage pupils well and introduce topics and activities clearly. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning. They are interested and well challenged. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is effective. Appropriate praise is given and detailed advice on how pupils can improve their work. Where it is at its best, marking provides developmental targets associated with each piece of work. In Years 1 and 2, the teacher plans soundly and draws pupils' attention well to important elements of grammar in the shared text. In an effective lesson in Year 3, the teacher challenged the pupils well to consider more powerful verbs in the poem 'Take Two' which they were reading.
45. The headteacher is the subject co-ordinator and he is very effective in his work. He has ensured that the key issue at the last inspection to raise the standards particularly in writing has been addressed well. This has been a whole school focus supported well by specialist advisers. Other elements of the subject have also been successfully addressed. An agreed approach to handwriting has been re-established, a phonics programme begun and the headteacher has introduced a graduated spelling programme devised just for this school. This is proving useful for pupils and popular with parents. Assessment procedures are thorough and are well used to set overall year group targets and individual targets for pupils. Data are collected from the results of standardised reading and spelling tests. Resources are good. Pupils have access to a good range of attractive and appropriate fiction and non-fiction books.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

46. Literacy skills are not used consistently across other curriculum areas. Practice across the school is too inconsistent. The scrutiny of pupils' work showed that in some cases literacy skills had been used well. Handwriting, general presentation and opportunities for some extended pieces of writing had all been addressed well. However, in the current work, opportunities for descriptive and report writing in areas such as history and science have not been sufficiently taken.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are achieving well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their work.

Commentary

47. Pupils of all abilities are achieving well. Standards judged against national averages are very variable because numbers are small and analysis of statistical data is unreliable. For example, in the 2002 National tests pupils were in the bottom five per cent nationally. Currently, they are achieving average standards. The Year 4 group contains a very high proportion of pupils with SEN and overall they are achieving standards that are well below national averages. However, this is good achievement for their capabilities. Pupils with SEN achieve well because they are taught in a small class in Years 3 and 4 and work is well matched to their needs. In Years 1 and 2, they are well supported to achieve their potential. Pupils capable of higher attainment are particularly well challenged. Three pupils in Year 2 join the Year 3/4 class and are working successfully at a higher level than expected for their age.

48. Good quality teaching leads to pupils learning well and making good progress. Past work shows that pupils are taught all aspects of the mathematics curriculum and there are appropriate opportunities for them to use and apply what they have learned. Work is well marked and tells pupils what they need to do to improve. Pupils take care with their presentation. In the Year 1/2 lesson observed, the teacher managed the lesson well and pupils were particularly attentive. They joined in well with the counting activities and enjoyed their success. In groups, they worked on three-dimensional shapes and used everyday language to describe their properties. The teaching assistants made a good contribution to the lesson and in the groups they were teaching. In the other class observed the lesson was very good. The headteacher ensured rapid responses to the mental work involving the links between multiplication and division. Good questioning gave pupils the opportunities to show what they knew about perimeters and areas of shapes. Teaching methods were imaginative and led to a high level of interest. Group tasks were well matched to pupils' needs and all worked productively at their own levels. All concentrated well and were well challenged. In the lessons seen, pupils enjoyed the subject.

49. The headteacher manages the subject well. He has a clear vision and provides a good role model for successful teaching. Work is regularly monitored and realistic targets are set for the range of pupils. Assessment data are well used to track progress and identify what pupils need to learn next. Classrooms are a good size and the shared areas allow for a range of group activities. Resources in terms of books and materials are good and support learning in the subject well. The use of computers to practise basic skills is developing well. Pupils collect data and input these into a database. They use a range of graphs to show their findings clearly. Good improvement has been made in this subject since the last inspection when it was reported that standards were beginning to rise but that there was still much to do.

Mathematics across the curriculum

50. Pupils use mathematics appropriately across other subjects. They collect data from their investigations in science and display it in graphs and charts. They measure accurately in science and design technology. They use time lines in history and in physical education (PE) they measure time and distance.

SCIENCE

The provision for science is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good attitudes to their work.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Leadership and management are not yet effective.
- Higher attaining pupils are not fully challenged.

Commentary

51. Pupils in Year 2 achieve average standards but those in Year 4 attain standards that are below those expected for their age. This is because of the higher proportion of pupils with SEN in this group. Teacher assessments for these pupils at the end of Year 2 also showed them to be low. Across the school, pupils of all abilities achieve satisfactorily and make sound progress.
52. Pupils learn about how to keep healthy and the dangers of drugs and alcohol. They consider what makes a balanced diet and what foods we need to promote growth. Through the science curriculum, they learn about reproduction at an appropriate level for their age. The school is well on the way to achieving the Healthy Schools Award. The subject contributes well to pupils' personal development. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject. They enjoy working co-operatively on investigations and support each other well. They behave sensibly and carry out investigations safely.
53. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Previous work shows that pupils work at appropriate levels for their age but those capable of higher attainment are not always challenged at higher levels. In the Year 1/2 lesson, the teacher and assistants encouraged pupils to identify what they could sense using their five senses. They recorded their findings in written form on a group chart but needed much support for this. The lesson was too abstract for the younger pupils. In the Year 3/4 lesson, pupils investigated the elasticity of certain fabrics. They developed appropriate vocabulary, such as stretchy, flexible and rigid, but found some difficulty in understanding fair testing. The materials the teacher had provided and the suggested means of testing led to some confusion as the weights were not sufficient to make a difference.
54. The part time teacher has just taken over the role of co-ordinator. She has not yet had time to monitor the subject. She has little experience in this area. She has not yet assessed where pupils are at or what needs to be done to raise standards. A new policy was introduced in 2002 and the school follows a commercial scheme based on national guidelines. The subject has not had a high profile as the school has been concentrating on other areas. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Sound opportunities are now provided for pupils to explain their work in writing.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for ICT is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The level of resourcing is very good.
- The use of ICT skills across the curriculum is developing well.
- Pupils show good attitudes to their computer work.
- The subject is led by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator.

Commentary

55. Across the school, pupils are attaining standards that are in line with those expected for their age. Their achievement is sound. This has maintained improvements from the last inspection when it was noted that standards in this subject were beginning to rise.

56. In the one lesson observed teaching and learning were satisfactory. The teacher was skilled and knowledgeable as she taught Year 1/2 pupils that information could be presented in a variety of forms. She, and two teaching assistants, helped pupils to change and modify text, but this was expecting too much of those with limited previous experience. It meant that only six pupils at a time used computers whilst others worked on paper tasks. This limited the overall effectiveness of the lesson. Evidence from other observations and scrutinies indicates that pupils are working at appropriate levels for their age. They concentrate on tasks and show good perseverance. When working in pairs, they co-operate well and support each other. Pupils enjoy work on computers and are well motivated.

57. The co-ordinator has only recently become fully qualified and has just taken over the job. She is knowledgeable and has a clear view of what needs to be done. She has made a good start in the management role. The school provides a high level of resources, which enable pupils to have good access to computers. The ratio is currently one computer to every four pupils. This is above that usually found.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

58. A strength in pupils' achievement is the way in which information and communication technology skills are being used increasingly to support work in other subjects. For example, in mathematics and science, pupils collect and display data. In English, they use word banks to support writing, programs to check spelling and interactive books to enhance reading schemes. In other subjects, they are beginning to use CD-ROM's and the Internet to find information for topics.

HUMANITIES

59. There was insufficient evidence for an overall judgement to be made in history or geography on standards achieved or the quality of teaching and learning. Only one lesson was observed in history and no lessons in geography. In the Year 3/4 lesson on the Vikings, teaching and learning were satisfactory. The teacher reminded pupils that historians and archaeologists help and share information with each other. Pupils made satisfactory progress in learning about life in Viking times at an appropriate level for their age. Previous work shows that pupils were achieving average levels when they leave the school. Work on the Tudors gave good opportunities for pupils to extend their writing. They wrote play scripts on the theme of 'Unhappy Henry', Tudor diaries and letters. Pupils used a range of evidence including evidence from portraits. They used time lines both AD and BC. In geography, they collected and displayed data and worked on maps of different scales, which supported their work in mathematics. Pupils studied recycling and other environmental issues. In both subjects, the school is developing the use of ICT for research and displaying information. Both subjects are planned against national guidelines which provide full coverage of the curriculum.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

60. There was insufficient evidence for an overall judgement about standards achieved or the quality of teaching and learning in art and design, design and technology, (DT) music or PE.
61. In art and design, no lessons were observed. A scrutiny of previous work showed a sound use of sketchbooks and the development of observational skills, for example, as pupils drew sketches of the school building. Evidence of work on display showed that pupils used a variety of materials as they made colourful pictures to show the effects of the Great Fire of London and collages of journeys they had made.
62. In the single lesson observed in DT in Year 1/2, the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory. The teacher introduced the task of making an artefact with a winding mechanism clearly and groups were well organised. The teacher and her assistant circulated well around the groups as they worked giving pupils effective support and encouragement. A weakness was that the activity was not clearly related to an interesting practical application. Older pupils were observed measuring and cutting lengths of wood for their photographic frames. A scrutiny of previous work showed that pupils had been involved in appropriate design projects such as making a purse and designing and making their own spectacles.
63. No lessons were observed in music. In assemblies, pupils sang enthusiastically and with obvious enjoyment. Even the youngest children knew the words and joined in with gusto. Pupils have a range of musical opportunities outside lessons. They sing in festivals at church and in the Christmas concert. They sing carols in the village pub for pensioners and three pupils took part in a Fiddle Fiesta at the middle school. The school took part in the Bedfordshire Music Festival and their small choir sang well. The curriculum is planned appropriately against national guidelines.
64. In PE, in the single Year 3/4 lesson that was observed, teaching and learning were satisfactory and pupils' gymnastic skills were appropriate to their ages. The teacher managed the lesson well and pupils behaved sensibly and safely. They completed a suitable warm up and put out the apparatus carefully and co-operatively. They planned, performed and evaluated a number of sequences. The teacher provided sound coaching and the teaching assistant supported a pupil with physical problems well. Planning shows all aspects of the curriculum are covered and pupils have opportunities to play in the football team, which plays against local schools and clubs. The school is planning a multi games area, which will involve the whole community.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

65. There was insufficient evidence for a judgement to be made about the overall provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship. The school is committed to achieving the Healthy Schools award. There is evidence of a concentration on safety and pupils learn the dangers of drugs and alcohol. The governors' statement on sex education is that no formal instruction will be given but that matters will be sensitively handled as they arise. 'Circle times' and assemblies give good opportunities for pupils to explore a range of themes.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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