

INSPECTION REPORT

STOKE MANDEVILLE COMBINED SCHOOL

Stoke Mandeville

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110249

Headteacher: Mr J Ainsworth

Lead inspector: Mr J G F Parsons

Dates of inspection: 19 – 21 January 2004

Inspection number: 258042

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	197.5
School address:	Lower Road Stoke Mandeville Aylesbury Buckinghamshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Starr
Date of previous inspection:	5 July 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is an average size primary school. Pupils come from a wide catchment area and attainment on entry has declined in recent years, it is broadly average. There are an average number of pupils with special educational needs. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is high. There is a department for those who are hearing impaired, some of whom have complex medical needs. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals appears well below the national average, but no hot meals are served and take up of free packed lunches is slight, but socio-economic circumstances are average. The mobility of pupils is low and the school is over-subscribed. The turnover of teachers in recent years has been considerable. The school achieved the Investors in People Award in 2003, the School Achievement Award in 2002 and is on course to achieve the Active Mark Gold for physical education in the near future. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22546	Mr J G F Parsons	Lead inspector	English Science Art and design Physical education
9520	Mr J Leigh	Lay inspector	
26514	Mrs A Tapsfield	Team inspector	Music Religious education Special educational needs
23009	Mrs A Hogbin	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Foundation Stage English as an additional language
27240	Mr A Hooper	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology

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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 and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	15
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES	18
The Hearing Impaired Department	
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	20
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	33

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school that has overcome significant turnover in staffing, due to promotion and retirement, in recent years. Most pupils achieve well due to the good teaching and learning. The headteacher and his deputy provide good leadership and motivate staff. They have successfully raised the expectations of staff and standards by the end of Year 6 and have adjusted to the changing intake. **The school offers good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Most pupils achieve well in all classes due to the good teaching and learning and standards are good overall, but the pitch of work for those who are lower-attaining or have special educational needs does not always provide suitable challenge.
- By the end of Year 6 the inspection found standards are above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics.
- The senior management team is effective but deployment of teachers to curriculum co-ordinator roles does not always fully take into account their other responsibilities, making them less effective.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall but the significant financial deficit restricts provision for future development.
- Pupils are articulate, confident and have a wide vocabulary.
- This is a very caring school with very good relationships and a strong ethos. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, and attendance are very good.
- The school has a strong commitment to inclusion and the hearing impaired department is a highly valued feature of the school.

The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection due to better leadership, and teaching and learning.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of free school meals.*

Most pupils achieve well in Reception and Years 1 to 6. Children's attainment is broadly average when they start school but has declined since the previous inspection. The arrangements for children to start in Reception each term means that they all achieve well. However, only those who start in September are on track to meet or exceed the standards expected for their age by the end of the year. Those children who start later in the year do not have enough time to reach these standards. This means that while achievement is good, standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2 as pupils catch up from their short time in Reception. This good achievement continues, and by the time pupils reach Year 6 the inspection found standards are above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. Standards in English have risen due to teachers' improved subject knowledge, teaching and learning leading to raised expectations. It is difficult to make a direct comparison of standards with schools in a similar context. This is based on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals. No hot meals are served and the take up of free

school meals is unusually low (0.5 per cent). Given the school's mixed catchment the yardstick for deprivation is therefore unreliable. Standards compared to schools in a similar context could well be higher than those stated above, but there is not enough evidence to substantiate this. Pupils in the hearing impaired department, some of whom have severe medical needs, achieve well. However, lower-attainers and those with special educational needs in the mainstream fare less well. This is due to assessment procedures not being used effectively in some classes to inform the planning of pupils' work to match their needs. All other pupils regardless of background achieve well. Standards in all other subjects are at least average and above average in physical education across the school and in music and history by the end of Year 6. **Pupils' personal qualities including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good** owing to the good teaching and learning and very strong ethos of the school. This leads to pupils' very good confidence and self-esteem, and to their very good attitudes and behaviour. It also encourages very good attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good overall. The quality of teaching is mostly good in all classes. Pupils learn well because of well-planned activities in lessons and teachers' good subject knowledge. Assessment procedures are used effectively to inform planning and to provide challenging work for higher and average attaining pupils including those with special gifts or talents. However, the pitch of work in some classes is not as effective for lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. The quality of education offered in the hearing impaired department is good overall. A good range of curricular and very good extra-curricular provision is enriched by visits and visitors to the school. The school is well resourced overall. However, the outside provision for Reception is too accessible to other pupils and adults and does not fully meet children's needs. Very high quality relationships in this very caring school make a strong contribution to standards. Parents' good commitment to the school, together with strong community and links with other schools, make a significant contribution to its effectiveness.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The good leadership of the headteacher and his deputy has motivated staff and raised morale and standards. Sound management systems have addressed most of the issues in the previous inspection. The deployment of co-ordinators does not always take into account their other responsibilities, which makes them less effective at managing their subjects. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and fulfil their statutory duties well. However, they rely too heavily on the vision and aspirations that the headteacher has for the future of the school rather than developing their own, although they employ suitable strategies to achieve these goals.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Nearly all parents think very highly of the school although a very few are concerned about bullying and some think the school should seek their views more. Most pupils enjoy school very much, a few do not consider that other pupils behave well or that there is an adult they could go to if worried.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- to plan work in lessons more effectively for lower-attainers and those pupils with special educational needs by;
 - using the information gained from assessment procedures to pitch work at a suitable level;
 - providing challenging activities that enable them to succeed more independently;
- to review the enrolment of children into Reception to give children more experience of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement in Reception and Years 1 to 6 is mostly good and better than during the previous inspection. Standards in the core subjects are average in Years 1 and 2 except for mathematics, which are above average. In Years 3 to 6, standards are above average in English and science and well above in mathematics.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in Reception and by the end of the year those children who start in September are on track to reach the standards expected for their age in the nationally agreed six areas of learning and many will be above average.
- Those who start Reception in the second or third term of the year also achieve well, but are less likely to reach the standards expected by the end of the year as they have not been in school long enough.
- In Years 1 and 2 pupils continue to achieve well and standards in reading and writing by the end of Year 2 are average and they are above average in mathematics.
- By the end of Year 6 the continuing good achievement means that pupils reach above average standards in English and science and well above average standards in mathematics.
- Lower-attainers and those pupils who have special educational needs do not always achieve their potential as the work set is not pitched to fulfil their needs in a few classes in Years 3 to 6.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.6 (18.8)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.1 (15.3)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.0 (18.5)	14.6 (14.4)

There were 30 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	27.0 (27.5)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.5 (27.5)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.0 (28.4)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 39 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Commentary

1. Children start school with standards that are broadly average for their age. These are lower than during the previous inspection. Most children achieve well in Reception but the termly enrolment slows development, as some children spend as little as 12 weeks in this class. Much ground has to be made up in Years 1 and 2. The inspection found that pupils do well to achieve average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. This compares favourably with the results in the Year 2 national tests of 2003 when pupils achieved average standards in reading but were well below average in writing and

mathematics. The absence of the teacher in that year, due to maternity leave, and the very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, meant results were abnormally low and not typical. In the previous two years for example the standards were much higher.

2. By the end of Year 6, results in 2003 national tests were average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. The inspection found standards better than this due to more stable staffing, improved subject knowledge of teachers, and better teaching and learning. They are above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics. In particular numeracy is very well taught. Pupils are quick and eager to learn. Reading is of a very good standard and pupils are articulate and speak well with a wide vocabulary. The practical approach to science is effective. This improvement in standards of all these subjects is confirmed by the school's own predictions. There has been good development in standards overall since the previous inspection and in the past three years the educational value added from Year 2 to Year 6 has been good or very good overall.
3. Making a similar school's comparison is difficult in this school as the take up of free school meals is very low (0.5 per cent). There are no hot meals served and there are a significant number of pupils who come from low socio-economic areas. It seems probable that the current statistics are unreliable and that pupils' eligibility for free school meals is higher. Therefore, standards are probably higher when compared to schools in a similar context than stated in available statistics. However, there is insufficient evidence to make a definitive judgement.
4. The few pupils from minority ethnic groups or who do not speak English as their first language achieve well. Against the national trend, boys achieve significantly better than girls in the national tests at Year 6 and have done so for some time. However, there was no evidence of any difference in their performance in the classroom. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily overall. They often achieve their objectives effectively in lessons because of the good level of support they receive. However, their ability to apply the skills learned when an adult does not support them is not extended well enough. They do not achieve as well as other pupils because in a few classes information from assessment data is not used enough to guide class teachers' planning. As a result, tasks in lessons do not develop pupils' independent use of basic skills consistently. In these instances, these pupils realise that they are not succeeding and this has an adverse impact on their confidence and self-esteem.
5. In all other subjects, standards are at least satisfactory. They are above average across the school in physical education because of the highly effective management of the subject and the very wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities which support it. In Years 3 to 6, standards are above average in music due to teachers' good subject knowledge and the enthusiastic and effective management of these subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance and behaviour are very good, they mature very well during their time in school and personal development is very well cultivated.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good inclusion of all pupils.
- Pupils' commitment to attend school is very good.
- Pupils show confidence and are very keen to take responsibility.
- Relationships are very good.
- Attitudes are very positive.
- The termly enrolment of pupils in Reception slows the personal development of the youngest intake.

Commentary

6. Pupils are very keen to come to school and attendance is well above the national average. The youngest pupils settle well and leave their parents happily. Pupils' punctuality is good. Parents are very aware of the importance of good attendance.
7. Pupils like school very much and are well motivated to learn, this is similar to the previous inspection. They are polite, helpful and considerate. They respect each other even when adults are not present. They show great interest in their work, find it fun in most lessons and immerse themselves fully in what the school provides. Most work independently and co-operate well in groups. In a Year 5/6 information and communication technology (ICT) lesson, for example they enthusiastically and with enjoyment work well together to design a school information leaflet for parents using multi-media presentational techniques. Occasionally, the pitch of work during lessons in Years 3 to 6 means that lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs require too much assistance to be fully engaged in their work.
8. Pupils behave very well in lessons and about the school. Teachers have high expectations for behaviour and pupils achieve well as a result. Pupils' relationships with staff are very good. They take care of their own and others' property and take pride in their school. Play times, break times and mealtimes are well supervised and are characterised by calmness and pupils' enjoyment.
9. Most pupils develop very good confidence and self-esteem. Skilful questioning by teachers ensures that pupils are encouraged to speak in front of their friends. However, in Reception some pupils do not have long enough in school to develop in full their personal qualities before moving on to their next class. The pupils reflect on their feelings, for example in an assembly using the theme 'Special People'. They considered how they were special, sang and signed a hymn using sign language. In class council meetings they discuss sensibly, and with respect for different viewpoints, issues important to them such as school uniforms and tidier cloakrooms, and make decisions. Pupils use their initiative and value the opportunity to learn from mistakes. Pupils engage very well in the responsibilities given to them and carry them out with pride, for example ensuring that younger pupils are cared for and helped at playtime to join in activities. Pupils with special educational needs have very good attitudes to school. They pay close attention in lessons and try hard, especially when a member of staff supports them.
10. In most lessons there is a range of interesting, well-chosen activities to stimulate a desire to learn. Lessons are well paced, with appropriate methods and resources used, for example in Reception a particularly broad range of activities were used to capture the interest of pupils to read, write and speak words beginning with 'h'. Pupils develop a good understanding and respect for other peoples' feelings, values and beliefs. They understand the importance of festivals and the outward signs of religion, faith and belief. They understand fairness. No incidences of racial tension or harassment were seen. They interact socially very well and have a very good understanding of what is right and wrong.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.8	School data	0.0
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.

There were no exclusions in the previous school year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment procedures are good. The use of assessment findings to aid planning for pupils of differing abilities is satisfactory.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 42 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	10 (24%)	19 (45%)	12 (29%)	0	0	0

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics has led to improved achievement and raised standards in these subjects. Setting (grouping according to ability) in Years 5 and 6 has made an effective contribution to this.
- The effective use of guided reading techniques leads to above average standards.
- Work is planned well and meets the needs of higher and average attaining pupils effectively.
- Teaching and learning in the hearing impaired department is good.
- The gathering of data on pupils is good and in Reception is very good. However, in some classes it is not used sufficiently to inform the planning of lessons for lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Staff follow commercially-produced lesson planning too closely in some less effective lessons with the result that pupils' needs are not addressed sufficiently.

Commentary

11. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and as a result pupils achieve well and enjoy their work. Good progress has been made since the last inspection when the quality of teaching was satisfactory overall.
12. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Reception. This is a great improvement on findings at the previous inspection when teaching was unsatisfactory. Very good assessment procedures enable work to be matched closely to pupils' differing abilities and needs. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Teachers engage pupils very effectively in lessons and this promotes good learning. There are high expectations of good behaviour and pupils achieve well because they are motivated to learn.
13. In Years 1 to 6, pupils learn well because teachers have good subject knowledge, manage pupils very well and plan activities that interest them. As a result, pupils listen attentively and most make good progress. The development of the literacy and numeracy elements of the National Primary Strategy has had a significant impact on the teaching and learning in English and mathematics. This improvement in quality has led to raised achievement in standards in these subjects. In particular, the teaching of speaking and listening skills is very good because of the probing question and answer sessions that teachers plan in a range of subjects.
14. At the last inspection it was identified that teachers did not plan lessons to challenge pupils of differing abilities sufficiently. There has been significant improvement in the planning for the average and higher-attainers. Teachers use assessment procedures effectively to aid their planning and to provide challenging work for higher and average attaining pupils including

those with special gifts or talents. As a result these pupils achieve well, making good progress in acquiring basic skills. Assessment data has also been used to organise pupils into ability sets in Years 5 and 6 for literacy and numeracy. This too is effective in raising standards. However, the planning of assignments for pupils of lower ability and for pupils with special educational needs is less successful in some classes. Teachers use the general assessment procedures effectively to identify pupils' learning needs and to plan tasks which challenge these pupils. However, the pitch of work often means that pupils cannot complete it without considerable support. This limits the achievement of these pupils in working independently and adversely affects their self-esteem.

15. Where lessons are less successful staff sometimes follow commercially-produced lesson planning too closely, without analysing whether they fulfil pupils' learning needs with the result that these needs are not always fully addressed. Occasionally, staff follow the guidelines of the planning too closely rather than the emerging needs of pupils in their class. In a few lessons this also led to the pace of the lesson slowing and pupils' enthusiasm to wane.
16. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Class teachers are careful to ensure that these pupils are fully involved in class activities, and plan carefully the tasks supported by the learning support assistants so that they mirror those done by the whole class. As a result, these pupils work hard and they make sound progress in acquiring new skills. However, teachers do not find it easy to plan activities that promote pupils' independence and this limits the achievement they can make.
17. The quality of education in the hearing impaired department is good. The school regards the department as an asset, encouraging all pupils to use a range of means of communication to ensure that those assigned to the department are fully integrated in all aspects of school life.

The curriculum

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is now good. There are very good opportunities for enrichment, for example through extra-curricular activities in sport and music. The accommodation and resources meet the needs of the curriculum well in Years 1 to 6. Accommodation and resources for reception are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum in Reception is practical and follows national guidance effectively but is limited to some extent by the outside play area which is too accessible to others.
- The curriculum meets the needs of average and higher-attaining pupils including those with gifts or talents very well. However, it does not fully meet the needs of lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs in a few classes in Years 3 to 6.
- There is very good support for learning outside the school day, particularly in sport and music.
- There is a strong focus on learning through first hand experiences and good use is made of the school's minibus to take groups of pupils to appropriate sites.

Commentary

18. The main pathway to the playground for children and their parents is through the Reception class outside area. Consequently, it cannot be fully fenced or gated. This lack of security means the equipment provided, such as climbing frames, has to be easily removable; equipment needed during the day cannot be put out until after the start of school when the path is no longer needed and valuable items such as wheeled vehicles cannot be left unattended. Further difficulties are that the outdoor area cannot be seen from the Reception class and it has no shade or shelter. This adversely affects the quality of outdoor provision that can be planned for children. The school is planning to rectify this when funding permits.

19. The curriculum overall is well-planned and broken down to good medium term plans. Short term planning in a few classes in Years 3 to 6 requires attention to modify it sufficiently to enable lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs to achieve more independently and with less support from teaching assistants.
20. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs, including those with Statements of Special Educational Need, is satisfactory overall. Pupils' individual education plans are written by the special educational needs co-ordinator in consultation with staff and parents, and focus on reading, writing, spelling and elements of numeracy. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs within their classes is tailored to promote their understanding of the work addressed. The teaching assistants work effectively with the pupils assigned to them as well as others, promoting the full involvement of their pupils in group activities. However, sometimes tasks for lower-attainers or those with special educational needs are not sufficiently adapted for pupils to be able to complete them without adult support. A broad range of specialist programmes which address specific difficulties are run effectively by skilled teaching assistants who give good support to pupils with special educational needs.
21. Pupils take part in a wide range of sporting activities and very successfully compete against other schools. The school has a strong focus on promoting a healthy lifestyle and love of sports. A high percentage of pupils learn instruments and take part in the school band and singing club. Very good opportunities are found to share these with the local community. For example, pupils participated in a carol concert outside the local supermarket and sang carols on the village green; they used sign language during these events.
22. The school plans a wide range of effective practical experiences to extend the curriculum. This interests pupils and helps them to achieve well. Older pupils have a residential visit to Bristol for activities such as abseiling and caving and a day visit to France. Pupils take part in history theme days and visit museums and stately homes. In geography, pupils use the immediate locality and visits to sites such as the Thames barrier very well as a basis for map work and environmental awareness.

Care, guidance and support

Very good steps are taken to ensure the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils. Good support, advice and guidance are provided based on good monitoring of achievement and personal development. The school seeks, values and acts on the views of pupils very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The care, protection and support for pupils are very good.
- All staff have detailed knowledge of pupils as individuals.
- The trusting relationship that pupils have with adults is very good.
- Staff listen to pupils' views.
- Every opportunity is seized to support pupils' personal development.
- Pupils are not always as aware as they could be of how to improve their attainment.

Commentary

23. Child protection has a high profile. It is handled sensitively, effectively and promptly. Staff always work in the best interests of all pupils to safeguard their welfare. Child protection is well supported by comprehensive arrangements, where the school, parents and other agencies work together well.
24. The school ensures that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment. All reasonable steps are taken to keep pupils safe and protect them from injury or ill health. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy supported by regular inspections of school premises.

Risk assessment is effective and defines action to take to reduce risk, for example in educational visits made to the Bristol Youth Hostel Association and on the day-trip to Boulogne.

25. The school has very good procedures to monitor attendance and personal development. This has an impact on the achievements made by pupils both academically, and in the significant development of their personal qualities.
26. Although there are systematic and well-managed assessment procedures that track pupils' progress, pupils themselves are not, as yet, able fully to use this information to improve their individual attainment.
27. The school council, which has elected representatives from every class, meets to discuss any matters brought to their attention by their classmates. They are most impressive in the way they can articulately and sensibly discuss issues with sensitivity and a growing maturity. They respect different viewpoints and make suggestions for improvement. The school has acted on some of their suggestions, for example the provision of a school tuck shop offering healthy food such as fruit, which pupils have most impressively researched and will be allowed to implement.
28. There are good induction arrangements for pupils into the Reception class which are flexible enough to suit the needs of pupils as individuals and are based on very good relationships with new pupils and their parents, although the termly enrolment means that some pupils only have 12 weeks in Reception.
29. The school provides a secure, caring environment where pupils feel safe and are happy. Relationships with adults are very good. Pupils are known very much as individuals. If they have a problem they are confident they can go to an adult and get help. Inclusion is good, the integration of hearing impaired pupils into classes and the concern that the other pupils have for them and the good support they receive illustrate this. Other pupils with special educational needs are cared for and supported well. They have good relationships with staff who are quick to identify their needs as they arise. The school operates as a supportive family.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, the community and with other schools are good.

Main Strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for parents to support, and help their children in school.
- The parents have a high regard for the school.
- The community has a positive impact on the development of pupils.

Commentary

30. Parents are well informed by regular, clear, well-presented general school newsletters. Additionally, each class provides an information sheet detailing the curriculum to be covered in each term. There are frequent opportunities to receive information on their child's progress throughout the year. Information for the parents of children with special educational needs is good. The annual report to parents on their child's progress is thorough. It includes clear targets for improvement, for example in one instance pupils are asked to learn to use symmetry, number bonds up to twenty, and make more accurate predictions in science.
31. Parents' views are positive and they are very pleased with what the school provides. Almost all parents think their children make good progress. The school encourages a strong sense of partnership based on mutual trust and confidence. Parental views are sought by use of

questionnaires completed by new parents and by parents whose children have moved to the secondary school. The school uses these views to effect improvements. The school is welcoming to parents. A group of parents help in a variety of ways in school. If any parents are concerned about any aspect of school life they will approach the school and have high expectations that any concerns will be acted on. The Friends Association is very active in supporting the school through fundraising, which is used to provide every class with an amount of money to be spent according to each teacher's wishes. Parents are appreciative that their children receive the help and support they need. There are very good relationships between parents and staff.

32. There are many visitors from the local community who contribute significantly to the achievement of pupils. For example a local bridge club organises card games for pupils at a weekly lunchtime event, which is very well attended. It is clear that this contributes strongly to the personal development of pupils in numeracy, decision-making, memory, and thinking and social skills. The school uses the local community very well to enhance the learning of its pupils through traffic studies and architectural studies in Aylesbury. There are productive links with Stoke Mandeville hospital, which pupils visit as part of curriculum enhancement. Several community groups use the school's facilities for their meetings and activities.
33. There are good induction arrangements for pupils joining the school, which are much appreciated by parents, as they enable their pupils to settle very well into school. Pupils transfer to up to ten different secondary school. The school has addressed the potential difficulties well in having good transfer arrangements to make the transition as smooth as it can.
34. The involvement of parents in the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. This includes those in the hearing impaired unit. Individual education plans are shared with parents, and older pupils contribute to the review of their own targets and the setting of new ones. Parents feel that their pupils are cared for well, that their difficulties are identified quickly and that effective action is taken.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher provide **good** leadership. Other key staff provide **satisfactory** leadership. Management is **satisfactory**, as is governance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher leads by example, with a strong focus on the personal development of every child.
- Inclusion is very good.
- Morale is high as a result of the way in which the headteacher values all members of the staff highly.
- The governing body knows the school's strengths and weaknesses but does not always hold the school sufficiently to account.
- The re-allocation of curriculum management responsibilities, following the recent high turnover of staff and employment of newly qualified teachers, has not been fully effective, the school is planning to address this in the new academic year.
- The governors, although supportive, do not challenge the headteacher and other teaching staff sufficiently.
- The deficit budget means that the school has limited options for future improvements.

Commentary

35. The headteacher has a strong vision for the school, and places strong emphasis on the full development of the pupils. He is a good communicator and makes all members of staff feel valued. He is always available for staff, parents or pupils. His detailed knowledge of pupils and their circumstances contributes well to their personal development. The deputy headteacher shares the headteacher's vision and their complementary skills make them an effective partnership.
36. The school is well regarded in the locality and is over-subscribed. The headteacher is successful at fostering a community spirit and there are very good relationships within the school. The inclusion procedures in the school are very effective, and pupils feel that they are very much part of a community. The pupils and staff of the hearing-impaired support unit are fully integrated into the life of the school.
37. Management is sound. There is regular monitoring of teaching as part of the school's performance management systems. The teaching assistants also have regular appraisals and performance targets to help them to develop their roles in the school. Newly qualified teachers are also well supported, so that they develop their professional skills and become more effective. The school has recently had a large turnover of staff, due to promotion and retirement. This resulted in many subjects lacking a co-ordinator. However, the way that these posts have been filled has not been fully effective. Some co-ordinators are in charge of subjects that are not very compatible with their other roles in the school and some senior staff have too many disparate roles. This makes it difficult for them to influence the subject for which they are responsible. The school is aware of this and has planned to address it ready for the new academic year.
38. The governing body makes a significant contribution to the work of the school through its formal meetings and the visits that individual governors make during the day. Many of the governors have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, which helps them to see the areas that need development. However, there is a reluctance to challenge the headteacher and other staff when budgetary items are being discussed. The governors' role as a 'critical friend' is not fully developed. There is a school improvement plan that is regularly updated and reviewed by staff and governors, but it is not always fully costed in a detailed way. It does not show in enough detail how proposed expenditure would improve pupils' achievement. However, there are clear and effective measures for monitoring the budget. The school has run a deficit budget in recent years, and this has worsened as a result of an accidental over-payment by the local education authority. The school was unaware of this and allocated the funds to its educational priorities. However, when the local education authority realised its error it required immediate repayment. The chair of governors negotiated a compromise, and the local education authority has helped the school resolve the situation by using their financial support advisers. It is intended that this support will also help the school move out of their deficit budget in time. The current financial situation means that the school is very limited as to what it can do to improve its provision.
39. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The school's systems are well-organised and the co-ordinator works hard to support class teachers in writing individual education plans and at review meetings. She is new to the post and her lack of experience means that the monitoring of the provision for pupils with special needs is limited.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	608,547
Total expenditure	632,323
Expenditure per pupil	2,702

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-3,634
Balance carried forward to the next	-27,411

THE HEARING IMPAIRED DEPARTMENT

The provision in the hearing impaired department is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of pupils with hearing impairment is good overall.
- Both the specialist staff and the mainstream class teachers know these pupils and their difficulties well.
- The school's commitment to the full integration of pupils with hearing impairment is excellent.
- Assessment of pupils' needs is very good.
- The care and support given by the department staff to its pupils is excellent.
- The staff have not received sufficient training to meet the increased range of complex learning and medical conditions of pupils assigned by the education authority.

Commentary

40. The hearing impaired department supports pupils aged from four to 11 who have moderate to profound hearing losses. There is capacity for 12 primary-aged pupils, but at the moment there are only six on roll, of whom five were in school during the inspection. The local education authority refers pupils and makes decisions about admission to the department. The department plays a full part in the life of the school and pupils spend some time each day within the mainstream class appropriate to their age and development. The room in which the department is based is bright and inviting and provides a stimulating learning environment in which pupils feel safe and secure. Displays are informative and resources are of good quality. The care and support given by the department staff to its pupils is excellent. They know the pupils and their difficulties very well and enjoy their company.
41. Pupils from the department are fully integrated in every aspect of school life and staff seek to raise the status of the hearing impaired community generally. Members of the hearing impaired department also work within mainstream classes. Signing is taught to hearing and hearing impaired pupils who choose to attend the lunchtime club. Every school assembly is signed with the whole school signing the school prayer. The signing club also takes part in special events such as carol singing in the shopping centre and in a nearby residential home. This approach is very effective in extending pupils' communication with other pupils as well as with staff, and it was moving to observe a hearing and a hearing impaired pupil enjoy a friendly discussion using a combination of spoken and sign language.
42. Pupils make good progress in relation to the targets identified on their individual education plans. These focus on the development of their communication skills, literacy and numeracy skills and upon extending pupils' independence. Pupils make particularly good progress in self-expression as well as in the development of their receptive language skills. This is because their work is planned to address their individual needs and their day-to-day progress is monitored closely, with tasks adapted quickly as their needs change. The department's principle objective is to ensure the success of pupils who previously have struggled in school.
43. Pupils with hearing impairment have positive attitudes to school. They work hard and collaborate well with their classmates. However, some do not readily work independent of adult support. Other pupils give good support to their peers with hearing impairment, celebrating their successes generously and taking trouble to include them in group activities. The success of the school's commitment to full integration of these pupils is very clear from the way that the hearing impaired pupils are rarely together, having their own friends amongst their hearing classmates. Hearing impaired pupils are taught through a mix of specialist withdrawal work and extensive in-class support.

44. All hearing impaired pupils make use of amplification equipment and staff are carefully to check it regularly. The teaching of pupils with hearing impairment is good overall and sometimes very good. Pupils work as much as possible within their mainstream class, often with support from either a specialist teacher or a learning support assistant trained in sign language. In their mainstream classes the teaching of the hearing impaired pupils is good overall. All members of staff are very aware of the need to promote actively their full involvement in all class activities and make a point of inviting their contributions to whole-class discussions. However, sometimes tasks are not sufficiently adapted for pupils to be able to complete them without adult support.
45. Within the department pupils receive specialist support on aspects of the curriculum they have found difficult or that staff have identified they will find hard. Where possible the work covered matches closely the essential elements of the tasks being learned by their classmates. For example, during the inspection a lesson in the department made use of the same 'big book', a large group reading book that was being used in one of the mainstream classes. In addition they follow individually tailored language and communication programmes that extend their expressive and receptive language skills very well. Teaching in the department is good and often very good. The curriculum for pupils with hearing impairment is good overall. Planning is very good and addresses the individual needs of pupils closely. Very good use is made of ongoing assessments to enable pupils to progress.
46. The department is well managed and the teacher-in-charge and her team work closely and very effectively. The teacher-in-charge is keen that the department makes a full contribution to the life of the whole school. This is a valuable feature that is very effective in promoting the integration of pupils with hearing impairment into the hearing world. At the last inspection the hearing impaired department was judged to be excellent. This inspection has found the department to be making good provision for its pupils. The department is managed as well as previously and staff work equally well to care for pupils and help them learn. However, the increasing proportion of pupils with learning and medical needs, in addition to their hearing impairment, has had an impact on overall achievement. Staff have not received sufficient training to help them provide appropriately for these needs.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

47. Provision is good in Reception. Children start school during the term of their fifth birthday. During the inspection there were eight full-time children who had been at school a term, and eleven children attending mornings only who had been at school for two weeks. No children have special educational needs. Children enter school with a wide range of attainment but overall this is broadly average for all areas of learning. About half the children have attended the nearby nursery school, but a few have little or no pre-school experience. The majority of summer born children, and those with little pre-school experience have insufficient time to meet the nationally agreed early learning goals by the time they move to Year 1.
48. Provision is well managed by the teacher and children's progress is carefully monitored. Children achieve well because the teaching is good and the good curriculum provides a wide range of challenging, and stimulating activities. The teacher provides an appropriate outdoor curriculum, but has to be creative in her planning to achieve this as the designated outdoor area is not visible from the reception class windows and has no shelter or shade. It is neither completely fenced nor gated because it provides through access between the road and the playground. This means valuable resources cannot be left unattended, nor can it be used as a natural extension to the classroom. All adults manage the children very well. Parents are supportive of the school and many come in regularly to help. The provision for this stage of education has improved well since the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children achieve very well because there is a high expectation that they will be polite and cooperative and respect each other and their classroom.
- There is a strong pastoral curriculum that develops children's skills in this aspect.
- Two Reception children sit on the school council.

Commentary

49. The teacher and classroom assistant ensure that the environment provided and the ethos of the class helps the children quickly learn the correct way to behave. For example, although some children had only been in school for a few weeks they were encouraged to tidy away the bricks by stacking rather than throwing them in the box. Children were noted lining up sensibly and joining in school assemblies and asking politely for help to zip up their anoraks. Children are taught to take responsibility, such as taking registers to the office or sitting on the school council. The teacher provides a good balance of directed and self-chosen activities and there is an air of peaceful harmony at all times in the classroom. Apart from the incidental and ongoing teaching in this area, there is strong curriculum provision. For example, a story about a new baby was used well to encourage children to talk about their own feelings and relationships. There are regular opportunities for children to sit in a circle and discuss their experiences and attitudes, such as what makes them happy or sad. This is well extended to enable them to recognise non-verbal communication by drawing happy or sad faces. Approximately half the class met or exceeded the early learning goal for this area last summer. A similar proportion are on track to do so by the end of this year.

COMMUNICATION LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Early reading and writing skills are taught systematically and well.
- Very good ongoing assessment is used well to plan future teaching.
- ICT is well used to reinforce sound recognition.
- Books are regularly taken home to share with parents and carers.

Commentary

50. The key to children's good achievement is very good ongoing assessment, which pinpoints each child's needs and sets future targets for them. The experienced teacher has very good knowledge and understanding of how to teach the basic skills and uses methods that interest children.
51. The development of reading skills has a high priority and is well linked to developing writing skills. Most lessons include learning the sounds letters make and how to write the letter shapes correctly. One very good lesson was seen where the teacher focused on helping children to hear the starting and final sounds of words through using rhymes with repeated patterns. Children then practised matching the correct starting sounds with pictures on a computer program. Children take home books from the school library and a reading scheme to share with parents and regularly read individually to an adult at school, which helps them achieve well. Children develop their speaking and listening skills well through the many opportunities including role-play, for example, in the class post office. About a quarter of children met or exceeded the early learning goal for this area last summer. A similar proportion are on track to do so by the end of this year.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good emphasis on understanding concepts through practical methods, including ICT.
- Teaching is well matched to pupils' prior attainment which enables children to achieve well.

Commentary

52. Teaching and learning are good and children achieve well because they are interested. The teacher keeps a careful note of each pupil's attainment and uses this knowledge well to plan lessons. Adults take every opportunity to develop the children's mathematical skills and particularly the development of mathematical language. During the inspection for example, the well-deployed teaching assistant focused very clearly on developing knowledge of shape names in a printing session using different shaped articles and paint. Children working with the class teacher achieved very well when playing a skipping game around a variety of plastic shapes on the playground, and stopping to find the correct shape from a description of its properties when the tambourine was struck. Information and communication technology full at the beginning of a sentence is well used. For example, children play a computer shape game with the sound commentary reinforcing the shape names. Children gain a good appreciation of comparative length and weight through practical methods such as measuring their toys with plastic cubes and weighing scissors and pencils to find out which is heavier. Although no sessions where children learnt about the number system were seen, work in children's workbooks shows the majority of children at school for a term can count accurately

to 5, write these numbers correctly and are starting to add and subtract. Approximately a third of children met or exceeded the early learning goal for this area last July. A similar proportion are on track to do so by the end of this year.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

53. It is not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards in this wide area of learning, but the work seen was good. In a short session during the inspection, children learnt a lot from a visitor about how a bicycle works through close observation and asking questions. The curriculum is good. For example, children visited Wendover woods last term to learn about autumn and planted bulbs in the school garden. Festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year are celebrated which give children a perspective of other cultures' beliefs. They have many opportunities to use the computer and children in school for one term were confidently using the mouse to access tools and to drag and drop images. Approximately half the class met or exceeded the early learning goal for this area last year. The school estimates similar proportion are expected to do so by the end of this year.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

54. It was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards and no teaching was seen. However, there is a satisfactory curriculum using the school hall for physical education sessions and regular access to outside wheeled vehicles and other apparatus for developing physically. Indoors, children develop their manipulative skills by using construction equipment, using scissors and playing with small toys. Last summer the majority of the class met or exceeded this early learning goal and are expected to do so this year. Although there are limitations to what can be planned outside this does not appear to have a detrimental impact on standards.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

55. It was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards. In the short music session observed children who had been in school for a term sang a variety of songs with actions and played percussion instruments confidently showing similar standards that match those expected for children's age. Last summer about half the class met or exceeded the early learning goal for this area and a similar proportion are expected to do so this year.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective planning promotes good teaching and learning.
- Literacy skills are taught well across the curriculum.
- Pupils are keen to learn and have very good attitudes to this subject.
- Effective assessment procedures are used and enable teachers to respond well to pupils' individual needs.
- The termly enrolment of children in Reception means that development of language and literacy skills are slowed in Years 1 and 2 especially in writing, although speaking and listening skills and reading are better developed.

Commentary

56. Pupils' results in English by the end of Year 2 in the 2003 national tests were well below average. However, this was not typical and standards were higher in previous years. These low results were due to a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the group taking the tests and the long-term absence of the teacher. The inspection found that all pupils achieve well and standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and would probably be higher but for the slow start in Reception. The strongest aspects of English are pupils' high confidence in speaking, their good levels of attentiveness in lessons and good reading skills. The development of knowledge about the sounds that letters make is strong in Year 1 and 2 and this is effective in enabling pupils to tackle unfamiliar text. It is the development of writing which is slower and is being addressed through various initiatives this year, such as improving writing for different purposes in other subjects. However, the lack of experience of those pupils who only spent part of the year in Reception, sometimes as little as 12 weeks, means that in Years 1 and 2 there is a lot of ground for pupils to cover in developing their English skills.
57. By the end of Year 6 pupils achieved average results in the national tests in 2003 although standards have been higher than this in the past. Educational value added was satisfactory but was higher in previous years. In recent times the school has had a significant turnover of teachers and this has negative impact on standards overall. With a more settled staff, standards are rising. The positive impact of a new co-ordinator who is also the deputy headteacher has been significant and has improved standards. Teachers use assessment procedures more effectively to inform their planning and work is pitched much more accurately to pupils' needs. This means that pupils make good achievement including those from minority ethnic backgrounds and with English as an additional language as well as those with special educational needs. Much of the time pupils from the hearing impaired department effectively study English in their group setting. When they are in mainstream classes they are well supported and achieve well. The setting or grouping of pupils according to ability is proving successful and has helped the development of the subject. The inspection found that pupils are achieving above average standards in Years 3 to 6 overall, although the weakest area remains writing. There has been a good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils are confident speakers, listen attentively in lessons and with understanding. In one very good Year 4 lesson for example, pupils compared the translation of a Maori poem with one from Singapore and cultural differences were identified and discussed. Pupils read well and the higher-attainers are reading books such as *The Lord of the Rings* by Year 6 and one pupil was able to make a considered comparison between the book and the film.
58. The comparison of this school with similar schools in English is unreliable, based as it is on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals. No hot meals are served at lunchtime and the take up of free school meals at 0.5 per cent is very low. Given a significant proportion of the intake comes from an area where there is some deprivation it seems likely that the percentage should be much higher and therefore the results should compare more favourably with similar schools. However, there is insufficient evidence to make a definitive judgement. The performance of boys in English over the years 2001 to 2003 in the Year 6 national tests was significantly better than girls. However, the inspection found little difference in performance.
59. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and the organisation of the combined Year 5/6 classes together with other withdrawal groups across the school helps to raise standards. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use the literacy element of the National Primary Strategy effectively in their teaching. The three part lesson organisation works well and teachers use the final or plenary session effectively to check what pupils have learned, enabling them to modify future planning to meet pupils' needs. In particular, the use of probing questioning during the course of lessons is effective and establishes pupils'

understanding of the work they are doing and helps take their learning forward. The use of the literacy framework gives the teaching a consistency across the school and expectations are high. Pupils effectively learn the structure of language and in a very good Year 2 lesson for example pupils learnt to make compound words such as 'lighthouse'. The structure of the literacy lessons and well advanced assessment procedures enable teachers effectively to pitch the level of work to challenge pupils of all abilities including those with special educational needs.

60. The subject is well managed by the deputy headteacher who has already made a positive impact on standards, which are rising. It is her close and effective monitoring of teaching and learning and sharpening up of assessment procedures that have made a strong contribution to this improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. This is good. The impact of the development of literacy skills means that pupils are able to express themselves well and understand and respond well in all subjects. The ability to communicate and good levels of speaking skills from an early age enable pupils to learn well. The use of commercial worksheets in some classes does not encourage pupils to develop extended writing skills.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good which enables most pupils to achieve well.
- There is a strong focus on numeracy and problem solving which leads to well above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Teachers in some classes in Years 3 to 6 do not sufficiently match the work to the needs of below average pupils and those with special educational needs to enable them to achieve as well as their peers in lessons.
- Boys considerably outperform girls by the test at the end of Year 6, but this was not evident in lessons.
- The other responsibilities of the subject co-ordinator mean that she is not able to be fully effective in her management of the subject.
- There has been a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

Commentary

62. During the inspection all lessons focused on numeracy and problem solving. There was insufficient evidence of achievement and attainment in other areas of the programme of study to comment.
63. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2. Many pupils have a limited experience in Reception due to the termly enrolment and are unable to cover sufficient ground to reach above average standards by the end of Year 2 as might be expected. Consequently the standards of the year group overall is average by the end of Year 2. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 3 to 6 and standards seen during the inspection were well above average at Year 6. The annual booster classes and teaching focus on attaining well in the national tests during the second half of the year are effective and pupils in Year 6 are on track to achieve well above average standards by the end of the year.

64. The trend in the last four years has been for boys to considerably outperform girls at the end of Year 6 and this year's projections show the trend continuing. Boys have moved from a position of underachievement to greatly exceeding national averages. The school has not identified or monitored this to find the cause and there was no indication in lessons during the inspection of why it is happening.
65. Last summer standards at the end of Year 2 dropped to well below average reversing the above average trend of previous three years. There were an unusually high percentage of pupils with special educational needs in the class, and, pupils were taught by a variety of supply teachers, due to ill health, which led to inaccurate predictions of how well pupils were achieving and a lack of teaching for higher-attaining pupils at an appropriate level.
66. Teaching is good overall and pupils learn well. In Years 1 and 2, teaching was very good and all groups of pupils achieved very well. Teaching had very good pace and teachers used well-chosen practical methods that kept pupils keen and interested. For example, Year 2 pupils fixed enlarged cardboard coins to a display purse to show the range of ways to make a certain sum of money. The teacher's very good knowledge of what pupils already knew enabled her to set an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils to make them think hard, but also to be successful. Information and communication technology is very well used in these classes. Pupils use a mathematical program several times a week, which automatically becomes more challenging as they progress.
67. In Years 3 to 6, teachers very effectively challenge pupils with the highest prior attainment, who work hard and achieve very well. Setting procedures are effective. However, both in class lessons and in sets, a few teachers have unrealistic expectations of those with special educational needs and those of lower prior attainment. Too often, these pupils are given work that is too difficult, and are not inspired by the methods that successfully motivate other pupils. Consequently, they do not achieve as well as their peers and often lose interest and concentration. In most lessons, teachers engage pupils' interest very effectively during starter activities and pupils learn very well during this part of the lesson. However, they do not manage the final or plenary sessions well enough and many pupils of all levels of prior attainment do not listen or participate sufficiently to add to their knowledge and understanding. There is little use of ICT within these lessons.
68. The teacher in charge of the hearing impaired department has recently become mathematics coordinator due a lack of experienced staff within the main school to take on the role. Although this is not ideal due to her already heavy workload, and she does not regularly teach mathematics, it is not yet having an adverse effect because the subject was left last term very well set up by the previous coordinator.
69. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen. The National Primary/Numeracy Strategy has been introduced and teachers have received good quality training. Assessment procedures and the use of assessment data have improved, although they are still not used well enough in Years 3 to 6 to match work to the needs of all groups of pupils.

Mathematics across the curriculum

70. Although the numeracy element of the National Primary Strategy has been implemented well in mathematics lessons, it has not been systematically planned in other subjects throughout the school. However, there are examples where mathematics is used well. For example, in science experiments, older pupils make accurate measurements of length and capacity and in geography they use four figure grid references in map work.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils achieve well and standards are above average.
- There is good emphasis on a practical approach to the subject.
- ICT is used effectively in the subject.
- Teachers' marking does not consistently contain comments to help pupils improve their work.

Commentary

71. Teacher assessment in the national tests of 2003 show pupils standards were well below average by the end of Year 2. However, this is not typical. The group taking the tests had a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and the long-term absence of the teacher due to illness had an adverse effect. Although pupils achieve well, the inspection found that standards are average in Years 1 and 2, as the pupils have much ground to make up from their limited experiences in Reception.
72. By the end of Year 6 in the national tests of 2003, pupils' results matched the national average. The inspection found that standards are better in class and in samples of pupils' work showed pupils achieving well. As a result of analysing the progress made by pupils, the school predicts that there will be a higher number that will reach the more demanding Level 5 standard in the national tests at the end of Year 6, leading to above average standards. The evidence from lessons and work sampling supports this prediction. This improvement is as a result of the good teaching and insistence on the correct use of technical vocabulary. No differences were observed between the achievement of boys and girls, and they achieve well, including those from minority ethnic groups. However, planning for some lessons does not always include realistic challenge for the lower-attaining and pupils with special educational needs.
73. In the lessons seen during the inspection, teaching was good. Teachers generally provide opportunities for pupils to carry out experiments, and design their own investigations. In a good lesson for pupils in Year 6 the teacher used a data projector to display a computer simulation of an experiment similar to the one the pupils had done in the earlier part of the lesson. This meant that the teacher used time effectively to extend pupils' understanding of the topic and challenged all pupils to modify the experiment by changing variables. There is good emphasis in all lessons on the correct use of specific vocabulary, which ensures that pupils fully understand scientific terms. The written work of younger pupils is sometimes too reliant on completing work sheets from commercial schemes, which do not always meet the needs of all ability ranges in the groups and does not extend their writing skills. Some of the written work by older pupils was not well presented and this makes their work less effective. Written work is marked regularly. Marking is always encouraging, but in most of the written work sampled during the inspection there were not enough comments to show pupils how to improve their work.
74. The science co-ordinator is a teacher in Reception who has good subject expertise. She manages the subject well, and has arranged for teachers in local secondary schools to give lessons. This gives pupils additional opportunities to extend their scientific knowledge with high quality specialist teaching. The co-ordinator analyses the results of the national tests, and assesses pupils' work in the subject. Teachers set targets for pupils based on their previous attainment. As a result, pupils are getting to know how to improve their standards. The use of ICT is being developed systematically and pupils have created flow charts to illustrate how to separate mixtures.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- The addition of a computer suite to the accommodation means that opportunities to develop ICT have improved.
- The subject is well managed by an effective manager.
- ICT is not used sufficiently in other subjects.

Commentary

75. At the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 the standards are average. This is similar to the picture at the last inspection. However, standards are rising swiftly as a result of the initiatives put in place by the co-ordinator. Pupils of all age groups achieve well in the subject. In Year 2 pupils use computers to 'paint' pictures in the style of Mondrian. They manipulate the mouse confidently and are beginning to use the keyboard with increasing speed. Pupils in this age group save and retrieve their work and some know how to print it. Pupils in the current Year 5/6 class produce multi-media presentations that add pictures and sounds to work that they have written. These are then put into a 'slide-show'. Older pupils send and receive e-mails to pupils in other schools through the school website and this makes an effective contribution to their literacy skills. There is now more equipment available for pupils to develop their use of control techniques and sensing devices, for example, heat probes.
76. Teaching seen during the inspection was good. Lessons are well planned and pupils well managed; teachers' subject knowledge is good. Teaching assistants are closely involved in the planning of lessons. They help class teachers to manage the class and to support the pupils. In one lesson, an assistant with music qualifications took the lead in teaching pupils how to create a musical sequence using the computer. The pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and most work diligently and enthusiastically. The accommodation is good, and the computer suite is roomy so that staff can easily see the work that pupils are doing. The ratio of pupils to computers is in line with that recommended. The school has access to the Internet and has effective safeguards to prevent pupils being exposed to unsuitable material. A Year 2 teacher is in charge of this subject and manages it well. She has expertise and enthusiasm and has already begun to make an impact on standards. She is reviewing the scheme of work and is developing an effective assessment system so teachers have a clearer idea of the achievement of pupils. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

77. The co-ordinator supports other teachers and helps less experienced colleagues to gain confidence. As a result, more teachers are now developing the use of ICT in other subjects. Not enough use was seen of ICT outside the direct teaching sessions in the ICT suite. Work is word-processed in English and history and pupils have created flow charts in science. In lessons, teachers take opportunities to make links with other subjects, for example, art and design and music. However, this is not yet consistent throughout the school and is an area that would benefit from further development.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY

78. Only one lesson was seen so no judgment can be made of overall provision and standards. Teachers' planning, the school's photographic record, work on display and in pupils' books were analysed. Map work, and environmental studies based on first hand experiences is a strong curriculum element.
79. Pupils achieved very well in the Year 5/6 lesson due to good teaching methods and their own very good application and interest. Small groups who had researched different mountain ranges over the previous few weeks, using a variety of sources, made good quality presentations to the class, showing they had acquired a very good depth of knowledge.
80. Practical map work is effective and pupils are given valuable first-hand experiences for example, following the proposed route for the Aylesbury bypass in the minibus. The environmental implications were then considered. Other useful practical work include a residential visit to Bristol, day trip to France, as well as visits to sites such as the Thames Barrier are used very well as a base for pupils' geographical learning. Visits enhance the curriculum very well for older pupils.
81. The headteacher and his deputy are currently acting as geography co-ordinators due a lack of experienced staff to take on the role. While they manage it effectively, they have insufficient time to play a strong leadership role. This is not yet impacting negatively, however, as the subject was left in a well organised state by the previous coordinator.

HISTORY

82. No lessons were seen and no overall judgment can be made about provision and standards achieved. Work on display, pupils' books, teachers' planning and the school's photographic record were studied. There is a lively curriculum, which interests pupils.
83. The curriculum is based on first hand experiences whenever possible which captures pupils' imagination and gives them a good depth of knowledge. Pupils take part in a range of workshops during Roman, Tudor and Victorian theme days, which give them a real appreciation of everyday life of the period. The school's minibus is used to take pupils to interesting local sites such as Aylesbury museum and the Rothschild Houses. Older pupils use digital photography effectively to compare buildings from different historical periods in the locality. Pupils strengthen their literacy development well by using the Internet and CD ROMs for research and recording their findings in a wide variety of styles. The curriculum enhances pupils' social and moral development well. For example, they discuss what leads people to hold different points of view, such as the rich and poor in Victorian times.
84. The headteacher and his deputy are currently acting as history co-ordinators due a lack of experienced staff to take on the role. While they manage it effectively, they have insufficient time to play a strong leadership role. However, the subject was well organised by the previous coordinator and this means good practice is being followed this year. They have identified a need to catalogue and store resources so they can be easily accessed for different topics.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Religious education continues to be well taught and enjoyed within the school, as at the previous inspection.
- Teachers make use of a broad range of strategies to engage pupils' interest.
- Limited use is made of opportunities to develop extended writing skills.
- Assessment systems are not fully established.

Commentary

85. Standards attained at least match those expected by the locally agreed syllabus and pupils achieve well. Standards reported at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.
86. The quality of teaching was good overall. Analysis of work and discussions with pupils indicate that pupils reach at least average standards. Teachers use a range of strategies to engage the interest of pupils. Those observed during the inspection include the use of videoed stories and of role-play, as well as whole-class discussion. For example, pupils in Year 4 worked in groups to consider the thoughts and feelings of different people at the Last Supper in order to develop their understanding of aspects of the Christian faith. As a result the pupils involved showed great enthusiasm and interest in the story.
87. Pupils' work demonstrates a broad and balanced programme of learning in the subject, which gives them knowledge and understanding of several world religions as well as encouraging them to reflect on their personal views and beliefs. However, the work scrutiny also demonstrated that limited opportunities are provided to develop pupils' extended writing skills. Chances are missed to reinforce and make use of skills learned in literacy. Assessment systems are not fully established and therefore information is not used to inform teaching. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory, but the co-ordinator has not been able to monitor the teaching and standards in the subject to help to raise achievement.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

88. There is too little evidence to make an overall judgement about the quality of the provision and teaching and learning. Few lessons were seen and the records of pupils' past work are insufficient to judge standards. One or two areas mentioned in the last inspection such as the lack of a scheme of work have been remedied, but in other respects, for example, assessment procedures, there has been no improvement. The headteacher is the co-ordinator. Although he is knowledgeable and enthusiastic he has too little time to develop the subject. The scheme of work has not been analysed to see how the material it contains can be used to ensure that pupils develop the skills of working with a wider range of tools and materials as they move through the school. In one of the lessons seen, Year 5/6 pupils were using the same techniques, cutting and simple stitching, that pupils in Year 2 use. They have positive attitudes to the subject and enjoy lessons. The resources for the subject are satisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

89. No lessons were seen and so no overall judgment can be made about the quality of teaching and learning and standards overall. The subject is jointly co-ordinated by the headteacher and his deputy until it can be suitably allocated to another member of staff. They are keen to

ensure that the high quality provision identified in the previous inspection is maintained. Certainly there is high quality work in evidence around the school and good photographic evidence from past work as well as folders of pupils' paintings and collages for assessment purposes. Pupils use sketch books effectively to draft out pictures. A wide range of materials is used, for example Year 2 made an effective collage of leaves out of felt in Year 2. Art and design is well used to support other subjects and there are examples of aboriginal art, Ancient Egyptian art, and art throughout history. There are good examples of pupils effectively using perspective in drawings and paintings of street scenes in Year 5/6. Three-dimensional art is represented and pupils in Year 5/6, for example made high quality action figures in wire, coated with plaster of Paris bandages and painted silver or gold. These show a good understanding of anatomical movement. Pupils use ICT effectively in art including painting programs using the computer and a digital camera. In Year 2, for example they produced effective pictures in the style of Mondrian.

MUSIC

Provision for music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Music-making is enjoyed by all members of the school community.
- Pupils concentrate and behave well in whole-school singing practices, with the result that pupils achieve well and standards attained are good. Members of the school sing together enthusiastically and in tune.
- The enthusiasm of all staff encourages pupils to aim high.
- A comprehensive scheme of work is effective.
- The music curriculum is enriched by a broad range of instrumental provision.

Commentary

90. Standards overall exceed expectations for pupils' age by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 but are better than those seen in many schools. Standards attained in whole-school singing are good and pupils achieve well overall.
91. Teaching in music is good and leads to good learning for all pupils. The strengths of teaching are teachers' enthusiasm led by good subject knowledge from the joint co-ordinators, an effective curriculum that is simple for non-specialists to follow and high expectations. These lead to pupils' knowledge and skills being developed in a progressive way that builds on previous learning. Music makes a very good contribution to the sense of community in the school.
92. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good. The curriculum is enriched through a broad range of extra-curricular activities. Instrumental tuition is available for recorders, violin, brass, woodwind and guitar and more than a quarter of the pupils take up these opportunities. The school also arranges voice tuition for pupils who show promise. There are opportunities for pupils to sing in school productions and the singing club, as well as performances such as carol singing in the shopping centre at Christmas. During the inspection pupils participated in the wind band, achieving a good standard.
93. Assessment procedures for music are good. As well as an annual piece of assessed work to be included in pupils' general assessment books, pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own performances throughout the year with videos and audio tapes made of their own performances. This is very effective in helping pupils understand what they need to do to improve.

94. The music provision is also used very well as a vehicle for integrating pupils from the hearing impaired department. Often whole-school singing is signed, using the sign language for the hearing impaired. The school signing club have performed signed concerts in such places as a local residential home. In addition, the music department undertakes work based around the 'audio-rhythmic training' programme to facilitate the access to music for pupils with hearing impairment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a long-standing tradition of encouraging sports and sporting activities both in lessons and out side of school hours. It is due to receive an 'Active Mark Award' for its endeavours.
- It participates in many sporting events and is successful at them.
- Skills are well developed across the school.
- The very enthusiastic co-ordinator is the driving force behind the strong provision.

Commentary

95. Regardless of background all pupils achieve well, and standards are above average. This includes those from the hearing impaired department, who are fully included in all activities. The school benefits from the excellent input of a specialist teacher from the local secondary school who acts as a role model to teachers by taking demonstration lessons. By invitation, she helps the subject co-ordinator effectively to develop the curriculum and subject planning. A full range of activities is taught including gymnastics, athletics, swimming, football and tag-rugby.
96. Standards of teaching are good, and sometimes very good across the school; they are good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge. In most lessons teachers keep the pupils active. In the most effective lessons teachers make pupils aware of their bodies' reaction to exercise. In all lessons pupils are encouraged to warm up at the beginning and cool down at the end of sessions. In the majority of lessons teachers organise pupils well. Much constructive individual and group work takes place that concentrates on high quality movement and sequences of skills development. In a very good Year 1 lesson, for example, the teacher demonstrated very well, to show pupils various balancing movements in floor work on mats. The pupils showed good spatial awareness as they moved around the hall quickly to warm up. They jumped well, landing softly and bending their knees. They were mobile and well-coordinated and followed instructions carefully. When working on mats they balanced well and held various complex shapes effectively. In a very good Year 5/6 lesson, the teacher very effectively developed pupils' work on apparatus, encouraging them to complete a sequence of movement with a defined beginning, middle, and end leading to a very well finished set of movements. Particularly effective was the very high quality collaboration shown between groups of three or four pupils. In one less effective Year 5/6 tag rugby lesson, the teacher did not organise the lesson into small enough groups to enable pupils to keep sufficiently active. This was particularly important on a winter's day, although they were encouraged to run on the spot to keep warm. In all lessons, pupils were enthusiastic and listened carefully to instructions and took due care to move about the hall and playing field with an awareness of others. Even the youngest pupils took care moving apparatus efficiently and safely.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

97. Insufficient lessons were seen on these specific aspects of the curriculum, so no overall judgement can be made about provision or standards. The school is however aware of their importance and suitably planned arrangements are made. For example, there are good opportunities for pupils to discuss their feelings and reflect on their own circumstances during lessons and assemblies. The school's strong caring ethos encourages pupils to be reflective and caring of others and they are polite and courteous in and around school. The personal development programme covers the dangers of drugs and has a sensitive approach to sex education. The school strongly recognises the importance of the individual and his or her place in the school through its very strong ethos. Pupils' achievements are celebrated in assemblies. The very strong relationships between all adults and pupils help pupils to develop a strong sense of self-esteem. They are given good opportunities to take responsibility. The school council gives pupils a meaningful role and makes a good contribution to developing concepts of citizenship and helping others.

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	2
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	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
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	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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