

INSPECTION REPORT

SYWELL CE (A) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Sywell, near Northampton

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122030

Headteacher: Mrs J Watson

Lead inspector: Mr N Sherman

Dates of inspection: 17-20 May 2004

Inspection number: 258080

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4- 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	101
School address:	Overstone Road Sywell Northants
Postcode:	NN6 OAW
Telephone number:	01604 644565
Fax number:	01604 644565
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Tebbut
Date of previous inspection:	15 June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sywell CE Aided Primary School is situated in the village of Sywell close to the city of Northampton. Around half the pupils live in the village and others travel to the school from villages close by and the Eastern district of Northampton. Despite the school's size, it experiences a high degree of turnover of pupils in Year 3 to 6. There are few pupils from ethnic minority groups and the school has a smaller than average number of pupils with English as an additional language. No pupil is at the early stage of learning English. The number of pupils who claim free school meals is below average. Seven per cent of the pupils have special educational needs, a proportion that is below average. The number of pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs is below average. Attainment on entry varies from year to year because the cohorts are small and the presence or absence of particularly gifted pupils or those with significant special educational needs can affect the overall standard; it is above average overall.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16493	Mr N Sherman	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Information and communication technology Music Physical education
19320	Mrs B Attaway	Lay inspector	
1963	Mrs S Raychaudhuri	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language English Science Art and design Design and technology Geography History

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a good education and gives good value for money, Children get a good start to their education in the Reception year and by the time pupils leave the school they attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. The pupils work hard in lessons, like school, and behave well. The school is well led and managed, although some aspects of how the school monitors teaching are not fully effective.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is good but the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged in writing and science in Years 1 and 2.
- The headteacher accomplishes a successful balance between her teaching commitments and her leadership of the school, although the monitoring of teaching is not always effective.
- The pupils develop very positive attitudes to their learning in response to the very effective way in which the school promotes their spiritual, social and moral development.
- The curriculum for pupils is well planned and complemented by the extensive range of extra-curricular activities; however, insufficient use is made of information and communication technology in different subjects.
- The school promotes very effective links with parents which account in part for the very high levels of attendance.

The improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Most of the key issues have been successfully tackled. Schemes of work to assist teachers to plan pupils' learning in all subjects have been successfully implemented. The school improvement plan now has clear cost analysis and the part the co-ordinators play in the school's management is considerably strengthened. Raising standards in writing continues to be an area of school improvement.

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*	A	C	D
mathematics	A	B	C	E
science	B	B	D	E

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

Achievement is good overall. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well and exceed the goals expected of them by the time they start in Year 1. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall, and good in reading. Standards by Year 2 are above average in reading and average in mathematics. The school has acted effectively to improve standards in writing. Standards of writing in Years 1 and 2 are improving and are average overall but the more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The school has also taken action but with less success to improve standards in science in Years 1 and 2, which although improving are still below average. Achievement in Years 3 and 6 is good, reflecting challenging teaching and an enriching curriculum. Pupils' standards in Year 6 are better than the 2003 National Curriculum test results indicate. The results in 2003 fell because a higher than usual number of pupils had special educational needs and many did not attain the levels expected for their ages. Current standards in Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. Pupils concentrate well in lessons. As well as being polite and

courteous, they participate fully and eagerly in the extra-curricular life of the school. School assemblies are of a very high quality and make a valuable contribution to promoting a strong sense of community. Attendance is well above the national average and the punctuality of pupils is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Overall, the school provides the pupils with a good quality of education, although there are a few shortcomings in Years 1 and 2. **Teaching is good overall.** It is sometimes very good in the Foundation Stage and Years 3 to 6. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is satisfactory. The more able pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not always challenged sufficiently in writing and science. The curriculum is good overall and complemented very well by the extensive and interesting range of after school activities. Currently, insufficient use is made of computers to extend pupils' learning. The pupils receive a high level of care. The teachers and members of the support staff know the children well as individuals. The school is very effective in developing links with parents and it enjoys the good level of support it receives in return. Clear-cut links with the local church and nearby secondary schools successfully broaden pupils' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is effectively led and managed. The headteacher is very successful in promoting a strong team spirit and she successfully balances her teaching and managerial responsibilities. The role of the co-ordinator is well developed and ways to monitor teaching and learning are suitably embedded into the school's day-to-day management; however, this work has not been sufficiently rigorous in tackling shortcomings in some areas of pupils learning in Years 1 and 2. Governance of the school is good and the governing body effectively carries out its statutory responsibilities.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise the achievement of higher-attaining pupils in writing and science in Years 1 and 2;
- ensure that the monitoring of teaching and learning is more robust;
- build on the recent work in information and communication technology to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to use computers in different subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is good overall. The pupils' in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6 are achieving well. Current standards in Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 where pupils of average ability and those who are less able generally do well. However, the more able pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not always challenged by the teaching in writing and science and could do better.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children achieve well in the Foundation Stage and are well prepared to enter Year 1.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well in reading, where standards are above average, and they achieve satisfactorily in mathematics, and speaking and listening; however, higher-attaining pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable of in writing and science.
- Overall achievement in Years 3 to 6 is good.

Commentary

1. From a generally above average starting point, the children in the Reception class achieve well and exceed the expected standards for their age in all areas of their learning. Children achieve well because teaching is frequently good and the good knowledge and understanding that their teacher and learning support assistant have of the children. Consequently, they undertake work that is challenging and in a learning environment that is attractive and where they receive a high quality of care.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.4 (15.9)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.5 (14.7)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.0 (16.7)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 16 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall. The higher-attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well in reading and in speaking and listening but do not achieve as well as they should in writing and in science. This lower level of achievement in writing and science is due to the lack of challenge in the work pupils are given. The school has put into place measures to tackle these shortcomings and the early data from the 2004 National Curriculum tests in Year 2 is pointing towards a larger number of pupils exceeding national expectations in both writing and science. Standards in speaking and listening and reading are above average in Years 1 and 2. In writing and mathematics, standards are average. In science, standards in Years 1 and 2 are below average.
3. The pace of pupils' progress quickens in Years 3 to 6, where the quality of teaching and learning is frequently good. As the table below indicates, the pupils performed less well in the National Curriculum tests for 2003 than in the previous year, mainly because the group had a large number of pupils with special educational needs. As a result, the school's performance in the tests was lower compared to that of previous years. In addition, the pupils who join the school in Years 3 to 6 further distort the pattern of attainment from one year to the next. Inspection findings show that standards in Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science. Achievement is good overall. The achievement of pupils with special educational

needs is also good. This reflects the good support and guidance they receive in lessons enabling them to achieve as well as their classmates. The National Curriculum test data indicates that the boys have out-performed the girls in the tests over three years. This is mainly explained by a larger number of girls having special educational needs. Inspection evidence could find no other difference in attainment between boys or girls.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.4 (29.3)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	26.6 (27.9)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.1 (29.8)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 17 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- Pupils’ achievement is good in music and satisfactory in the other subjects inspected. In music, pupils make good progress in their singing and in their understanding of different musical styles and genres. Overall, achievement in information and communication technology is satisfactory. While pupils have a secure understanding of how to use certain computer programs such as word processing and graphics programs, they are not always sufficiently challenged to make full and creative use of spreadsheets or the computer language of ‘Logo’.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils’ attitudes and attendance are very good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, with notable strengths.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Behaviour overall is good and in Years 3 to 6 and in the Foundation Stage it is very good.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral and social development is very good.
- Pupils’ knowledge of living in a multi-cultural society is limited.

Commentary

- Overall, pupils have very good attitudes to learning. In the Foundation Stage, children are highly enthusiastic and greatly enjoy their learning. They work hard and are keen to succeed. Throughout the rest of the school the pupils’ enjoy learning and work hard to produce work that matches their ability. The pupils are highly committed to the school and this is demonstrated by the very high participation rates in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides.
- Behaviour is good overall and that demonstrated in The Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6 is very good because lessons inspire and motivate them and behavioural expectations are clearly defined. No pupil has been excluded during the reporting period. In the combined class of Year 1 and 2, pupils occasionally become a little restless because the pace of lessons sometimes slows. Nonetheless, in all classes, children are polite and helpful and treat each other as well as the adults who support them in their learning with courtesy and respect.
- The school has effective arrangements for dealing with any potential bullying. Very few incidents of bullying occur. Pupils are clear about what to do should bullying arise. Discussions with the pupils indicated that they know what the procedures are and would feel comfortable in approaching any adult at the school if they were to experience any aggressive behaviour.

8. Personal development is very good because many opportunities are created, especially for the oldest pupils. They suggest jobs, and even write job descriptions and plan rotas. This helps the efficient running of the school and prepares them very well for secondary school. Class responsibilities and encouragement to sing to the whole school raise confidence and self-esteem of younger pupils.
9. Spiritual development is very good because the school's strong Christian ethos permeates many aspects of school life. Pupils are provided with many opportunities for reflection and assemblies and the use of music during these makes a very positive contribution to the pupils' spiritual development. In worship the pupils demonstrate due reverence, bowing their heads and understanding well the significance of why a candle is being lit. Songs and hymns are sung with conviction and great feeling. Moral development, based on religious values, is very good. The pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong which is successfully reinforced through developing class rules each year. In lessons, pupils are given good opportunities to discuss and write about issues of a moral nature. These include, for example, writing letters of complaint about the impact of litter and the effect that this has on the local community.
10. The very good relationships contribute to the very good social development. This is an inclusive school. The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are well integrated. In the computer suite, the youngest pupils guide others sensitively in undertaking tasks. Older pupils act as hosts to senior citizens and the level of interaction is such that pupils develop well their understanding of how they can assist others in the local community. The popularity of the extra-curricular activities supports social development very well. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Through their day-to-day studies, pupils get good opportunities to learn about their local culture. However, provision to raise the pupils' understanding of living in a multi-cultural society is limited. Within religious education they learn about different faiths. While the pupils visit local churches and Peterborough Cathedral, very few visits are made to mosques, temples or synagogues.
11. Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection as a result of very good monitoring. Requests for holidays in term time are assessed individually and parents have responded very well to the tightening of permission; this success makes a good contribution to learning.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.4	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.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides the pupils with a good quality of education in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6; it is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in all other parts of the school. Good assessment arrangements have been developed by the school since the previous inspection, but not all teachers make crisp enough use of the information to ensure higher-attaining pupils are fully challenged. Care of the pupils is of a high quality and links with the parents and the local community have a strong influence on pupils' learning.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6 where pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy are taught well. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and

2, although higher-attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. Assessment is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of carefully organised play to enhance learning in the Foundation Stage.
- In Years 3 to 6, teachers successfully extend and challenge pupils who respond by working hard.
- In all classes, relationships with pupils are good and additional adult assistance is put to good use.
- All teachers make good use of the central communal overflow area for practical and other work.
- In Years 1 and 2, work planned for higher-attaining pupils does not always challenge them to produce their best work.
- Insufficient use is made of computers to promote learning in different subjects.

Commentary

12. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 to 6 are good and in Years 1 and 2 they are satisfactory. In Years 3 to 6, there is good teaching in English, mathematics, science and music. The teaching of information and communication technology is satisfactory across the school. Increasingly effective use is made of the computer suite to teach specific skills to pupils. However, there are missed opportunities. Year 6 pupils, for example, have a limited understanding of how spreadsheets can be used to broaden their learning of handling numerical data. Across the school, the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers regularly monitor the progress of these pupils and ensure that their learning is consistent with their individual education plans. This enables them to develop confidence and achieve success in relation to the targets they are set.
13. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good and characterised by the teacher's very good knowledge and understanding of how best to plan learning for young children and the high ambitions she has for the children to do well. Learning is carefully planned. Good use is made of more informal moments such as snack time. The effective teaching is balanced equally skilfully between activities that are teacher-led and opportunities for children to plan their own learning through play. Teaching has a good effect on the children's achievement. Assessment of progress is very good with the information being used well to guide and inform lesson planning.
14. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. Strong features in Years 1 and 2 include the use made of resources to help the pupils grasp new concepts. In one lesson, for example, the teacher gave pupils good scope to handle and explore three-dimensional shapes. Pupils successfully developed their understanding of concepts such as faces, edges and sides as a result. However, there are a number of shortcomings that limit the progress of some higher-attaining pupils in some aspects of their work. These include:
 - provision of work that is too similar in challenge to that for other pupils in the class;
 - expectations of what the pupils are capable of achieving being too low;
 - investigative work in science that is too structured and does not allow the pupils sufficient opportunities to follow their own lines of scientific enquiry.
15. In Years 3 to 6, teaching and learning are good. The teachers have a good understanding of the subjects that they teach and, in the main, care is taken to ensure that pupils are presented with work that matches their ability and enables them to achieve at their own particular level. Time is used well in lessons and the teachers explain work carefully to each of the year groups so that they know what is expected of them. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 effectively use concluding parts of lessons. This allows the pupils to share what they have learned with their classmates, helps them to gain confidence speaking to a wider audience, and gives the teacher insight into what pupils have achieved and what should be learnt next. While some

use in Years 3 to 6 is made of computers in classes and in the computer suite, in the main not enough use is made of computers in pupils' day-to-day learning in other subjects.

16. In all classes throughout the school, teachers make good use of the communal overflow area that is outside each of the class rooms. Pupils work sensibly when studying there, benefiting well from the good relationships that exist between the pupils and their teachers. In addition, good use is made of the additional assistance that other adults give. This includes that of learning support assistants and other members of the school community.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 26 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	3	13	10	0	0	0

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good for the Foundation Stage and good for Years 1 to 6. It is greatly enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The school is adequately staffed, has good level of learning resources and makes successful use of its somewhat limited accommodation.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All subjects are planned and taught systematically and there are good resources to support pupils' learning.
- There are effective links made between different subjects.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, helping them to achieve well by Year 6.
- Provision for personal, social and health education contributes effectively to pupils' social and moral development.
- Extra-curricular provision is a significant strength of the school, which extends pupils' interests and learning outside lessons.
- Although accommodation is quite limited, very effective use of it creates a stimulating learning environment for pupils.

Commentary

17. The curriculum in the Reception class is planned very effectively. All areas of learning are given strong emphasis and there is a particular focus on developing the children's communication, language and literacy.
18. The school has maintained its good curriculum since the previous inspection, and there is a significant improvement in enrichment opportunities. It is broad, well balanced with all subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal social and health education being planned and taught regularly. The provision for personal, social and health education has improved from satisfactory to good now. National guidance and commercially produced schemes of work are used well to support teachers' planning. The school offers its pupils many opportunities for reflection through assemblies, art and music. The legal requirement of a daily act of collective worship is effectively met.
19. Teachers devise good links between subjects and both literacy and numeracy are supported well throughout the school. All subjects provide good opportunities for speaking and listening, reading and writing. However, there is potential for greater use of information and communication technology in mathematics lessons.

20. Curriculum planning is good with a two-year rolling programme to meet the needs of mixed age classes. However, there is insufficient recognition of the needs of higher attaining pupils in planning in Years 1 and 2. Consequently, these pupils are not always stretched and challenged sufficiently. The school currently has a full complement of suitably qualified members of staff who are well deployed to make best use of their skills and experience. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by teaching assistants.
21. The pupils benefit from a wide range of clubs and activities during and after school hours and the participation rates in these are very high. Sporting activities are very much appreciated, giving pupils many chances to demonstrate and develop their skills and interests. These opportunities make a very significant contribution to students' learning and personal development. The very good range of visits and visitors to the school also enhance the curriculum and extend pupils' learning in a variety of ways.
22. Although accommodation is somewhat limited, it is used imaginatively, making the learning environment attractive with displays from different classes. Resources are of good quality and are well organised. Teachers make good use of them to help pupils in their learning, particularly in art and design. The school has developed its curriculum content in subjects such as geography and history to reflect the diverse cultures that exist in the wider society. However, there is scope for improvement in this aspect of the school to prepare its pupils for an ethnically and culturally diverse society.

Care, guidance and support

This is a very caring school where all staff value pupils as individuals. The pupils work and play in an environment where health and safety are priorities. Pupils have access to good levels of support and those who join the school at different times are inducted¹ well. Pupils' views about the school are sought and acted upon.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good relationships with adults throughout the school make the pupils feel secure.
- Health and safety procedures are very good.
- Academic assessment is not used effectively to challenge more able pupils in Years 1 and 2.

Commentary

23. Child protection procedures and arrangements for pupils' well being are very good. The school is working hard on a school travel plan to improve the safety of pupils who need to cross the road to access the school premises. Induction arrangements for the youngest children in the Reception class are highly regarded by parents. These arrangements ensure that the children settle in quickly to school and their increasing confidence motivates learning. Those who join later are equally well supported and settle in quickly. In the 'Sywell Star', an older pupil joining the school wrote, 'It was rather easy to make friends and it feels like I have been here ages'. The monitoring of behaviour is very good because the red card system provides an easy method of identifying problems. Incidents are dealt with promptly, fairly, consistently and effectively.
24. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is very good. Care is taken to ensure that the pupils receive at least one award annually and this raises their self-esteem. Individual personal and social plans detailing age related skills enable close monitoring and aid development. Academic assessment is used to challenge and raise achievement for higher-attaining pupils in Years 3 to 6 but its use is not always used effectively to raise the achievement of higher-attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2. Pupils are involved in setting their

¹ Induction refers to the arrangements for receiving pupils new to the school and helping them to settle and make friends.

learning and personal targets. They celebrate what they are good at and praise others who may have worked as hard but at a lower level.

25. Pupils know they can have a say in the school's work and development. They have contributed to discussions on the introduction of the school newspaper and how the playground should be organised. A pupil suggestion box is to be trialled and they are to be asked how ideas should be dealt with. A separate group of pupils for dealing with each suggestion is being considered so that more pupils have the opportunity to have a say in the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents has improved since the last inspection because two-way communication is stronger. It is now very good. Links with the local parish church continue to be strong, but links with local businesses remain underdeveloped.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive and this enhances pupils' learning.
- Many parents and members of the local community help in school.
- Links with the local community are good overall.

Commentary

26. As at the last inspection, the weekly newsletters continue to keep parents well informed of school life. Parents are very supportive of consultation evenings and the newly introduced practice of sending a questionnaire beforehand is enabling consultations to be more focused; this supports the pupils. Questions explore what their children say about school and feedback from parents has been positive. Parents' views are invited on specific questions such as the residential visits and road safety and such initiatives help to strengthen the very good links with parents.
27. Reading diaries are used effectively for two-way communication and are appreciated by parents. Homework diaries enable parents of older children to know what homework is set. The detailed advice parents receive on how to help at home with reading, spelling and multiplication tables is supportive. Curriculum information is sent termly to parents, but in the main this lacks sufficient detail. For example, in design and technology the information may simply state, 'Playgrounds'. Parents suggest that they would find additional information helpful in supporting their children's learning.
28. Pupils' annual reports are good, showing improvement since the last inspection. They give helpful information on what the pupils have learned and achieved during the course of an academic year. The sharing of targets is to be reintroduced so that parents will know when a set target has been achieved and how well their child is progressing.
29. Parents and members of the community willingly offer their time to assist, for example, with information and communication technology, art and reading. The 'Friends of Sywell School' (FOSS) is very active and provides appreciated resources which benefit all of the pupils, such as library books and the new shed for storing equipment.
30. Links with the local parish church are very good and the good links with the local secondary school and the local playgroup enable smooth transition. The school has established good links with University College Northampton. Senior citizens continue to join the school for harvest, tea parties and concerts; this strengthens community relationships. A local supermarket offers useful support by donating refreshments for school trips. The school has tried hard, but with little success, to gain support from other local companies.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides a clear educational lead and she is well supported by other teachers and the school's governors. The school is an orderly and well managed community. Monitoring of teaching is regular but insufficiently robust in tackling areas where the higher-attaining pupils perform less well. Governance of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher effectively combines her teaching and leadership responsibilities.
- There is a strong sense of teamwork and co-ordinators undertake well the duties asked of them.
- The school improvement plan successfully draws on information gained from assessing pupils' progress to plan improvements.
- There is effective governance of the school and governors work well with the headteacher and the teachers.
- Monitoring of the teaching and learning is not always rigorous enough.

Commentary

31. The headteacher provides the school with a clear sense of educational direction and has a good understanding of what the school does well and what aspects of school life still need to be strengthened. She has very effective inter-personal skills and all associated with the school attest to the warm yet purposeful team spirit that the headteacher has engendered. This strong emphasis on teamwork has helped the headteacher gain the full support and trust of all who work in the school as well as governors and parents. The headteacher effectively combines her teaching and leadership responsibilities and the school's ethos helps to ensure that its stated aims in respect of inclusion are sufficiently met.
32. While the role of the co-ordinator is much improved since the previous inspection, there are shortcomings in the overall effectiveness of how the school monitors and uses information to measure improvements in some pupils' learning. The teachers carry out their roles and responsibilities enthusiastically. Although the school has fewer than average numbers of pupils with special educational needs, arrangements for overseeing provision are secure. During the academic year, each co-ordinator has non-teaching time to enable them to gauge for themselves teaching and learning in their subjects and, in the main, they have a good idea of the standards that pupils are attaining. However, while support has been provided to raise the quality of teaching of science and writing in Years 1 and 2, this progress has been too slow. National Curriculum tests results have indicated that higher-attaining pupils have not been achieving as well as they could in these aspects. The headteacher has put initiatives into place to tackle this issue and they are showing early signs of success. Inspection evidence for the pupils in Year 2 points to a more positive and improving picture with regards to the progress of the pupils concerned.
33. The school improvement plan is a clear working document and an improvement since the last inspection. The plan is drafted after full and frank discussion with the governing body and it provides a clear rationale for school improvement. The school is aware of the need, for example, to improve the performance of pupils in writing and the plan is clear about the steps to be taken to lift the pupils' performance in this aspect of literacy development. The arrangements for performance management are good and currently rooted in raising standards in pupils' writing. Planned developments and improvements are carefully analysed for cost and the plan is regularly reviewed to gauge the success of initiatives.
34. The governance of the school is good. The governing body carries out its statutory duties effectively and provides well-targeted support. Although the school has few pupils from minority ethnic groups, governors have developed a clear policy for racial equality that outlines

provision in this aspect. Some of the governors are able to work in classrooms and this, coupled with arrangements for them to work alongside teachers supporting aspects of provision such as special educational needs, enables them to have a clear overview of the school's performance. The headteacher ensures that they are kept fully informed with school events. The governing body's committee structure is such that they are fully able to play a part in the school's strategic development. The governors are successful in acting as a 'critical friend' to the school.

35. The school makes careful use of all the funds that are available to it. There is prudent, good quality financial planning by the headteacher and governors. However, arrangements to ensure that the effect of spending decisions is measured in terms of impact on pupils' achievements are at an early stage of development. There are satisfactory procedures to enable the school to get the best value from any goods or services purchased.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	242,749
Total expenditure	253,555
Expenditure per pupil	2,535

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	25,200
Balance carried forward to the next	14,394

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

36. The overall provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Teaching and learning are good overall. Children settle well into school life. They are well prepared for their learning in Years 1 and 2. Overall, the substantial majority are on course to attain or exceed the early learning goals in all areas of learning by the time they leave the Reception class.
37. Children's attainment when they start at the school covers the full range. This can vary each year due to the small size of the cohort but is generally above average. At the time of the inspection, there were 14 children in the Reception class, taught by one teacher and a part-time support assistant. There is good leadership and management of the Foundation Stage. The teacher has a very good understanding of the needs of young children and ensures that they learn through play. Assessment arrangements are very good and the detailed notes that are kept are used well to plan the next steps in their learning. The co-ordinator has successfully developed ways to ensure that the children are settled quickly into school and these arrangements are smooth and unobtrusive. Links with the parents are very good. Some parents work in the classrooms and they are given good information about how best they can support day-to-day learning. Many parents contribute well to the home-to-school reading diaries and are very proactive, for example, in hearing their children read. Such support has a positive impact on the children's progress and helps to establish a close relationship between the school and the home.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children settle quickly into school and co-operate well with one another.
- Relationships are very good and the children quickly learn the school's expectations in terms of behaviour.
- Children demonstrate good skills in being able to work independently of the teacher.

Commentary

38. By the time children leave the Reception class, they are on course to exceed the early learning goals in this area of their learning. Achievement is good as is the quality of teaching. From when they first start in Reception, the children are given good scope to work with one another and to develop their understanding of using and sharing resources openly and fairly. The children successfully demonstrate these skills and, as a result, develop very positive relationships with one another. Good opportunities are given for sharing learning with one another at the end of lessons and this develops the children's interest in what their classmates have achieved. Children are highly motivated and they are given good opportunities to work independently of the teacher on the work they are set. They do so ably and only rarely seek out the assistance of an adult to assist them in their work. Behaviour is very good. By the time they leave the Reception class, children have a good understanding for their age of how their behaviour can affect the well being of others.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching successfully promotes the children's skills in speaking and listening, reading and early writing.
- Imaginative use is made of structured play to promote speaking and listening skills.
- Home to school diaries ensure parents can play a full part in the children's reading development.
- Regular assessment of the children's progress provides the teacher with a clear idea of children's achievements.

Commentary

39. The children achieve well and exceed the expected early learning goals in this aspect of their learning by the time they leave the Reception class. Teaching is good and the children are provided with many rich and interesting activities that successfully promote their ability to use their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. At frequent intervals, the children are assessed in relation to the progress that they make in the development of their early literacy skills. The information that is gained is used to good effect by the teacher as she uses it to plan the most appropriate learning that would move the children further on in their ability to use and understand language.
40. By the time the children leave the Reception class, many of them are confident readers who understand terms such as 'author' and 'illustrator'. Higher-attaining children read confidently and explain well what the story they may be reading is about and how they think it may unfold. The teacher has forged strong links with the parents, many of whom contribute frequently and effectively in terms of the comments they add to the children's home-to-school reading diaries and in listening to the children read at home. Such arrangements further boost the children's love of reading and seeing reading as a pleasurable activity. Many children make good progress in their early writing development. By the time they enter Year 1, children are producing writing that is correctly formed and in some cases, punctuated correctly with a full stop and capital letter. Children are provided with interesting writing tasks such as writing invitations to the 'Teddy Bears' Picnic' and this helps to promote well their early understanding that writing is for a purpose.
41. Teaching effectively promotes the children's use of speech by making good use of imaginative structured play. Part of the classroom is organised, for example, into a 'Hospital' where the children play co-operatively together as they provide 'first-aid' for any 'teddy' that may be taken 'ill.' The teacher makes good use of the professional interests of some parents in this area who give their time willingly to talk to the children about the nature of their work. This enables the children to listen carefully to other adults and to ask questions of them in terms of the work that they undertake.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make good progress in their understanding of early mathematical ideas.
- Teaching makes good use of everyday equipment and resources.
- By the time children leave the Reception class, they exceed the early learning goals in the mathematical area of learning.

Commentary

42. Teaching is good and by the time the children leave the Reception class, they have developed a good understanding for their age of where mathematics is to be seen in their day-to-day learning. Achievement is good.
43. Good opportunities are provided for the children to develop their understanding of different mathematical ideas. Registration periods are used well in this respect when working out how many are present or absent. Children count freely up to 30, with the higher-attaining counting in 10s to 100. They have a good understanding of a 'longer/shorter' and the good opportunities they are provided with to measure how tall they grow over time, or in measuring how plants grow, effectively helps to extend this understanding. The teacher makes good use of open-ended questions to boost learning. These may include, 'How can you show me which one of you is the tallest?' This encourages the children to think deeply about the reasons for their answers and to further extend their early understanding of mathematical language. Equally good use is made of sand and water play to extend the children's perception of the concept of capacity. Children can explain terms such as 'full', 'nearly full' and 'empty.'

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children use computers and other related information and communication technology equipment well in day-to-day learning.
- Children have a good understanding of other living things.
- Teaching effectively promotes early understanding of the past.

Commentary

44. Achievement is good. By the time they commence Year 1, children have a good understanding of the world in which they live. Teaching is good and helps the children to exceed the expectations of the early learning goals in this area of their learning.
45. Teaching makes good use of the school's computers and other related information and communication technology equipment to promote learning. Children demonstrate high levels of confidence when using computers and they can move freely between the different layers of the programs that they use. They also enjoy listening to tapes of stories and the creative use that the teacher makes of digital cameras to record snapshots of the pupils' work or how relate to each another helps the children to develop a good awareness of the part that new technologies are playing an increasing part in their daily lives.
46. Children learn well-known Bible stories throughout the course of the year. The school meets statutory requirements in ensuring that religious education is taught to pupils who are five. Good use is made of the village of Sywell to promote the children's understanding of the world around them. The local church is frequently used well. When the children visit this their learning is successfully reinforced back in the classroom as the teacher reminds them of what they have discovered such as when the church was built and how and in what way it is currently used. The school's grounds are also used well to boost the children's learning about other living creatures. They understand well, for example, that insects and flowers need food and water in order to grow.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are provided with good opportunities to develop physical co-ordination.
- The recent provision of an outside play area gives good scope to develop physical attributes.
- Good use is made of the 'Jump Rope Club' to develop physical skills.

Commentary

47. Achievement is good. Teaching is good and provides good opportunities to develop dexterity handling small objects and larger pieces of equipment such as bikes and scooters. The children are on course to exceed the expectations of the early learning goals by the end of the Reception year.
48. The teacher provides a good combination of daily play activities, where the children can select and use wheeled toys and other equipment, and formal weekly lessons in the hall, where they are taught how to balance and use the space in the hall to good effect. In addition, children are invited to the 'Jump Rope Club' and have the opportunity to develop skipping skills. Many children participate in this and develop a good understanding of how to skip. Good opportunity is given for the children to use a range of glues when constructing objects and to develop their fine coordination skills when doing so. Most children show good control when cutting with scissors. When taking part in activities on the school playground using larger equipment such as bikes, trikes and scooters, the children use the space well and show good control both over the equipment and of the need to be aware of others.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children greatly enjoy the creative work they are asked to undertake.
- Singing is of a high quality.
- Children are provided with varied activities to promote creative learning.

Commentary

49. Achievement is good. By the time they leave the Reception class, they exceed the early learning goals. Teaching is good and characterised by the rich and varied opportunities the children are provided with to stimulate their imaginations and creative abilities.
50. Achievement is particularly good in singing. Good use is made by the teacher of day-to-day nursery rhymes and songs and children are provided with scope to explore the sounds that various untuned musical instruments make. In addition, the children regularly take part in the singing activities that are provided for the pupils in the rest of the school. For their age, the children sing well and very much in tune.
51. Children make good progress in their ability to mix and apply paints and they are given scope to devise paintings and models using a range of different media. There are good opportunities to take part in imaginative role play activities, and at the time of the inspection, using the 'hospital' and devising imaginative play with 'teddy bears' were popular 'free-choice' activities. The very purposeful way in which adults intervene in the learning helps extend particular vocabulary effectively.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good provision in reading helps pupils to attain above average standards by Years 2 and 6.
- Achievement in Years 3 and 6 is good.
- Higher-attaining pupils do not get enough opportunities to write at length in Years 1 and 2 and they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported well so that they achieve well by Year 6.
- Literacy skills are developed well through other subjects of the curriculum.

Commentary

52. Overall standards remain the same as at the time of the previous inspection. They are broadly average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. In 2003, in the results of the national tests declined to average from well above average in 2002 in Year 6, reflecting the changes in the size of the cohort and the high number of pupils with special educational needs. When compared with similar schools, the results were below average. The results in 2003 were a blip and the school is back on track this year. In Year 2, results in reading were above average but in writing declined to well below average for all schools and similar schools. This was due to the lower than average number of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in the tests. Early indications are that more pupils in the current Year 2 are on course to attain Level 3 in the 2004 tests. This reflects the time and attention that the school has devoted to developing writing across the school during the past eighteen months. Inspection evidence could find no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls this year.
53. Pupils who have joined the school at other than the usual time of admission affect the overall picture in terms of standards attained by pupils by Year 6. They generally make good progress but do not always attain as highly as the other pupils. Overall, pupils achieve well in Years 3 and 6. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve well in reading where standards are above average. However, higher-attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not achieve sufficiently in certain aspects of writing. Pupils with special educational needs in all classes achieve well because of the good support provided for them.
54. The teachers build effectively on the speaking and listening skills developed by pupils in the Foundation Stage. Most pupils across the school speak clearly with confidence and can adapt their speech to a purpose. Standards in speaking and listening are above average by the time they leave the school. By Year 2, pupils achieve well in reading as the school places a strong focus on developing reading skills, including phonics. The strong teaching of phonics and a good range of books help pupils to achieve highly and attain above average standards in reading by Year 2. Pupils are heard reading regularly at school and home and teaching assistants and parents make a significant contribution to pupils' reading. Pupils maintain these good standards in reading in Year 6. By the time they leave the school, they have a well developed understanding of modern day authors and can express why they may like such author's work compared to that of more classical authors, or vice-versa.
55. Standards in writing are average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. Opportunities to write for a variety of different purposes are good in Years 3 to 6, where pupils use correct grammar and punctuation well and produce extended writing that is interesting and holds the attention of the reader. However, there are not enough opportunities for more able pupils in Year 2 to engage in sustained writing to achieve higher levels. The better teaching in Years 3 to 6 helps pupils to make greater progress and to secure standards expected for their age.

Systematic teaching of handwriting and spelling have resulted in above average standards in these aspects for all pupils.

56. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, which is an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was satisfactory with some good examples. Teaching is stronger in Years 3 to 6 where lessons are stimulating and move with a brisk pace. In Years 1 and 2, lessons often lack pace and challenge for higher-attaining pupils and as a result they do not always achieve as well as they should. A good feature of the lessons seen was the way teachers shared the learning intention at the start of each lesson. Consequently, the pupils knew what they were expected to learn. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and consequently pupils behave well and show very good attitudes to lessons. They work effectively with teaching assistants so that pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Homework is used effectively to extend pupils' learning. The use of information and communication technology is satisfactory in English, where pupils use it to compose, edit and re-draft their work using a word-processor.
57. Subject leadership is good with a strong commitment evident towards further improvement. The management of the subject is only satisfactory as the systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are not sufficiently rigorous to achieve a consistency in the quality of teaching and to raise standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

58. Language and literacy are developed well through other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils learn to use specific language and vocabulary required in each subject. There is also sufficient evidence of teachers using lessons like history, geography, design and technology or music to develop speaking and listening or writing skills. Good examples were seen in history, where the Years 5 and 6 pupils had written a character study of Christopher Columbus and in design and technology where they had written and designed advertisements for the slippers they had made.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Years 3 to 6, teaching is often challenging to which the pupils respond well.
- Achievement in Years 3 and 6 is good.
- In Years 1 and 2 there is over-use of commercially produced worksheets and higher-attaining pupils are sometimes given the same work as that for other groups of pupils.
- Children confidently solve problems involving mental arithmetic.
- Pupils get too few opportunities to use computers in mathematics.

Commentary

59. The 2003 national test results showed that pupils attained standards in Year 6 that were average, yet well below average when compared with similar schools. In Year 2, results in 2003 were above average but not as good as similar schools. Inspection findings indicate that standards are above average in Year 6 and average in Year 2. The difference between current standards and the national test results for 2003 reflects variations in overall levels of ability between cohorts. The high number of pupils with special educational needs in the previous Year 6 cohort adversely affected the results in the 2003 tests. The school's careful tracking systems show clearly that pupils in the current Year 6 achieve well. The same data indicates that the current Year 5 pupils are on course to attain high standards in the 2005 national tests. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall in Years 1 and 2. Although National Curriculum test data points to boys performing better than the girls in the 2003 tests,

inspection evidence could find no significant variations in attainment between the boys and girls in the current year.

60. In Year 2, pupils have a satisfactory grasp of number and work with a fair degree of speed in working out mental calculations. Their knowledge of multiplication facts and number bonds is satisfactory as is their understanding of both two and three-dimensional shapes. The good support for pupils with special educational needs enables the pupils concerned to take a full and active part in lessons. However, at times higher-attaining pupils in Year 2 are given work to complete that is the same as that for other pupils in the class and this limits the challenge.
61. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is often greater due in part to the challenging teaching they are given. Pupils are given good scope to explore open-ended problems that involves them working with a partner to solve the question they are set. Work is carefully geared to meet the needs of different ages of pupils in the class, ensuring that the children can achieve to the best of their ability. In both classes in Years 3 to 6, pupils receive due praise and encouragement. This acts as a spur to the pupils to work at a higher level. By Year 6, they have a good grasp of mathematical concepts such as area, angles, shapes and how to construct bar charts and other forms of data presentation.
62. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. The overuse of commercial worksheets in Years 1 and 2 lessens the impact of the teaching which is often characterised by good use of practical equipment to reinforce pupils' learning of different mathematical ideas. In Years 3 to 6, lessons have good pace and have been planned with teachers making good use of assessment information to plan learning for different aged pupils in the class. In all classes, insufficient use is made of computers to enhance learning. Older pupils, for example, get too few opportunities to use software such as spreadsheets or 'Logo'. These restrict their ability to explore and interpret a range of mathematical data and then present that data in the form of charts, tables and graphs.
63. There is good leadership and management of the subject. The pace of improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Assessment procedures have been well developed and the school is making greater use of the data gained to plan improvements. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to ensure that teachers make greater use of information and communication technology in day-to-day lessons.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. Teachers are aware of the need to reinforce numeracy skills in all subjects of the curriculum and teachers do plan quite well in order for this goal to be achieved. Design and technology is used well in this respect in all classes and the overall promotion of numeracy in other subjects is satisfactory. The current school improvement plan points to further plans to incorporate the use of information and communication technology more fully into day-to-day teaching and learning. Such work has the potential to further boost pupils' understanding of how mathematics can be seen in their day-to-day lives.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good at the top end of the school and the work set is made interesting for them and as a result pupils achieve well by Year 6.
- An emphasis on investigation and the use of scientific vocabulary helps pupils develop an interest in the subject and generally enjoy lessons.
- Standards are below average in Year 2 as teaching does not closely match work to the needs of higher attaining pupils and consequently they do not attain high enough standards.

Commentary

65. In the 2003 National Curriculum tests in Year 6, the results were below the national average and well below to the average for similar schools. In Year 2, the 2003 results were well below average for all schools and well below average for similar schools. Current standards are above average in Year 6, showing that the 2003 results were a blip, with a high proportion of pupils exceeding national expectations. The difference between inspection findings and the most recent tests for pupils in Year 6 is attributable to the difference in the overall ability of the cohorts. Pupils in Year 6 achieve well because of very good teaching in this year group. In Year 2, standards are below average with fewer than average number pupils reaching the higher levels. Inspection findings point to current standards showing significant improvements over the last year's results reflecting action taken by the school to raise standards. The school has maintained its good standards in Year 6 but standards in Year 2 have fallen since the previous inspection.
66. In Years 1 and 2, the majority of pupils achieve satisfactorily, making gains in their knowledge and scientific skills. Although they can describe and classify a range of materials using appropriate terminology and know how some materials are changed, the more able pupils do not achieve well. The scrutiny of work does not show any evidence of work at higher levels that enables pupils to follow their own lines of scientific enquiry or carry out 'fair testing'.
67. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, although it is often good in Years 3 and 6. However, this is balanced with some inconsistency in Years 1 and 2 where the higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough through demanding work. There is little indication in the books of pupils being set tasks in science to match the different abilities in a class. All pupils appear to work on very similar tasks at the same level of difficulty. In Years 3 to 6, strong emphasis is given to the development of scientific enquiry and of scientific vocabulary and so pupils become proficient at planning and carrying out investigations so that they achieve well in Year 6. The pupils develop deeper understanding of key scientific ideas and learn to identify appropriate scientific explanations as distinguished from descriptions. By Year 6, they show good understanding of living things and their growth and reproduction. The very good teaching in Years 5 and 6 help pupils to become deeply involved through stimulating activities. For example, during the inspection, they studied seed dispersal in depth by examining the teacher's plum tree. The pupils are encouraged to present their findings in reports, drawings, diagrams, tables and charts. Mathematics is used well in science but information and communication technology is not sufficiently used to extend pupils' learning. Homework is used effectively to extend the learning of older pupils.
68. Currently, the leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and the management is currently tackling the low attainment of the more able pupils. Staff development has been provided to raise the understanding of how best to provide challenging investigation work for the pupils. The subject leader has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, a high level of commitment to its improvement and the capacity to carry this out.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Older pupils very much enjoy producing the school newspaper, 'The Sywell Times'.
- Older pupils' understanding of certain software is underdeveloped.

Commentary

69. In Years 2 and 6, pupils attain average standards. The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. A new computer suite has been creatively added into the central communal area and this is used well by all classes to raise pupils' understanding of how computers and other related information and communication technology equipment could be used to enhance and broaden their learning.
70. There is satisfactory teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 to 6. Teaching in the computer suite is often good and teachers make good use of the interactive white screen to demonstrate clearly the teaching points and skills they wish the pupils to acquire. Where appropriate, suitable links are made with other subjects and the pupils learn how information and communication technology can be used to broaden their studies. However, some of the teachers miss the opportunity to allow pupils to explore certain programs in more depth and this lessens the impact of the teaching. While Year 6 pupils, for example, know how to use the Internet, they are less confident about the benefits of and how to use e-mail.
71. Pupils enjoy using the computers and the school has been successful in ensuring that the equipment contributes significantly to their personal development. Older pupils, for example, with the support and guidance of one of the teachers meet regularly to produce the 'Sywell Star', a school based newspaper. Pupils take on the role of editors and edit and paste up text to make the newspaper that is then sold, with the profits being put to charitable purposes. Years 1 and 2 pupils use computers to create art work and for putting numerical data into charts and diagrams. In Years 3 to 6, pupils make satisfactory progress in their understanding of how databases can be constructed and explored in searching information. Older pupils have a good understanding of the part that information and communication technology plays in their daily lives. They know, for example, that credit cards hold data electronically and that supermarkets keep a tally on what stock is being sold and should be replenished as a result of goods being scanned prior to purchase.
72. The subject is well led and managed. The co-ordinator has given a clear lead in the subject and members of staff are keen and willing to develop their understanding of how to use information and communication technology as curricular developments in the subject continue apace. Good assessment arrangements help to build up a useful profile of the pupils' achievements and teachers use this information well to plan what steps are needed to move pupils on in their learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. Pupils have planned opportunities to use computers and other related technology equipment in several other subjects. However, the potential for using computers to broaden pupils' learning is not exploited sufficiently, particularly in mathematics and science. Pupils use computers in Years 1 and 2 to draft stories and amend their ideas as well as using art packages to produce simple pieces of art as a result of exploring, for example, the work of Mondrian. Years 3 and 4 pupils use databases well in collecting and synthesizing information. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 use the Internet to research information on rivers or deserts as part of their work in geography. Continuing to broaden pupils' use of information and communication technology in other subjects is part of the school's development plan and it acknowledges that there is potential for greater use in other subjects.

HUMANITIES

74. **History** and **geography** were not a focus of this inspection and so are not reported on in any detail. However, scrutiny of planning and previous work and discussions with staff indicate that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met in both subjects, with a good coverage. Literacy skills are promoted well through history and geography.

75. In **geography**, Year 2 pupils are able to identify key features on a map of the school and its surrounding area. They also study the physical and human features of Sywell. The Year 6 pupils successfully describe the features of a river and valleys; this level of knowledge is consistent with national expectations. Much of their understanding is based on a field study of a local river Nene, which is good practice. The pupils show a secure understanding of how a river can be used for leisure and business. Understanding of geography is particularly enriched by provision for exploring the geographical features of the locality. The work of Years 3 and 4 shows good examples of such study through exploring and carrying out a survey to find out the changes that might affect Sywell when a new runway is built at the nearby airport. They have also compared and contrasted physical features and life in Trinidad and Tobago with those of England. Overall, the pupils' work, together with discussions, shows that knowledge and understanding is consistent with national expectations in each age group.
76. In **history**, Year 2 pupils have studied toys since 1940s. They have examined various aspects of domestic life and how these have changed since then. They have compared kitchens and ways of washing clothes now and then. Aspects studied by pupils in Years 5 and 6 include the World War II, Britain since 1940s, the 20th century Britain, important events in the 1960s. There are close links between pupils' work in history and other subjects, including literacy and numeracy. All key elements such as chronology, historical enquiry and knowledge of the past are planned and taught in an integrated way. Altogether, the evidence from sampling shows that the knowledge and understanding of pupils is consistent with national expectations and that they are taught an appropriately broad curriculum.

Religious education

As the school is voluntary aided, religious education is inspected separately.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

77. Too little teaching was seen to give clear judgements on the provision in **art and design**, **design and technology** and **physical education**. Examination of planning and previous work and discussions with staff indicate that a wide range of experiences is provided in each of the subjects. Year 2 pupils, for example, learnt to make prints using different colours. In design and technology, they visited a park before designing it. Then, they used this knowledge and experience to design and make a park using a range of materials including Lego, cardboards and papers.
78. The work in **art and design** by the Years 5 and 6 pupils is of good standard and shows a suitably broad range of curricular experiences. Examples include using a range of materials to produce work on sunflowers, including felt pens, paints and clay to create the images of sunflowers. The glazed tiles depicting sunflowers were good examples of clay work and they have also produced computer-generated pictures of flowers. In **design and technology**, the pupils have carried out projects on making biscuits, musical instruments, slippers and shelters through systematic investigations, planning, making and evaluations. These show good understanding of the design process. Numeracy is used well, including the handling of data during investigations and working out the prices of the items they make. Literacy is also promoted well through these arts based subjects. For example, pupils have written advertisements for the slippers they have made. In **physical education**, the pupils participate well in the very good range of extra-curricular activities of a sporting nature that are organised for them. This programme is rich and varied and allows pupils to participate in football, netball, cricket, rounders, athletics and skipping. Lessons in physical education allow pupils to have access to gymnastic, dance and swimming activities during the course of a year. Good use is made of the school's grounds to support the pupils' learning in physical education which goes some way to compensate for the relatively small size of the hall.

Music

The provision for music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in their musical development, singing is of high quality, and there are good opportunities to learn to learn to play different musical instruments.
- The subject makes a positive contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and development.
- Pupils make too little progress in their understanding of musical styles from different cultures.

Commentary

79. Overall achievement in music, including pupils with special educational needs, is good. Standards are above average. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection. The subject has high status in the school and is complemented further by good provision to learn a musical instrument through the local education authority's peripatetic service. Older pupils, for example, have the opportunity to learn to play the violin, flute and the clarinet. Regular opportunity is given for these pupils to demonstrate their skills in end of year concerts or assemblies and this has helped develop their confidence in playing to a wider audience.
80. Pupils are developing a good understanding of different musical styles and the instruments associated with these genres. They understand well the different musical notations and how to record music onto paper. Compositional skills are good and Year 6 talk enthusiastically about the type of music associated with classical composers such as Mozart or Beethoven, jazz and more contemporary music such as that produced by the Beatles. The pupils' singing is of a high quality. Regular singing practices are a feature of the curriculum and pupils singing in assemblies and in annual concerts for their parents as well as the local community complement these further. Pupils sing tunefully and with clarity and their ability to sing in a three part round is good. The singing adds much to the quality of assemblies and, as a result, to the pupils' spiritual, social and moral development. Pupils' singing is regularly formally recorded and made available to them or their parents in disc format and this further boosts the importance of music in the minds of pupils.
81. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils talk eagerly and enthusiastically about their musical experiences the school offers and they work hard in lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding and give good scope for pupils to explore the sounds and textures different musical instruments make. The teaching of singing is very good and the headteacher, who always leads such sessions herself, sets a fine example for the pupils to follow. Pupils, however, have too few opportunities to listen to the musical influences of other countries outside a European heritage and at present the subject makes too little contribution to multi-cultural development.
82. There is good leadership and management of the subject. This is undertaken by the headteacher, whose strong commitment and interest in music has a strong influence on the subject.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

83. The small amount of teaching seen was of good quality. The school has developed a programme of work that covers a series of themes over the course of the school year. These include, living a healthy life style, personal safety and relationships. Good links are made with religious education and the school effectively includes aspects of personal, social and health education within other subjects. For example, older pupils when learning about food technology explore healthy diets and the importance of taking regular exercise. For the older pupils, a programme has been devised to raise awareness of drug misuse. 'Circle Time'

sessions are a regular feature of the school week and this gives the pupils good scope to learn more about themselves, including common human experiences such as anger or fear, and to explore and discuss issues of a topical nature. The plentiful scope that the pupils are given to work in the local community fosters well their understanding of what it means to contribute to a wider society.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement	Grade
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	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	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	3
<i>Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).</i>	