

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Brackley

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121907

Acting Headteacher: Mr. D O' Shea

Lead inspector: Hugh Protherough

Dates of inspection: 8th – 11th March 2004

Inspection number: 257520

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 3 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 429

School address: Banbury Rd
Brackley
Northamptonshire
Postcode: NN13 6AU

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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mrs Marya Griffiths

Date of previous inspection: 4th -15th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This large primary school serves a socially mixed area on the southern edge of the market town of Brackley. There are 429 pupils on roll, almost all of whom are of white British ethnic origin. The few other ethnic groups represented cover a wide variety of origins. In addition to mainstream provision, there is a speech and language unit (SLU) attached to the nursery class and a separate designated special provision (DSP) for pupils with autism. The pupils attending the DSP are integrated within the mainstream classes each afternoon. Partly as a result of this additional provision, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average (24%) and the proportion with statements of special educational needs well above average (3%). Before starting full time education, almost all pupils attend the nursery class. Their attainment on entry covers the full range but is generally average. The school has been without permanent leadership for almost two years and there have been sixteen changes of staff during that time. In September 2003, a highly experienced consultant headteacher took over the leadership of the school and will stay there until a permanent successor is appointed.

In 2003, the school received an Achievement Award from the DFES for the improvement in the pupils' results in the national tests.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8339	Hugh Protherough	Lead inspector	English, information and communication technology (ICT)
32682	Ruth Wood	Lay inspector	
20911	Judy Dawson	Team inspector	Foundation Stage
27100	Trevor Davies	Team inspector	Science, art and design, design and technology, music, physical education
4287	Brian Allaway	Team Inspector	Mathematics, geography, history, religious education
4926	Thelma Aspin	Team Inspector	Special educational needs

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	10
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	15
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	17
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2	22
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The quality of education is sound and the pupils achieve satisfactorily. After a period of turbulence, the leadership and management of the school are now satisfactory. **The school is reasonably effective** and offers satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The pupils display positive attitudes to their work and behave well in lessons and around the school
- Since September, the outstanding leadership of a consultant headteacher has galvanised both staff and governors to take fuller responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school and to move it forward
- The teaching of handwriting lacks coherence
- The marking of pupils' work and the use of assessment information lacks consistency and rigour
- Many subject leaders have made a good start to raising standards and improving the quality of education in their areas of responsibility
- The quality of education within the speech and language unit (SLU) is good, but that in the designated special provision unit (DSP) is unsatisfactory
- The school is a strongly inclusive community and all children, including some with significant special educational needs, are successfully integrated within mainstream classes

For the past two years the school has had no permanent leadership and has experienced a very high turnover of staff. Despite its difficulties, the school is far more effective than at the time of the last inspection. The teaching is vastly improved and the pupils are better behaved. The quality of education is more consistent and is being properly monitored. A new computer suite offers better provision for the teaching of ICT and, as a result, standards have risen. A good start has been made in analysing the test and assessment data, but the resulting information is still not fully utilised when the teachers set targets for their pupils.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

With the exception of their writing, pupils throughout the school are achieving satisfactorily.

The children in the Foundation Stage make a sound start to their education. The vast majority are on course to achieve the goals expected of children at the end of their reception year. The pupils in Year 2 are achieving satisfactorily and standards are average. The children attending the speech and language unit in the nursery receive very good support and achieve well.

The results achieved by Year 6 in last year's tests reflected the downward trend caused by a succession of staff changes and many temporary teachers. Since September these difficulties have been resolved and good teaching is raising standards and helping the pupils to achieve more. Despite a significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs, standards in Year 6 are currently in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science. The pupils are achieving satisfactorily and this is reflected in the increased proportion of higher attaining pupils whose work exceeds the nationally expected levels. The pupils who attend the designated special

needs unit are effectively integrated within mainstream classes every afternoon and achieve well. However, their achievements in the morning sessions within the unit are unsatisfactory.

The pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. The vast majority display positive attitudes to their work, are polite and behave well. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

With the exception of the teaching in the DSP, **the school provides a satisfactory quality of education and the teaching is sound.** The vast majority of the teachers provide stimulating lessons that interest the children and encourage them to work hard. The additional support provided by the teaching assistants often enhances the learning of the pupils and is particularly effective in ensuring that those with special educational needs are successfully integrated within mainstream classes. However, the teaching of handwriting and spelling and the marking of the pupils' work lack consistency and rigour.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Last summer the consultant headteacher made a rapid and incisive evaluation of the school. He presented the staff and governors with a truthful picture and a clear plan for improvement, which have helped them to make rapid strides in starting to move the school forward. All members of staff are beginning to recognise their strategic importance as leaders and managers. Those responsible for the Foundation Stage, English, mathematics, ICT and design and technology have a good oversight of standards and achievement and are using this information to create sensible plans to ensure and accelerate continuing improvements.

In the past few months, the governing body has undergone many changes. The governors now have a clear appreciation of their roles and several have a thorough and detailed knowledge of important areas, such as finance and special educational needs. However, because a number of important statutory responsibilities are not yet being met the work of the governing body is currently unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Overall, the parents express a reasonable level of satisfaction with the work of the school. Almost all feel that their children are happy, well motivated, well taught and produce good work. However, many are understandably concerned about the lack of permanent leadership. Very few pupils returned questionnaires, but those who spoke with the inspectors expressed positive views about the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Establish sharper policy and practice for the teaching of handwriting
- Develop greater consistency in the marking of the pupils' work and the use of assessment information
- Improve the teaching in the designated special provision unit

Furthermore, in order to meet statutory requirements, the school should also

- Update the health and safety policy and arrangements for critical incidents
- Review its child protection policy and the staff training arrangements in this area
- Update the school prospectus

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are achieving satisfactorily. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are in line with the national average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The presentation of the pupils' work is not good enough
- The pupils in Year 6 are achieving well in speaking and listening and reading
- Standards in information and communication technology and design and technology have improved to satisfactory levels

Commentary

1. In Year 2, the school's results in the national tests have been above the national trend. They have improved significantly from the well-below-average results in 2001. In 2003, standards were above average in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics. The present Year 2 pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Currently, standards are average overall because fewer pupils are working at the higher levels.
2. Over a five year period, the results in Year 6 were broadly in line with the national trend period, but there has been a drop since 2001. Standards were in line with those of other schools nationally for English in 2003, but below average for mathematics and science. They were well below the results of similar schools. However, there have been some significant barriers to learning in Year 5 and 6 over the last few years that have adversely affected the standards that the older pupils achieve. Many of these pupils have had several teachers during this period and there has been a significant number of pupils with special educational needs in the cohorts. The temporary nature of much of the subject leadership meant that the systems to track the pupils' progress and to identify weaknesses in teaching and learning were inadequate. However, there is now a settled teaching force and stronger subject management. The good teaching in Year 6 has ensured that standards are now in line nationally for all three subjects with a growing number of pupils achieving the higher levels in English and mathematics. Standards in speaking and listening and reading are above average at this stage.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.7 (17)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16 (15.9)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	18 (17)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 56 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.5 (26.8)	26.8 (27)
mathematics	26.4 (27.2)	26.8 (26.7)
science	27.7 (28.9)	28.6 (28.3)

3. Children join the school in either the nursery or reception classes with skills similar to other children of the same age. Generally, they make steady progress throughout the Foundation Stage, but their personal and social skills are good. Most children are on course to meet the targets expected of them at the end of their Reception year and some will exceed them. The children who receive additional support in the speech and language unit make good progress because the teaching is very good. They are also effectively supported in their classrooms. One boy, for example, joined the nursery with very little intelligible speech, but little of his previous poor diction remains and he is now readily understood. A child new to the nursery, who has very little English language, is making good progress because of her contact with other children and the teacher's clear speech. Most children achieve well when they are working with an adult. There is a good range of interesting activities provided for the children, planned to support the identified learning goals for the week. The children are encouraged to work and play with each other sensibly and almost all interact well with their classmates. However, because the children move from activity to activity at will, not all achieve as well as they could when working independently. The adults are unable to adjust the task to meet children's needs. Some children are not sufficiently challenged and others do not cover the full range of learning experiences planned for the week.

4. Since the last inspection, there have been notable improvements in standards in Years 2 and 6. The weaknesses in information and communication technology have been remedied and the pupils now achieve standards in line with the expected levels. Standards in design and technology were below average in Year 6 at the time of the last inspection, but are now average. The above-average standards achieved in Year 2 over recent years have not been maintained. The teaching and curriculum for the pupils in the infant classes lack the challenge and rigour now evident in Year 6. There are some weaknesses in the teaching and marking of handwriting and spelling that impact on the pupils' future achievements, and the careful teaching established in the Foundation Stage is not maintained in Years 1 and 2. The handwriting of many average and lower-attaining pupils is often not as good as it should be and there is not enough rigorous marking and focussed teaching to address this. Many pupils throughout the school do not hold a pen or pencil correctly. In contrast, the pupils' speaking and listening skills are good, especially in Year 6 where purposeful use of drama and "hot seating" extend the pupils' vocabulary and encourage empathy. Many pupils are skilled and enthusiastic readers.

5. In the designated special provision unit, there is an over-emphasis on exercises, formal writing and numeracy skills that is not suitable for the pupils. In the afternoons they thrive in their mainstream classes due to the good support and interesting, practical activities. Their achievements in the mornings are unsatisfactory because the teaching does not take full account of their needs.

6. The school has a comprehensive range of test and assessment data for tracking the pupils' performance. The processes are new, and as yet lack the refinements needed to set well-matched targets for individual pupils. For example, the school has not yet adjusted its targets to meet the different rates of learning for the more able and the less able pupils. The pupils are rarely told what they need to do to achieve the next levels and the outcomes of tests are not yet analysed to identify weaknesses in order to adjust the planning to address any gaps in learning. Inspectors found some evidence of inaccurate assessments of the quality of the pupils' writing. The turnover of teachers has presented difficulties in whole school assessment training. The very effective acting Headteacher has helped teachers and subject leaders to understand what needs to be done to improve the accuracy and use of assessments in order to raise standards further but the improved subject management is only just starting to have a positive impact on standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The school makes good provision for the pupils' all-round development. The pupils have positive attitudes towards school and their behaviour is good. Their attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils behave well, are eager to learn and are sensitive to the needs of others
- The pupils from the designated special provision and the speech and language unit are very well integrated into their classes and are well supported
- The pupils' moral and social development is good

Commentary

7. Most pupils arrive promptly for school and their attendance has improved since the last inspection. It is now in line with the national average. The school monitors pupils' attendance closely and promptly follows up all absence.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.7	School data	0.5
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

8. The pupils' behaviour is good and their attitudes to school are very positive. They are eager to learn and relate well to one another and to adults in the school. The pupils comment on the improvements in behaviour and the steps taken by the school to eliminate bullying. Some Year 6 pupils are playground monitors. They undertake the role sensibly, commending pupils who play well together. The pupils from the designated special provision are supported very well during the afternoons in mainstream classes. They receive good, unobtrusive help from teaching assistants that enables them to work hard and achieve well. This is a good example of the way in which educational inclusion is promoted. The pupils in the nursery and reception are well supported in their personal, social and emotional development.
9. The curriculum complements the positive ethos and provides well for the pupils' spiritual and cultural development. The pupils are given opportunities in lessons and assemblies to reflect on ideas and experiences and to express their own opinions. Art, music and religious education provide good opportunities for the pupils to explore the traditions and customs of other cultures.
10. The promotion of strong moral and social codes is a good feature of the school's provision. The pupils are courteous and confident in their discussions with adults and are able to initiate and sustain extended conversations. The relationships between pupils are good and they work very well together in group activities. They are eager to take on responsibilities and frequently initiate and support charitable fund raising events.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

With the exception of the teaching in the designated special provision, the school provides a satisfactory quality of education and the teaching is sound.

Teaching and learning

The teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. Overall, teaching is satisfactory and all pupils are learning effectively. However, the use of assessment is unsatisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The relationships between the pupils and teachers are good
- Teaching in Year 6 and the speech and language unit is consistently good
- Teaching in the designated special provision unit is unsatisfactory
- The teaching of handwriting and spelling lacks coherence
- Teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support learning and enable the effective integration of the pupils with special educational needs
- The marking of the pupils' work is inconsistent

Commentary

11. The Foundation Stage staff have a good understanding of the early years' curriculum and of how young children learn. Right from the start, they focus strongly on promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development so that they can work and play together effectively. Very good relationships and gentle guidance by the adults help the children to feel secure in the nursery. The children who attend the speech and language centre are very well supported in both the nursery and the reception classes, and the teachers have a good understanding of their needs.
12. All adults in the nursery support the children very well as they work with small groups. The teacher has clear plans for all activities, including activities for large groups, such as music lessons. Sometimes, however, the teacher does not make the most of opportunities to encourage the children to discuss their learning and to make choices. In the music lesson, for example, the instruments were given out rather than selected by the children and the teacher chose the song at the end. The adults in the nursery prepare the classroom well for each session so that the children have equal opportunities whatever time of day they attend.
13. The three reception teachers work very well together. The shared teaching in one class is effective and children benefit from the different styles. There is good communication between the two teachers and children's learning is seamless. Carefully planned use of adults, including some splitting of the classes by ability to match the lessons to their needs, ensures that children learn well. The teachers assess the children's achievements carefully, making notes during the day as a basis for more formal assessments. They have a good understanding of the children's individual abilities, but they do not always make the most of this knowledge to plan activities to extend individuals. Much of the day is spent on a selection of interesting activities related to the weekly learning objectives. The children freely move from one to another. In the best lessons, the teachers tell the children that there are some activities they must complete, but the adults do not know when this will be and, therefore, cannot adjust the task to meet individual needs. The children are encouraged to tick a list when they have played at an activity, but they often forget. Some children do not cover the full curriculum during the week because they stick with favourite tasks. Overall, the teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and children make sound progress.
14. The teaching is mainly satisfactory throughout the rest of the school, apart from that in the designated special provision unit. All teachers have good relationships with their pupils, who in turn have a desire to please and a will to work hard. The teaching is good in Year 6. In a lively English lesson, for example, the pupils planned a murder mystery. The subject captured the imagination of a lower ability group of pupils who enjoyed the lesson and worked well. They were inspired to write very good phrases and sentences to enliven their work. Phrases such as "little did they know..." and sentences such as "Detectives surrounded the area." represented good achievement for these pupils.

15. There are, however, weaknesses in the teaching of handwriting and spelling throughout the school that adversely affect the standards of the pupils' work. In Year 2, for example, the progression in the writing practice books is illogical and does not help the pupils to extend their skills. The teachers do not remind the pupils about correct pencil grip and their expectations in regard to the quality of the handwriting are too low.
16. In Year 6, the teaching of mathematics and science is good, and sometimes very good. The teachers explain clearly, make good use of demonstration and encourage the pupils to apply their learning in other subjects. Interesting and challenging lessons encourage the pupils to work hard, and sometimes they make very good progress. The grouping of the pupils by ability works well, enabling the teachers to fine-tune their planning to meet specific needs and to challenge all abilities. In other classes, notably in Years 3 and 5, the planning is not so precise and is not so well matched to the pupils' abilities and needs. In these classes, although the teachers question the pupils effectively, some do not allow them time to think and to explain clearly. The pupils' work is often untidy and the teachers do little to remedy this. The teachers have appropriate subject knowledge, and their teaching and information and communication technology skills have improved considerably since the last inspection.
17. The teaching in the designated special provision unit is unsatisfactory. The pupils, some of whom have considerable difficulty in sustaining concentration, are often given written tasks and mundane exercises. In both classrooms, the lessons are far too long and there are no stimulating role-play areas to develop the pupils' speech and social skills. As a result, pupils make most progress in the afternoons when they are integrated and supported effectively in mainstream classes.
18. Assessment in Years 1 to 6 is unsatisfactory overall. Some teachers mark the pupils' work well and indicate how it can be improved, but others sometimes mark incorrectly and their comments provide little support. Furthermore, the comments are not followed up, especially when they are related to presentation. The pupils are set targets for English and mathematics. Some are relevant and specific, especially in mathematics, but others are less helpful in pinpointing the next steps in learning. All teachers assess the pupils' attainment, but very few tell the pupils either the National Curriculum level they are working at or how they can achieve a higher level. They keep portfolios of the pupils' work, some of which is matched to these levels. However, staff changes have resulted in some teachers not having recent training in assessment and some assessments are inaccurate. Some assessment procedures are very complex and are not helpful in identifying changes in the pupils' rate of progress. Few of the national test results have been analysed in sufficient detail to pinpoint weaknesses in the teaching and learning in order to adjust planning. The turbulence over the last two years and the staffing instability has hindered the development of whole-school systems for marking and the use of assessment information in the planning of subsequent work. The present teachers have already enhanced the quality of teaching since the last inspection and the school is developing systems to improve assessment. More needs to be done to build on these improvements by identifying good practice and disseminating this throughout the school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 56 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	6 (10%)	22 (40%)	24(43%)	3 (5%)	0	0

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

The curriculum

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that is enriched by a reasonable range of extra curricular activities. Overall, the quality of the accommodation and resources is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is a strongly inclusive community and all children, including some with significant special educational needs, are successfully integrated within the mainstream classes
- The provision within the speech and language unit (SLU) is very good, but that in the designated special provision (DSP) is unsatisfactory
- The Foundation Stage curriculum has improved and now successfully covers all of the areas of learning

Commentary

19. The school is a strongly inclusive community and all children, including some with quite significant special educational needs, are successfully integrated into mainstream classes. This works well in the nursery where the children receiving help with their speech and language are effectively supported to access the full breadth of the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, the range of learning experiences provided each morning in the DSP is frequently too narrow and often takes scant account of the very specific needs of these pupils.
20. The Foundation Stage curriculum covers all the necessary areas of learning and in Years 1 to 6 the national strategies are used to support the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills.
21. Curriculum breadth has improved since the last inspection. There is now fuller provision for ICT and in design and technology significant improvements in planning and creativity have resulted in better provision and standards. There is also evidence through the displays of work around the school that art and design is being taught imaginatively.
22. A very clear commitment to inclusion is evident in the classroom and within the school community as a whole. The school has an effective approach to personal, social and health education. Effort goes into ensuring that the pupils receive the help they need to access the curriculum and the support staff are deployed prudently to ensure that those pupils whose need is greatest receive the most support. A strong anti-bullying policy is communicated to and shared by all pupils in the school. Home languages, culture and religions are recognised and respected. For example, all pupils have the opportunity to worship in their own faith. The school does not shy away from exposing pupils to challenging issues. Racism and prejudice are considered in relation to the present day challenges of asylum seekers and refugees. The strong promotion of self-esteem results in a harmonious ethos.
23. The school provides a wide range of well-planned visits to places of educational interest and significance, such as places of worship, supermarkets and a local car-racing centre. The older pupils have the opportunity to experience well-organised residential weeks at activity centres. The children learning musical instruments receive tuition from visiting music specialists. A few extra-curricular clubs and activities are available to the pupils.
24. The staffing, accommodation and resources contribute well to the quality of education that the school offers. There is a good ratio of support staff and, as a result of recent teaching appointments, a good balance of expertise. The sports hall and library facilities in particular offer very good facilities to pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Although the staff are caring, the current arrangements to ensure the pupils' health, safety and welfare are unsatisfactory. Taken overall there are sound procedures for the pupils to access personal advice and guidance. The pupils are satisfactorily involved in shaping the development of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between the adults and pupils are good and the children feel secure
- The staff are insufficiently trained in child protection procedures

Commentary

25. New pupils are carefully introduced to the nursery and the reception class. The adults in the school have a good knowledge of the pupils and establish positive relationships with them. The pupils feel that they can share concerns and worries with the adults. The levels of care for the pupils in the speech and language unit and in the designated special provision are good. In Year 6, the teachers use their good knowledge of the pupils to modify and match the work well to their individual abilities and needs.

26. Currently, the teachers keep a wealth of records concerning the pupils' progress, but these are not yet being used consistently to set new targets against which pupils' academic progress can be measured. The pupils are encouraged to take responsibility around the school by carrying out monitoring duties and by reading with the younger children. They enjoy taking responsibility and appreciate being involved in discussions about the school's behaviour policy. Many pupils are confident and articulate and take their responsibilities seriously. However, there is currently no formal system, such as a school council, for them to become involved in offering their opinions and ideas in a collective way.

27. The statutory requirements for health and safety are not fully met. The necessary inspections and risk assessments have not been undertaken thoroughly enough, and the school's health and safety policy is out-of-date. There is no "critical incidence" policy and the staff, many of whom are new to the school, are unsure of procedures. Health and safety concerns identified by the inspectors have been brought to the attention of the headteacher and the governors.

28. The child protection arrangements are unsatisfactory. There is no specific school policy and some adults are unsure about child protection procedures in the school. No member of staff has recently attended child protection training.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents and the local community is satisfactory. There are good links with the local secondary school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vast majority of parents are pleased with the progress their children are making at school
- There is a good induction programme for the pupils transferring to secondary school

Commentary

29. The quality of the partnership between the parents and the school is satisfactory. The majority of the parents are positive about the work of the school, the progress their children are making and the information provided for them. They receive details of the curriculum at the beginning of each term and newsletters keep them up to date with events. The two annual parents' evenings are

well attended and the written reports give extensive details of what the children have covered. However, they do not always indicate clearly the standards achieved.

30. A number of parents help regularly in class, especially in Years 1 and 2, and accompany children on visits. The school values this involvement. Reading diaries serve as a useful means of communication, but the quality and frequency of homework generally need to be improved. The parents feel that the teachers are approachable, but some concerns were expressed about the accessibility of class teachers informally at the beginning and end of the school day.
31. There are good arrangements for the pupils entering the reception classes. Parents expressed their appreciation of the opportunity to attend information evenings about the school and the curriculum. The Governors' Annual Report to Parents meets the statutory reporting requirements and the prospectus contains some useful practical information about school procedures. However, it lacks important information and the tone is not particularly welcoming. The Southfield School Home Association supports the school through fund raising and is now committed to expanding its core membership and building a greater sense of school community.
32. The mechanisms for the transfer of the pupils to secondary school are good. The Year 6 pupils benefit from a programme of open evenings, visits and a three-day induction programme in preparation for transfer to Magdalene School. Both parents and pupils consider these links valuable in ensuring a smooth transition to the next stage of education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The acting headteacher is charismatic and highly effective and has improved the leadership and management of the staff to satisfactory levels. He has provided excellent guidance to the new governing body, but despite these recent improvements the governance is currently unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting headteacher provides very strong and effective leadership
- The new governing body has made an honest appraisal of the current situation in school and has a clear vision for its future improvement
- The management of special educational needs in the designated special provision is unsatisfactory
- The subject leaders for the Foundation Stage, English, mathematics, information and communication technology and design and technology have made a good start to improving provision and raising standards
- The governing body does not yet fulfil a number of its crucial statutory requirements

Commentary

33. There have been particular barriers to learning in the recent history of the school. A large turnover of staff, combined with a series of changes in the leadership resulted in a lack of continuity and purpose. The older pupils especially have been affected by the uncertainty of who would be teaching them from day-to-day. The wise request from the governors for the assistance of the present consultant headteacher has paid dividends. He made swift assessment of the school and outlined a radical, but manageable, plan to improve the quality of education and pave the way for the appointment of a permanent successor. He has helped the governors to fully appreciate their role and his style of open leadership and frankness is enabling them to question decisions and to fully understand the qualities the school requires in a permanent headteacher. He is committed to the policy of "leading from the middle" and is, therefore, introducing systems to enable the subject leaders to monitor, evaluate and improve standards. Consequently, the whole school is now well on the way to establishing clear procedures for identifying and tackling areas for development. He has excellent clarity of vision and high aspirations for the school.

34. Many of the subject leaders are new to the school, and some have not long been teaching but, under the dynamic leadership of the acting headteacher, they are becoming effective in their roles. They have been given time and good guidance on how to proceed and some of the subject leaders now have an understanding of school priorities. Their identified areas for development are prioritised in the school improvement plan. It is a good working document. The plans are detailed and appropriate with clear criteria for measuring success. Part of the budget had previously been shared out amongst subject leaders. This is changing and the new budget will be clearly linked to school priorities and a rigorous analysis of the effectiveness of previous spending. Other subject leaders are in the early stages of planning for improvement and need guidance on monitoring their subjects and prioritising future developments. The subject leadership is now satisfactory overall. The teachers' personal development, in the form of performance management, has been unsatisfactory in recent years because of the lack of permanent leadership and the many changes in the workforce. With the clear focus on school improvement, the school is now better placed to establish effective performance management procedures. The induction procedures for new staff are good. The teachers feel well supported, are confident to ask for help and soon become valued members of the workforce.
35. The management of the designated special provision is unsatisfactory although there are good links with external agencies. The style of education provided for these pupils with specific special educational needs is not appropriate. The formal English and mathematics lessons are far too long and there are few opportunities for practical and "hands on" learning. The targets in the pupils' individual education plans are not linked closely enough to their statements of special needs and almost all are based on academic skills with no mention of social and personal targets. The resources are inappropriate and insufficient; there are few books to stimulate a desire to read and very little of the pupils' work is displayed and celebrated. In contrast, the acting headteacher's management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs within the mainstream classes, including those in the unit, is good. The deployment of the learning support assistants is good and they are very effective in their roles. The management of the speech and language unit for children in the Foundation Stage is good. A learning support assistant is trained by the leading teacher to help the children in the classroom and to carry on her work when the teacher is not in school.
36. In the past few months the governing body has undergone many changes. In the past, the governors have supported the headteacher, but have had little influence on the management and governance of the school. Under the effective leadership of the present acting headteacher, and after several changes of chairman, the governing body has made rapid strides in starting to move the school forward. The governors now have a clear understanding of best value and understand that school development and spending needs to be clearly focussed on improving the quality of education and raising standards. In a few months, they have learnt to question decisions and discuss issues raised by the acting headteacher based on a good understanding of the school's needs. However, although the school generally looks after the pupils well, several significant legal requirements are not being met. For example, the child protection arrangements are insecure and many staff have not had relevant training. There are also weaknesses in the health and safety arrangements. The governors are aware of these matters and have sensible plans to deal with them. However, because of these important omissions the governance of the school has currently to be judged as unsatisfactory.
37. The day-to-day management and administration work well and help to ensure that the school runs smoothly. The budgetary arrangements are good and the acting headteacher and the governors are ensuring that future plans will be tightly linked to school development. There are plans to develop the Foundation Stage accommodation and the acting headteacher is encouraging coherent, whole school budget planning, thus making spending much more effective.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	979,774	Balance from previous year	50,590
Total expenditure	979,264	Balance carried forward to the next	51,100
Expenditure per pupil	2,124		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

38. The provision for the children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. They make sound progress from a generally average attainment level on entry to the nursery or reception classes. Previously, the nursery and reception classes have been run as separate units. The new coordinator has made a good start in creating a united Foundation Stage with daily meetings and planning discussions with the nursery teacher.
39. The nursery has twice as many children in the morning than in the afternoon. These numbers are managed well and very effective deployment of the nursery nurses and learning support assistants enables the children to feel secure within the small registration groups. The three reception class teachers work well together. A job-sharing arrangement in one class is very effective and the children benefit from the different styles of the two teachers. There are good links with parents, several of whom supported learning in the classes during the inspection. There is an appropriate curriculum securely founded on the areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage and leading to the first levels of the National Curriculum. Across all areas of learning, the children with special educational needs, including those supported by the speech and language unit, receive good support and make good progress. One child with English as an additional language has very limited spoken English. She has good support, but does not yet attend the specialist language support unit to speed up her acquisition of English.
40. The teachers and support staff have very good relationships with the children and have a good understanding of their individual abilities. Good assessment procedures, in the form of notes and more formal assessments, help to build up a profile of each child's progress towards the early learning goals. These help teachers plan what they teach to groups of children, but are not used sufficiently to match other activities specifically to meet the needs of children of different abilities. Much of the teaching observed during the inspection was good and some was very good. However, there is a lack of rigour in ensuring that all children have access to the whole curriculum during the week. The children are sometimes told that they must work at an activity, but there is no indication of when this will happen so the teachers cannot adjust the task appropriately for particular individuals. As a result, children often make good progress during formal teaching or group sessions with an adult, but their free-choice activities do not sufficiently challenge and support their learning and their progress slows.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children and adults have very good relationships
- The children work and play together cooperatively
- More needs to be done to give the children greater responsibility for their learning

Commentary

41. The children quickly settle into the routines in the nursery class because they are well supported by all staff. The adults give the children confidence to work well together because of the way they deal calmly with the children and set firm, yet friendly expectations for considerate working. The children form friendships and some show a pleasing care for others. In the morning, the children listen carefully, and although those in the afternoon are younger and less mature they also are beginning to listen to their teacher more readily.

42. In the reception classes the children have a strong sense of right and wrong and discuss issues well. They work cooperatively with each other, share equipment and listen to their classmates in whole-class discussion. Some show a pleasing empathy with the characters in their stories. They understand, for example, how the old woman who baked the runaway Gingerbread Man must have felt. However, although children select their activities, they drift from one to another without any clear plan. This is a lost opportunity to help the children take responsibility by discussing with them what they feel they need to do, and thereby giving their day a sense of purpose. Most of the more mature children should either meet or exceed the early learning goals for personal development by the end of their reception year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

The provision for communication, language and literacy is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The organisation of the reception children into ability groups for short teaching sessions meets their needs well
- The children rapidly develop a love of books and make good progress in reading
- They have many opportunities to write and are taught to form letters accurately

Commentary

43. Most children join the nursery with a well-developed vocabulary and have had good experience of books and stories. The activities include plenty of opportunities for the children to write using a range of materials. One girl, for example, expressed her desire to be a teacher after registration one morning. Her teacher gave her a clipboard and pencil so she could "see if she liked it", thereby giving the child a sense of purpose and a pride in her "job". During the inspection, the reception children's activities were based on the story of the Gingerbread Man. In a very good lesson the teacher had a telephone conversation with the learning support assistant, asking for advice in dealing with the wayward Gingerbread Man. Her comment that the ones cooked by the children behaved themselves delighted the children who were quick to quote the Gingerbread Man's chant as she retold her woes as the old woman. This was a very good prompt for subsequent role-play.

44. The focussed reading and writing sessions are effective. For instance, in their short literacy lessons the children were grouped by ability so that the teaching could be matched to their particular abilities. They learnt to use speech bubbles and the more able children were expected, for example, to spell high frequency words independently. All adults make sure that the children form letters and hold their pencils accurately and there is regular, daily practice of writing letters not only on paper, but also in the air, in sand, and in rice or semolina. Letter sounds are taught rigorously and more able children read and spell new words by decoding them. Most can identify the initial and end sound of words. They are encouraged to make their own books with the title and the names of the author and illustrator on the front cover. Most children meet the early learning goals for communication, language and literacy by the end of their reception year.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

The provision for mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many of the daily activities are planned to develop mathematical understanding
- Most children attain the early learning goals by the start of Year 1
- The independent activities provided during the day do not meet the needs of some children

Commentary

45. All the staff in the nursery and reception classes understand the way the children learn and provide a good range of activities to promote mathematical understanding. The children count and order numbers daily, for example as they form lines and at registration. They match objects, such as cups and saucers, use different shapes to make models or pictures, and the older children name common shapes with confidence. Mathematics is applied in practical situations. The children weigh ingredients for gingerbread men, make patterns, including symmetrical patterns using computer programmes, and compare position size and shape. One or two children achieve very well; for instance, one gifted boy has an understanding of number concepts normally expected of much older pupils. Mathematical games are also used to consolidate learning; for example, the children played a game where they threw a dice to establish how far their frogs had to jump onto their next lily pad. However, this game was too easy for some children, while others struggled with it. A parent supported the children well, but the random nature of the selection of those playing the game prevented the teacher making adjustments to suit individual needs. As a result, the activity was not as effective as it should have been. The children are taught to record numbers and to match them to objects, but the most able children rarely use written forms of calculation although discussion with them shows they are capable of this. Children make sound progress in developing mathematical understanding.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

The provision for the development of the knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The wide range of activities promotes effective learning
- The teachers build on children's personal knowledge well
- Most children reach the expected goals for their age

Commentary

46. Most children have a good general knowledge when they join the nursery. Many have travelled and have some understanding of differences between places and modes of transport. They have some technical vocabulary that is effectively extended by the adults in school. The nursery children know that chefs wear hats to cook and that mixtures can change texture with the addition of sugar or water. The older children in the reception class attempt to create a floating boat out of plasticine. One boy who has support in the speech and learning unit explained coherently how he is amending his design. He demonstrated a good understanding of the need to plug holes and make a large cavity to trap air. He and his workmates discussed the Titanic with relish, while other children played with a scene made out of blocks of ice, and other materials. They described the ice very well.

47. The children list their senses and are familiar with experiments to test them. They sniffed covered pots to find the ginger and the learning support assistant refined this activity as she worked with the cooking group. She helped the children to note the differences in smell between root, crystallised and ground ginger. The children have visited the local supermarket and scanned their shopping at the checkout. They have good computer skills. They control the mouse well to find their program, select the level, save their work and print it. They also play the "My World" games with confidence. Many use the keyboard to write and the mouse in a graphics program. Good questioning expends the children's learning across the curriculum and the good range of practical experiences helps them to learn well.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers provide many opportunities for the children to develop fine hand control
- The children have daily access to outdoor play, but the accommodation for this is unsatisfactory

Commentary

48. Most children start school with physical skills that are appropriate for their age. In the nursery and reception classes, they have many opportunities to use these skills to cut, stick, draw and write and manipulate fine objects. They use malleable materials such as play dough and gingerbread mixture, cutters, staplers to make books and lollipop sticks to write in sand. The teachers use their assessments to identify any children who have difficulties so that they can teach them, for example, how to use scissors correctly. Left-handedness is accommodated appropriately. In physical education lessons, the children have been taught how to move safely, and consequently they make good use of space and show awareness of others. In the lesson observed in the reception class, most children hopped, skipped, maintained position and refined their movements with skills appropriate for their age. The teachers have developed a good program of outdoor activities. However, the reception children do not have access to the nursery area and use a small playground with inadequate space. The nursery area for outdoor play is inadequate and, in spite of the adults' efforts, does little to stimulate the imagination.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children have access to a wide range of media
- Some activities are too directed by the adults

Commentary

49. The teaching is at its best when the children have access to a good range of materials and experiment with colour, shape and texture to create models and pictures. In the nursery, for example, a group of children selected materials independently, to make buildings and others experimented with paint and dough. The older children in reception are encouraged to add their own design to, for example, their gingerbread men.

50. In the reception classes, most of the artwork stems from the children's own ideas. However, some of the work of younger children derives from stereotyped templates, for example, Christmas stockings that offer little or no opportunity for the children to develop their creativity. In the one music lesson observed during the inspection, the children had a good knowledge of the instruments they used and tapped a steady beat accurately. They showed little enthusiasm for singing and had no opportunity to select either the instruments they were to play or the song they would sing. The strongest feature of the children's creative development is the use of role-play and language as they respond to stories. Despite these shortcomings, most achieve the early learning goals for creative development.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

The provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of handwriting and spelling is inconsistent and a significant minority of pupils underachieve
- Standards in speaking and listening and in reading are above average
- Teaching in Year 6 is good
- The new subject leader has established a good overview of standards and a sensible plan to improve provision

Commentary

51. Standards in English are average in Years 2 and 6, but there are weaknesses in the teaching of handwriting and spelling that limit the achievements of a significant minority of pupils; especially amongst the average and lower attainers. The many changes of staff have evidently led to considerable variation in the teachers' expectations. The inspectors' analysis of the pupils' work revealed that generally there is thorough coverage of the types of writing outlined in the national literacy strategy, but across the school the pupils' presentation of work ranges from good to poor. The key factor relating to poor presentation lies in the inconsistent approaches taken to the teaching of handwriting and spelling. An investigation into the variable quality of the pupils' written work involved each inspector in a number of focussed observations within lessons. They revealed that in many classes up to a quarter of the pupils were holding their pencils and pens incorrectly and forming many of their letters wrongly. In Year 6, the vast majority of higher attaining pupils are writing in a fluent, joined script, but a significant minority of average and lower attaining pupils are still struggling with this basic skill.

52. Throughout the school, handwriting is taught as a discrete activity, but is not viewed as integral to the children's day-to-day writing development. In lessons, the teachers were seldom observed either correcting writing grip or insisting that letters be started in the right place. The use of separate exercise books for handwriting only goes to reinforce this weakness, especially amongst the pupils in Years 1 and 2. The children's pages contain guidelines, but they are different from those in the pupils' literacy books. The teachers provide regular practice, but the progression of the skills taught is too rapid and takes too little account of individual needs. For instance, to move some pupils who have not mastered correct letter formation and orientation onto exercises requiring the joining of "o" with "e" is not helpful to their development. The marking of these exercises is carried out regularly, but not enough attention is paid to determining if the intended learning is securely mastered. In Years 1 and 2, the teachers do a good job in teaching the pupils the sounds of letters and this contributes to the secure development of their reading. The pupils make effective use of this knowledge as they strive to learn how to spell, but the teaching places too little emphasis upon the visual clues that lead to the most effective practice.

53. In Years 2 and 6, pupils reach above average standards in reading. The recent investment in a new reading scheme has added greater variety and useful cultural breadth to the texts used in Years 1 and 2. However, there remains scope for the wider use of good quality children's literature with pupils of all abilities. By Year 6, many pupils are eager and enthusiastic readers who are developing strong personal tastes. For instance, of those who read with the inspectors one articulated why he preferred non-fiction, while the others spoke about favourite authors as diverse as Jacqueline Wilson, Enid Blyton, Ted Hughes and Agatha Christie. By the time they leave school, the vast majority of the pupils are competent readers and a few are fluent, expressive and highly discerning in their tastes. The recent renovation of the school library has strongly supported the development of reading. There is a good variety of texts that are carefully catalogued so that the children can access literature and information with ease.

54. The teaching is strongest and most consistent in Year 6. Here the teachers take an imaginative approach that motivates the pupils and helps them achieve well. For instance, the current theme of murder mystery writing has been successfully introduced via the characters from the board game "Cluedo." The pupils have been writing character descriptions and then adopting them in dramatic role-play as they are questioned by their classmates. The speaking and listening in the upper ability set is of a very good quality. For instance, when questioned for an alibi, one boy in the character of Colonel Mustard responded; "Well, old boy, I was in the study examining my collection of guns. They're pretty old really..." and proceeded at length. Under the skilful teaching of the new subject leader, the pupils in the lower set are making good gains in their learning. They have no fear of writing and set to work eagerly when planning their story structure on large sheets of paper. The previous neglect of the mechanics of writing means that presentation is often printed and untidy, but the content is visibly improving. The inclusion of phrases such as; "Swiftly the detectives secured the area," "Little did they know" and "What might he have gained by this murder?" reflect the wider reading and awareness of literature being instilled by the teacher.
55. The subject leader has made rapid assessment of English across the school and has a secure view of standards. Her subject knowledge is good and she has a sensible, but far-reaching plan for improvement. The priorities of the plan now need further clarification in order that all staff can work together systematically across the school.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

56. The pupils make effective use of their secure skills in speaking and listening and reading in a wide variety of contexts. The higher attainers apply their writing skills effectively across the curriculum. However, the weaknesses in the handwriting and spelling of some of the average and lower attainers limits the scope of their written responses in subjects such as religious education, geography, history and science.

MATHEMATICS

The provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in mathematics are improving
- Pupils work well together and demonstrate good oral and mental skills
- The teaching is very good in Year 6
- The quality of the teachers' marking is inconsistent and unsatisfactory overall
- Teaching assistants provide effective support
- The subject is well led and managed

Commentary

57. Standards are improving, but generally remain in line with the national average at the end of Years 2 and 6. On the basis of their current work, it is likely that the pupils' in Year 6 will meet the school's agreed targets for the 2004 tests. Many of the higher attaining pupils in Year 6 have made particularly good progress during the year. In Year 2, the pupils enjoy oral and mental mathematics and are confident to explain, for example, the ways in which they double even and odd numbers to achieve results in excess of 200. This activity generated a real sense of curiosity about numbers. The pupils solve simple problems involving multiplication and division. By Year 4, the pupils construct their own problems based on the four rules of number and are adept at explaining their methods of calculation. In all classes, the pupils work together productively, share ideas and solutions and frequently offer mature and sustained responses to the teachers' questions.

58. The very good teaching in Year 6 derives from the teachers' good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm and for mathematics. Generally, they use questions well to challenge the pupils' thinking and to check their understanding. In Years 2, 4 and 6 there is a brisk pace of working. The teachers give clear instructions and explanations and readily adapt their teaching to meet the needs of the pupils. In some cases, the marking 'over-praises' work that is mediocre and gives insufficient information to the pupils about how they could improve it.
59. All teachers are conscientious in their planning. Most classrooms present a strong emphasis on numeracy by displaying appropriate vocabulary, captions and prompts to aid the children in their work. The teaching assistants give good support to the pupils with special educational needs by providing appropriate challenges and by monitoring their progress against their individual education plans.
60. The mathematics coordinator is new to the post, but has a very clear understanding of what constitutes an effective mathematics curriculum. Following an audit of the teaching and learning, she has constructed a mathematics action plan that is being used well to support her monitoring of progress.

Mathematics across the curriculum

61. There is an appropriate use of mathematics in other areas of the curriculum. In geography, for example, the pupils have used co-ordinates and grid references in their map work and have found averages and percentages when presenting geographical data. Line and bar graphs have been used in science. The pupils in Years 5 and 6 are beginning to make good use of ICT to support work on angles and learning to perform calculations using spreadsheets.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Years 2 and Year 6 has many good aspects
- Standards at the end of Year 6 are improving
- The leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory
- The pupils with SEN are effectively integrated in lessons and achieve well
- In a minority of classes, low expectations, insufficient challenge and lack of effective assessment procedures limit the pupils' achievements
- The pupils are particularly skilful in investigating scientific processes

Commentary

62. Standards in Year 2 are in line with national expectation. Observations of lessons, discussions with pupils and an analysis of work confirm this. Standards at the end of Year 6 have been below average in recent years, but have improved and are now in line with the national average. This results from good teaching and challenging expectations in this year group.
63. Two lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2. There were many aspects of good teaching in the Year 2 lesson. As a result, the teacher motivated the children so that they approached the practical task of creating a simple electrical circuit with enthusiasm, enjoyment and secure understanding. An analysis of the pupils' work in Years 3 and 4 showed that they covered a wide range of science topics, made good progress and had challenging investigations which led to good levels of scientific enquiry. The Year 3 lesson observed was well planned and differentiated to meet the needs of all groups of pupils, a characteristic that was also evident in their previous work. In Year 5, the pupils' progress was less consistent and the demand placed on them to

produce work of good quality was not so apparent. The higher ability pupils in particular did not achieve the levels expected of them. By contrast, in Year 6, effective teaching and the consolidation of knowledge and understanding of scientific processes through investigational work enable most pupils make good progress. In this year group, the teachers set demanding targets for each pupil and provide constructive feedback when marking their written work. In the lesson observed, the pupils made accurate, reasoned predictions and recorded their findings when changing one aspect of a complex electrical circuit.

64. The pupils with special educational needs have good access to the curriculum and are effectively supported by the learning support assistants. The pupils from the designated special provision are carefully integrated in the classes during the afternoon sessions, and the teaching is focussed and well matched to their needs. In the lessons observed, the teachers actively encouraged these pupils to contribute to all activities, including the class discussions.
65. The curriculum leadership is unsatisfactory. The scheme of work for science follows national guidelines, but there is little evidence that the subject leader has monitored standards and provision across the school in order to identify the strengths, weaknesses and issues for action. A range of data has been collected, but has not been used in the planning process in order to raise standards. Consequently, inconsistent progress has not been identified and action taken. Other than in Year 6, there is little evidence of consistent and effective assessment that tells the pupils how to improve their work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new ICT suite has improved the provision and helped to raise standards
- A sound start has been made to the application of new technologies across the curriculum
- The resources for control technology are inadequate and further investment is required
- The new co-ordinator has made a good start in her plans for further improvement

Commentary

66. The creation of a new suite of computers and a programme of helpful staff training have led to good improvements in this subject since the last inspection. The provision now meets the statutory requirements and standards in Years 2 and 6 are securely in line with the expected levels.
67. The pupils are evidently delighted by their new suite. A group of Year 6 pupils demonstrated good maturity when they took the inspector to show him their "PowerPoint" presentations. They loaded the program and confidently located their individual folders within the hard drive of the network. Each presentation contained an interesting variety of slides within which the pupils had created text and imported images to illustrate their work on "forces" in science. They had taken great care to ensure that the text was accurate and had entered each slide in a variety of ways that might engage the interest of the audience. Animated images with accompanying sound effects, such as those depicting an apple falling onto Newton's head, added to the entertainment value. The higher attaining pupils had also incorporated hyperlinks so that the speaker might return to the home page at any point in the presentation.
68. The subject leader's plans for the linking of ICT with other subjects are at an early stage, but the teachers are evidently eager to employ the power of ICT whenever possible. In Year 5, for instance, the pupils are being introduced to "PowerPoint" so that they can create simple presentations about Henry VIII. In Year 4, the pupils used the Internet website "Espresso" successfully to research information about the Bethnal Green tube disaster that occurred during

World War II and then cut and pasted information into their own newspaper reports of the incident.

69. Simple use of the computers to control movement was observed in a good Year 4 lesson. The program "Screen Turtle" had been successfully introduced and the pupils were achieving well as they applied their knowledge of angles in order to create a variety of regular two-dimensional shapes. A teaching assistant effectively supported the special needs pupils, and the higher attaining pupils made rapid strides in a very short time. For instance, many managed to program the "turtle" to draw hexagons and octagons, and a pair of boys successfully created a circle. The oldest pupils currently refine their knowledge and skills of control technology during the annual residential visit. However, the subject leader is keenly aware that the school's resources for the teaching of this aspect on a more regular basis are inadequate. A well considered bid for additional resources has been carefully compiled and if successful will further enhance the quality of the school's provision.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

70. The recent improvements in provision have resulted in the school making satisfactory use of ICT across the curriculum. In addition to the examples given above, there are many further instances of cross-curricular work. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 make effective use of 'Colourmagic' in designing their own drawings. Many of their other activities are now recorded with a digital camera. Word processing continues to be used effectively to support the pupils' work in literacy, and spreadsheet programs, such as Excel, often feature during work in mathematics and science. However, these illustrations are examples of the initiative of individual teachers and as yet there is no agreed, coherent programme that sets out where and when ICT will be deployed within the other subjects of the National Curriculum.

HUMANITIES

No **geography** lessons were taught during the inspection. It is not, therefore, possible to make a firm judgement about provision. Discussions were held with pupils and teachers and previously completed work was scrutinised. The evidence indicated that the pupils in Years 1 and 2 had an understanding of routes and key features within their own locality. In Years 3 to 6, pupils recalled work they had undertaken as part of a river study and lessons on maps and co-ordinates. The work seen indicated satisfactory progress in the areas of local study and mapping skills.

History

The provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is unsatisfactory in Year 1
- Role play is used imaginatively in Year 2

71. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are in line with national expectations. Year 1 pupils visited the local area to make comparisons between old and new houses. The follow-up work was planned well, but the pupils' poor concentration and chatter went unchecked and as a result their progress in the lesson was unsatisfactory. In Year 2, the pupils discussed the events related to The Great Fire of London. They could distinguish between secondary source evidence and an eyewitness account. They were enthralled when the teacher 'became' Samuel Pepys and entered into role-play. The quality of the children's questions to "Samuel Pepys" indicated how much information they had retained about the Fire of London and their keenness to learn more. The teacher was very well informed, responded imaginatively and made the lesson memorable for the pupils.

72. During their work on Tudor Britain, the Year 5 pupils built up a sound knowledge of life at that time and their writing contained good factual accounts and empathetic writing about the wealth and

poverty of the period. The Year 6 pupils use the Internet well to undertake research about the Second World War. They refer to books which they have read, such as "Carrie's War" and "Goodnight Mr Tom", to demonstrate a good understanding of the social conditions of the time.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Artefacts and visits are used well to stimulate the pupils' interest
- The pupils are introduced to an appropriate range of religious traditions

73. Standards in religious education are similar to those at the time of last inspection and generally in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. A recently constructed scheme of work introduces the pupils to some of the main beliefs and practices associated with the major world religions. It also provides them with appropriate opportunities to express their own ideas and feelings about religious belief. The pupils with special educational needs are supported well by teaching assistants during religious education lessons.

74. The Year 1 pupils recall some aspects of the life of St Francis and have considered the relevance of his teaching in their lives today. By studying stories from Judaism, some Year 2 pupils have explored the emotions and feelings present in the story of 'Joseph's Coloured Coat.' They have considered the relevance of the Torah and how it provides the followers of Judaism with guidance on how to live their lives.

75. In Years 3 to 6, visits to the parish church and the local Baptist church have enabled the pupils to appreciate that religious belief and practice are integral parts of their local community. In their study of Sikhism, the Year 6 pupils heard about one of the gurus and were able to relate the story to the importance of trust. Music and artefacts are used well and provide appropriate stimuli for the pupils to appreciate some of the festivals and practices in Sikhism.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

It was not possible to observe much teaching of art and design, music and physical education. However, these subjects were sampled through the analysis of the children's work, discussions with pupils and the occasional lesson observation.

In the **art and design** lesson observed, the teaching was satisfactory. The pupils in a Year 5 class were creating a design in the art deco style. They talked about the history of art deco and how it had influenced their drawing. The school follows national guidelines for art and design and there is evidence from the work on display that pupils in all year groups show creativity and an enjoyment in the subject. Two displays in Year 6 illustrating weaving and sketching techniques indicate that the pupils leave the school with a variety of skills that are in line with the expected levels.

In the one **music** lesson observed, the subject leader demonstrated good subject knowledge and had high expectations of her pupils as they attempted to decide whether or not a song was suitable to be sung as a round. They sang a round successfully and enthusiastically but, at the end of a long day, the pupils were restless and found it hard to maintain concentration during the main task. Nevertheless, the teaching and learning were satisfactory. The new subject leader has successfully improved the planning for the subject, opting for a published scheme that can be used easily by non-specialist teachers. The initial feedback indicates that the staff are happy with the new scheme. A range of instrumental tuition is provided by the county music service, and over 60 pupils are learning to play brass, strings or guitar. The school hosts the Saturday morning music school and participates in the Brackley District Carol Concert. A school choir meets at lunchtime supported by a parent. An appropriate range of resources has been recently augmented by the purchase of a set

of keyboards. Many teachers play records at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions, improving pupils' knowledge of a range of music from their own and other cultures.

The school has some good resources for teaching **physical education**, including a very good games hall and hard play areas marked for team games. However, the small size and unevenness of playing field are a hindrance to team games. Two lessons were observed. In the first lesson, the standards and achievement of the Year 3 pupils in gymnastics were very good because the quality of teaching was excellent. The teacher had specialist subject knowledge and the ability to challenge pupils to extend their physical capabilities and range of sequences to the limit of their potential. In the second lesson, the teaching was satisfactory as Year 5 pupils developed their football control skills on the hard play area. Instructors teach swimming off-site and the records show that by Year 6 all girls and 93 per cent of the boys can swim 25 metres. The subject leader ensures that the physical education taught throughout the school follows the national guidelines. The extra-curricular activities and competition against other schools in sport are currently inadequate.

Design and technology

The provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 2 and 6 have a sound grasp of relevant techniques and skills
- Many aspects of the teaching are good
- The subject is well led and managed

Commentary

76. Since the last inspection, important developments in design and technology have improved the provision and the profile of the subject and so raised standards. The school now uses national and local guidance to ensure that skills are developed satisfactorily from year to year. Four lessons were seen in which the quality of the teaching was good. It challenges the pupils and maintains their enthusiasm and enjoyment for the subject. This was evident in a Year 2 lesson where the pupils were given the task of dismantling a box and reassembling it inside out. They had to think about how they would tackle the process before selecting appropriate tools, techniques and materials for its reconstruction. The lesson was well paced and maintained the pupils' interest. The higher ability pupils were able to create axles and wheels for their box to form a vehicle, and then evaluate their product.

77. An analysis of work and the many displays around the school confirm that the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are developed consistently from year to year. The Year 6 pupils had produced some good work on bridges. They talked perceptively and with sophisticated vocabulary about their designs and how the structures could be improved.

78. The influence of the subject leadership on the improving standards and provision is significant. The subject is now well resourced and the teachers in all year groups have good support and guidance for their planning. The monitoring procedures are effective, and the teachers have access to samples of moderated work as a guide to standards and expectations for each year group.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Few specific lessons in personal, social, health education and citizenship were observed during the inspection. However, the evidence gathered and evaluated throughout the report indicates that personal, social and health education and citizenship are satisfactorily covered within the school's curriculum. The provision is linked well with the religious education curriculum. An examination of the teachers' planning and discussions with the staff and pupils show that pupils have good

opportunities to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to make decisions about issues that affect their lives.

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	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	5
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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