

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SPURCROFT PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Thatcham

LEA area: West Berkshire

Unique reference number: 109937

Headteacher: Mrs D Grimsey

Lead inspector: Mr J G Quinn

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> November 2003

Inspection number: 260507

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 -11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	225
School address:	Spurcroft Road Thatcham West Berkshire
Postcode:	RG19 3XX
Telephone number:	01635 871541
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Caroline Snowdon
Date of previous inspection:	27 <sup>th</sup> September 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

This is an average sized primary school with 225 pupils on roll taught in eight classes. Few pupils are from families of ethnic minorities and there are none who speak English as an additional language. The large majority of pupils attend from privately owned homes in the immediate vicinity of the school. The school building is undergoing expansion to accommodate a rising roll as the result of a major local housing development. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school at other than the normal times of admission is higher than average at approximately 14 per cent.

An average proportion of pupils have special educational needs at approximately 18 per cent. The majority of these have specific learning problems. Two pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs. Approximately six per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals which is below average. The school has been awarded the following: Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investor in People status, School Achievement Award.

Pupils begin school in reception at the beginning of the school year in which their fifth birthday occurs. They are admitted during the autumn term, but only the older children attend full time from September. Attainment on entry is average, but below average in communication skills.

The school has experienced considerable difficulties with the recruitment and retention of teaching staff over the past three years, which has been a serious impediment to raising standards. The staffing situation is now more settled and this is beginning to have an impact on pupils' achievement.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15676	Gerry Quinn	Lead inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design Special educational needs
9519	Sue Pritchard	Lay inspector	
30266	Hilma Rask	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Science Religious education Music Design and technology
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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>9</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>11</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES ONE AND TWO</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>31</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This school has improved considerably over a relatively short period of time under new leadership, but is still **not as effective** as it should be. Standards attained by the pupils are below average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Pupils do not make enough progress during their time in the school and their achievement is unsatisfactory. Improvement has been severely disrupted because of frequent staff changes over the past three years and difficulties with recruitment. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but not of sufficiently high quality throughout the school to promote rapid improvement in standards. The quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher, and governors is good and a strong contributory factor to improvement so far. Due to the below average standards by the time pupils leave the school at Year 6, compared with above average costs of educating each pupil, the school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The purposeful leadership and management of the school and the determination to improve further.
- Open and productive links with parents.
- Pupils are very well cared for.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and those in need of additional support is good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall.
- The provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are too low and pupils do not achieve as they should.
- The quality of teaching needs to improve further in order to raise standards.
- Frequent changes of teaching staff over the past three years have disrupted the learning of many pupils.
- The internal accommodation in the main school building is not conducive to uninterrupted whole-class teaching.

The school has improved in a number of important areas since the last inspection but standards are lower than they were. The quality of teaching has improved slightly and leadership and management have improved significantly. Most of the key issues from the last and previous inspections have been dealt with.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average  
Similar schools are those with a similar proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.*

An E\* in the table indicates standards were in the lowest five per cent. Between 2001 and 2002 standards improved in English and mathematics but in science they fell. Attainment overall fell significantly in the most recent tests. This is attributable to disrupted teaching for these pupils throughout preceding years and to the relatively high proportion of pupils who joined the school in this year group, other than at the usual time of admission.

**Achievement is unsatisfactory.** This has improved with more settled staffing but is still not as good as it should be. Standards are average in English, mathematics and science at age seven but below average at age 11; this is a major weakness. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are average throughout the school. Examination of pupils' previous work and lesson observations show that standards are satisfactory in art, design and technology, history and religious education by the ages of seven and 11. Insufficient evidence was gathered to form a judgement on standards in geography, music or physical education. Pupils' below average literacy skills hold down attainment in science. Children in reception make sound progress and are on course to achieve the levels expected by the end of reception in all areas of learning and some will achieve beyond this.

Pupils' personal development is good throughout the school. Most pupils have good attitudes to their work and behave **well**. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **satisfactory**. Attendance is well above average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching varies considerably, but is broadly **satisfactory** overall. The skills of literacy and numeracy are soundly taught in the majority of classes and ICT is used satisfactorily in connection with other subjects. However, teaching throughout the school is not of high enough quality to promote effective learning and to improve achievement rapidly. The best lessons were characterised by very good planning and organisation, very good subject knowledge and the provision of tasks that challenged all pupils fully. In less successful lessons unclear explanations, ineffective management of pupils' behaviour and inappropriate expectations of pupils had an adverse effect on learning. Pupils with special educational needs and others who need additional help are well supported and learn effectively as a result. Teaching in reception was consistently good. In a mixed Year 2 and 3 class teaching was good and sometimes very good. In this class pupils learnt well. The curriculum is satisfactory but the internal accommodation is too open to facilitate effective class teaching and is unsatisfactory. Parental links are very good but few parents help in the school to support pupils' learning. Pupils are very well cared for and the school is vigilant in matters of safety.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **good** and major factors in ensuring continued improvement. Although several curriculum leaders are very new to their roles, the support they currently provide in their subjects is satisfactory. Special educational needs are managed effectively by the subject leader and co-ordinator. The headteacher, together with the deputy head, provides purposeful leadership and clear direction. The headteacher has put in place good systems to improve the school since her appointment less than three years ago and these are already having an effect. The governors fulfil their functions well and are more proactive in the management of the school than they were.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

The large majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection survey, those attending the meeting for parents and the small number interviewed during the inspection, thought well of the school in important areas such as teaching and that their children are expected to work hard. Most pupils who completed the questionnaire for pupils also had good opinions of the school. They particularly enjoy ICT and extra-curricular clubs.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- As a matter of urgency, improve standards and raise pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality of teaching further, by building on the good practice that already exists within the school.
- Work with the local authority to improve opportunities for uninterrupted whole class teaching within the main school building.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Children achieve well in reception and are on course to attain the expected standards in all areas of their learning by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils in the Year 2/3 class also achieve well. Although standards overall are similar to those found in the majority of schools at age seven not all pupils achieve as well as might be expected. Standards in English, mathematics and science are below average by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 and achievement is lower than it should be. The school is working hard to address a history of significant underachievement throughout the school and this is improving.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well in reception and in Years 2 and 3.
- Pupils do not achieve well enough over their time in the school overall due to frequent staff changes and the variable quality of teaching.
- Consequently standards are below average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.
- Subject leaders are new to their roles and have yet to become fully effective.

#### **Commentary**

1. Pupils enter reception with broadly average levels of ability but below average communication skills. They achieve well as the result of good teaching and by the time they leave reception most will attain the expected Early Learning Goals in each area of learning and some will achieve above these. The school has experienced extreme problems in recruiting and retaining teaching staff over the past three years, with some groups of pupils encountering many changes in teacher. This is partly reflected in national test results tests for pupils in Year 2 which have remained well below average over the past two years in reading and mathematics and for the last three years in writing. Pupils were assessed by teachers to be achieving more favourably in science in 2003 with an above average percentage achieving the expected Level 2 with a well above average proportion reaching the higher Level 3. These assessments appear too generous and were not reflected in inspection findings for pupils currently in Year 2. Overall the trend of improvement has been slower than in the majority of schools nationally. In 2003, test results were well below those found nationally as is shown in the table below. Too few pupils attained the higher Level 3. The staffing situation has changed in this part of the school and is now more settled; standards are improving as a result with much good and very good teaching in one of the three classes. However, other teachers are either new to the school or relatively inexperienced and they have not developed appropriate expectations of all pupils.
2. Current inspection evidence shows pupils now to be working at levels expected for their age group and by age seven most of them attain average standards in English, mathematics and science. In ICT, history, art and design and technology, standards are also average and in religious education most pupils achieve in line with the targets in the locally agreed syllabus for the subject. Insufficient evidence was gathered to reach a judgement on standards in geography, music and physical education.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.7 (14)	15.9 (15.8)
writing	12.8 (12.9)	14.8 (14.4)
mathematics	13.8 (14.7)	16.4 (16.5)

*There were 29 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. Results in National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds have improved in line with all schools nationally over the past four years, although in 2002 and 2003 too few attained the higher Level 5. There was a marked improvement in English and mathematics compared with all schools nationally between 2001 and 2002 for which the school received an achievement award. The fall to well below average results in 2003 was equally marked and attributable in no small measure to the turbulent history of this particular cohort of pupils who experienced many changes of teacher throughout their time in Years 3 to 6. In all three subjects tested standards were well below those normally found, as indicated in the table below, and in science they were so for the previous year also. Compared to schools with similar characteristics, English and mathematics results were very low and in the bottom five per cent of schools. The statutory targets for English and mathematics set by the school in conjunction with the local education authority were unrealistically high and were not achieved.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	24.5 (27.3)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	25.0 (26.7)	27.0 (26.7)
science	27.3 (27.2)	28.8 (28.3)

*There were 32 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

4. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in English, mathematics and science are improving slowly with more settled teaching, but are still below average. However, pupils do not achieve as well as they should because teaching is still not of consistently high enough quality throughout the school and particularly throughout Years 3 to 6. As in Years 1 and 2, in ICT, history, art and design and technology standards are average and in religious education most pupils achieve in line with the targets in the locally agreed syllabus for the subject. Insufficient evidence was gathered to reach a judgement on standards in geography, music and physical education. Pupils' below average standards in reading and particularly writing, have a negative impact on subjects such as science throughout the school, which is particularly noticeable in Years 3 to 6. Also in science there is insufficient open-ended investigative work to extend more able pupils particularly. In mathematics, teachers do not regularly provide sufficiently challenging tasks for more able pupils, and the attention that is given to developing pupils' mental agility at the beginning of lessons varies between classes.
5. Subject leaders for English, mathematics and science are new to their roles. They are knowledgeable and enthusiastic but have yet to influence standards and pupils' achievement fully.

**Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes to learning, behaviour and other aspects of their personal development are **good**. Overall, the school makes **satisfactory** provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Due to the very good procedures in place to promote it, the attendance of pupils is **very good**. Pupils have good records of punctuality.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
- Pupils are motivated well to learn.
- Moral and social development are nurtured well.
- Although provision is satisfactory, there is scope for improvement in raising pupils' awareness and understanding of other cultures.
- Levels of attendance are very good and pupils are punctual.

## Commentary

6. The observation of lessons shows that pupils generally conduct themselves well in the classroom. Occasional lapses are due to the unsatisfactory management of pupils. Around the school, in the dining room and the playgrounds, most pupils show consideration for others. Some boisterous behaviour was seen amongst older boys, but most play is constructive. This is helped by the provision on both playgrounds of sports and other equipment which pupils enjoy using. A few pupils are concerned that, during times when they are not allowed to play on the field, soccer games take up too much space and limit opportunities for others not involved. No pupils have been excluded from school.
7. Most pupils are keen to learn, listen attentively, and relate well to each other and the adults who work with them. Enthusiastic, lively teaching results in high levels of motivation. This was evident in a Year 5/6 literacy lesson in which cries of disappointment were heard when the teacher did not have time to accept more answers. In other classes, a small minority who have been subjected to many changes of teacher in recent years sometimes show signs of disaffection when the pace of learning slows.
8. Since the last inspection, the strong leadership of the headteacher and senior staff has led to improvements in the personal development of pupils, including their behaviour. Clear expectations of how pupils conduct themselves, based on and backed up by the school's behaviour policy, have contributed to this. A number of measures, including the weekly timetabled opportunities for everyone to take part in 'circle time', and the class and school councils run by the pupils themselves, have also helped. Thanks to this good provision for moral and social development, pupils are polite and friendly, show good levels of maturity and are fair-minded.
9. Work in some parts of the curriculum, such as religious education, makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' cultural development. However, bearing in mind that the pupils encounter few people from ethnic minorities, not enough is done to raise awareness and understanding of different heritages. No links have been fostered with schools of different racial composition or in other countries. Although assemblies increase pupils' spiritual awareness appropriately, opportunities are missed to include references to people of other cultures. For example, in an act of remembrance - taken by a visitor to the school -, no mention was made of the soldiers from different parts of the world who also gave their lives.
10. Attendance procedures are very strictly applied resulting in very good levels of attendance and few absences, as shown in the table below. Despite the fact that the school reports a slightly higher than average figure of unauthorised absence, attendance overall is better than in most other primary schools. The school does not consider holidays during term time, and extreme lateness without good cause, to be acceptable reasons for pupils to miss lessons and will not authorise these. The strongly reinforced procedures ensure that parents carefully consider the implications of taking their children out of school for reasons that could possibly be avoided. As a result, pupils have few disruptions to their learning.

### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.7	School data	1.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.5

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

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education, including teaching is **satisfactory** and has improved slightly since the last inspection, with fewer unsatisfactory lessons.

## Teaching and learning

Teaching is **sound** overall, **often good** and **sometimes very good**. There is also a small proportion of unsatisfactory practice. Teaching is consistently good in reception and satisfactory throughout Years 1 to 6. In Years 2 and 3 teaching is never less than good and often very good. Where teaching is good or better, pupils learn effectively. In the small number of unsatisfactory lessons pupils do not learn as well as they should.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the best lessons teachers have high expectations of pupils. They plan well and introduce good pace into their lessons.
- Teachers make good use of support assistants to provide for pupils who need additional help.
- Support staff provide effective guidance to those pupils with whom they work.
- Praise and reward are used effectively by most teachers to manage pupils' behaviour.
- Teachers' relationships with pupils are good.
- Teaching is not of consistently high enough quality to promote continuous high achievement and improved standards.
- Not all teachers expect enough of what pupils are able to achieve and in the way pupils present their work.

### Commentary

11. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It has improved recently with changes to staffing and as the result of organisational changes within the school. It is slightly better than at the time of the last inspection but is still not of a sufficiently high quality throughout the school to promote pupils' achievement adequately and the rapid improvement that is needed in standards.
12. In the best lessons teachers have a good knowledge of the subject matter they teach and consequently introduce lessons clearly and confidently. They use incisive questioning very effectively to build on what pupils have learnt previously and to take their understanding forward. This was evident, for example, in most mathematics lessons. Here teachers make good use of the time available with constant reminders of the time allowed for different parts of the lesson. Pupils are encouraged to be more industrious as a result and learning proceeds at a good pace.
13. Staff have good relationships with the large majority of pupils and manage behaviour well. Teachers make good use of learning support staff to assist pupils with special educational needs and others who need additional help, including those who benefit from the well-planned and well-executed '*intervention*' program. Support assistants are valued and valuable members of the school team, making a significant contribution to pupils' learning.
14. Most teachers share the objectives for lessons with the pupils in the form of WALT (**We Are Learning To**) written on the board. This is an effective strategy which focuses pupils' concentration well and encourages more purposeful learning as pupils have a clearer view of where they are going. It is at its most successful where teachers refer to the objectives frequently throughout the lesson as a '*touchstone*' for evaluating progress. Unfortunately not all teachers make the best use of the plenary sessions at the end of lessons, to check whether objectives have been met and to assess which elements of the lesson have been understood, and which may need repeating.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 34 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	4 (12 %)	12 (35 %)	16 (47 %)	2 (6 %)	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.*

15. Although the figures in the table suggest a large proportion of good teaching and some that was very good, teachers' expectations, assessment of pupils' achievements reflected in their marking of pupils' past work and the way they support and promote future learning through their comments, are not consistently of high enough quality. Consequently pupils are not always aware of how they need to improve their work. These features, whilst not part of observed lessons, are taken into consideration when making the overall judgement on teaching. Where teachers' marking is good pupils receive clear guidance on what they need to focus on next. For example, the comment "*Well done... You have remembered to use full stops well. Next time try to remember to...*" is more productive and helpful than simply "*Good work*". Occasionally teachers accept poorly presented work too readily and even praise careless work too liberally. This reflects inappropriate expectations and gives pupils a false idea of what is acceptable. Sometimes, but not always, it is because a teacher is new to their age group and/or new to the school. Inappropriate expectations were also features of some otherwise successful lessons. Although teachers provide separate work for different abilities, this is occasionally not demanding enough for the more able pupils particularly. These pupils finish work too quickly, are ready to move on and complain that the work is too easy.
16. Features of unsatisfactory lessons were weak management of pupil behaviour which resulted in time being wasted, and insufficiently clear explanations of tasks, leading to groups of pupils being confused about what they had to do. These had a significantly negative effect on pupils' learning.

## The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory** overall with good provision for extra-curricular activities and for links with the community.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good extra-curriculum provision and community links.
- Satisfactory breadth and balance in the curriculum with appropriate focus on core skills.
- Improvements in schemes of work since the time of the previous inspection.
- Good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Good match of staff and support staff to the curriculum.
- New staff have good induction procedures.
- Accommodation remains unsatisfactory and is unsuited to whole class teaching.
- Cross curricular links are identified but not yet fully embedded.
- There is restricted outdoor space directly accessible from the reception class.

## Commentary

17. Since the time of the previous inspection, the school has developed comprehensive schemes of work which take due account of the needs of pupils in mixed age classes through the use of rolling two year topic cycles. Further attention to this is needed as some parents feel that some topics are repeated too frequently. The school provides satisfactory breadth and balance within the curriculum and places an appropriate emphasis on the development of the core subjects in a determined strategy to drive up standards. Cross curricular links are identified in medium-term planning, although in practice such links are not yet well embedded across the school. The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship and parents are appropriately informed on their right to withdraw pupils. The curriculum for religious education is in line with the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils are introduced to sex education and the correct and incorrect uses of drugs well, as part of the science curriculum.
18. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They receive effective support both in class lessons and when withdrawn for additional help. This allows them to access the curriculum at an appropriate level and to make similar progress to other pupils. Their individual

work programs are well-constructed with sufficient detail to be helpful to teachers in meeting pupils' needs.

19. The school has a good match of staff to the curriculum and this is the first year in recent times that all teaching staff appointments are on a permanent basis. The support assistants are well trained and make a valuable contribution to the work of the school. For example support staff link in to each curriculum area and audit resources. New staff are given good support from senior staff as part of clear induction procedures, and the staff handbook provides clear information to staff. This is an area of improvement since the last inspection.
20. The school makes good provision for extra-curricular activities. Pupils benefit from a wide range of out- of- school clubs, such as football, judo, netball, recorder, Spanish, German and an environment club. Many teaching assistants and parents take an active part in running these. The school has established good links within the community and with other phases of education. For example, there are good links with the local business enterprise partnership, the local secondary school and a range of pre-school providers. Master classes and technology workshops for older primary pupils are held at the secondary school from time to time, and the school makes good use of the swimming pool at the secondary sports centre.
21. Good use is made of visits and visitors into school to support the planned curriculum. All classes receive a visitor or undertake a visit once a term. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 have visited the Tate Modern Gallery in London in connection with work in art. Through the West Berkshire music trust, instrumentalists are invited into school to perform and pupils may take up the opportunity to have instrumental tuition from visiting peripatetic staff. The school has established links with the three local churches, although links with religions other than Christianity through visits or visitors have yet to be developed.
22. Although resources for learning are good, as at the time of the previous inspection accommodation remains unsatisfactory. The cramped open plan teaching areas in the main building are unsuitable for whole-class teaching approaches and noise levels from adjoining teaching areas are often intrusive. Major site development was in process in an adjoining area during the inspection. The reception classroom has only a very cramped outdoor area immediately accessible from the classroom at the present time, although staff make satisfactory use of an adjoining outdoor playground to provide for further outdoor learning activities.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The systems in place to ensure the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are **very good** and a strong feature of the school's work. Pupils' access to well-informed support and guidance are good. The school pays good attention to seeking pupils' views and acting on them.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Health and safety procedures are very good.
- Child protection procedures are good.
- Pupils understand the importance of talking things through with teachers.
- The school's systems for assessment are developing well under the leadership of the deputy headteacher.

### **Commentary**

23. The school breaks down many barriers to learning by establishing trusting and caring relationships between adults and pupils. The staff work as one to promote pupils' welfare and to safeguard them from harm. They know and follow the correct procedures on all issues related to child protection. Risk assessment procedures are very thorough, extending not just to the building and premises but to all procedures and practices in school.

24. The school recognises that racism and intolerance between individuals and groups of pupils exists and that all adults in school have an important role in combating them. Pupils are confident that the school has systems that work should they become the victim of racial harassment or bullying. They know that staff always have time to listen and that no adult in school would dismiss or ignore an issue brought to them. The school's *'buddy'* system means that pupils always have someone to turn to or to speak up on their behalf. Parents agree that their children enjoy coming to school and are well cared for.
25. Pupils from all year groups have a good insight into the principles of democracy. They see their elected school councillors instigate change, by taking on board their suggestions for school improvement. Their written contributions to the school newsletter show they care for their school and their environment. Pupils develop a worthy sense of equality and fairness in their dealings with the school and with each other, helping them work and play collaboratively.
26. Teachers have developed sound procedures that show how pupils have achieved and developed personally. This information is then used to target support and ensure that individual needs are met. The school's systems for assessing pupils' academic development are sound and are developing further under the leadership of the deputy headteacher. However, their consistent application has been impeded by the high level of staff changes over the past three years.
27. All staff contribute strongly to the care, guidance and support of pupils with special educational needs and they achieve well as a result. Generally, there is good engagement with pupils during lessons but some teachers do not always leave sufficient time at the end of a lesson to help pupils reflect on what they have learned. However, the school capitalises on the pupils' keenness to do well by providing particular support to help those who need it, to gain confidence in their own abilities.
28. Procedures for first aid are good. Staff always defer to the first-aider on duty if they are at all unsure about a child's state of health. Parents are kept properly informed of all matters related to the well-being of their children at school. As a result, parents know and support the school's work in helping pupils live healthily and safely. Entries in the accident and injury book are kept up-to-date and good account is taken of the number of incidents when assessing potential risks around the school. This is good practice.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has established **very good** links with parents and **good** links with the community.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The range of information provided to parents about the school and how their children are getting on is good.
- The school makes very good efforts to involve parents and deal with their concerns and complaints.
- Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning at home and at school.
- Links with the local community enrich and strengthen the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

29. The school has established a good number of ways to reach out to parents and to involve them in their children's education but is continually vigilant in how they might be improved further. Parents are generally pleased with the relationships they have with teachers. They praise the *'Pupil Planner'* record books and the open afternoons in classrooms. These are good ways of finding out what pupils are doing and how well they are getting on. Newsletters, including some written by the pupils themselves, and white boards at the school entrance impart good up-to-date information about school life. These whiteboards are successful in communicating with

those parents who collect their children at the end of the school day, but not with those whose children arrive at school on their own. Having had a limited response to an audio tape of pupils reading the current school newsletter, the school is now actively working towards developing its website.

30. Teachers promote constructive dialogue with parents by answering queries and dealing with concerns before they escalate into problems. Parents have very good opportunities to speak directly to the headteacher and to governors. Governors play an effective part in gauging parents' views and working with teachers to improve lines of communication between home and school. Close liaison with parents whose children need extra support, underpins the good quality provision for these pupils. The consensus of parents overall is that the teaching is good at the upper and lower end of the school.
31. There are good formal as well as informal opportunities for parents to be involved and learn more about what is going on in school. Many parents involve themselves with their children's learning by encouraging numeracy, reading, spelling and independent research at home, but few choose to help during the school day. Parents have responded well to the school's firm rules on attendance. They give good support to the school on occasions that directly involve their children, such as assemblies, concerts and consultation evenings.
32. Governors and staff strive hard to make the school's presence known in the local community. As a result, pupils' successes and achievements regularly feature in the local newspaper. The school makes good use of the local Educational Business Partnership to forge links with local schools and business, adding to pupils' learning experiences outside of school. Their visits enhance their mathematical and scientific knowledge and increase their understanding of the world of work.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good overall. Governance is good.** Governors are very committed to school improvement. **Leadership is good** with a clear view of what the school needs to do to improve. Many key members of staff are new to their jobs and their leadership is developing. **Management is good.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher provides purposeful leadership with a clear focus on improving the quality of education and driving up standards.
- Good arrangements have been put in place to support school improvement and to raise pupils' achievement.
- Staff recruitment and retention have been managed well under difficult conditions.
- Teaching assistants are given much responsibility and know that they are valued members of the school team.
- Governors are committed, reflective and organise their work well.
- The effectiveness of subject leaders is developing.

### **Commentary**

33. Since her appointment about two and a half years ago, the headteacher has worked hard under difficult circumstances. She shows great resolve and is willing to make difficult decisions in order to move the school forward. The headteacher has been successful in establishing a productive climate for learning in which all pupils are valued and given equal opportunities to succeed. She is supported ably by the deputy headteacher and senior managers. The very high staff turnover and considerable difficulties in recruiting and retaining suitable teachers mean that the efforts of managers to improve pupils' achievement have yet to be reflected in the standards that pupils attain. The appointment of good quality teaching staff, when they become available and the close monitoring of lessons to develop the performance of individuals have led to improvement



since the last inspection. Work to improve the effectiveness of teaching is based on the needs of individuals, ensuring that the time available is used to best effect. This good development of teachers' skills is resulting in better learning by pupils. More needs to be done to share the strengths of the very good teaching with all staff, in order to raise the overall quality of lessons.

34. High quality strategic planning for school development, with outline targets for 2006 and beyond, provides a very useful tool in the management of improvement. It provides a well-focussed and manageable plan to raise standards. A cohesive structure based on clear line management and a team approach, with key managers coming together for weekly meetings, helps to ensure that school business is dealt with efficiently and effectively. Plans are clearly expressed in goals to be achieved, and place due emphasis on monitoring by appropriate staff and the use of the analysis of performance.
35. The school has tackled the problems of recruiting and retaining teachers imaginatively and well, but the difficulties the school has experienced in this area has been a severe impediment to progress. Good arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers and those new to the school help them to settle in quickly. In addition to a comprehensive induction pack of helpful materials, newcomers are given a mentor and a mutually agreed one-year induction plan is devised for each. Financial and other incentives have been used effectively. The school's role in providing places for students training as teachers has been exploited well, with governors playing a leading part in the drive to recruit those who show good potential.
36. Much attention has been given to enhancing the role and effectiveness of teaching assistants. Their professional development is of a high order, with the headteacher providing training for them monthly. The assistants suggest the areas on which to focus. A recent topic was the assessment of pupils' work in relation to the National Curriculum. Two visited other schools recently to observe good practice. The assistants are given more responsibility than in most other schools and feel they have an important role in helping pupils to learn effectively. For example, each works with a subject leader and helps by, for example, ordering materials. This reduces the time teachers spend on administration, freeing them to concentrate on raising standards.
37. The governing body supports the school well, despite experiencing some difficulties over the last few years in attracting new members. Governors are articulate and organise themselves effectively. The introduction of a steering group has led to significant improvements in the conduct of meetings. Governors realise the need to push standards up as quickly as possible, and hold the school to account effectively for its performance. Governors are sent data about how well the school is performing before they meet, in order to prepare questions. They focus hard on moving the school forward, trying to link cause and effect in their analyses. Governors are not complacent. They seek to provide best value well and compare the school with others, in order to support and monitor the school's progress in raising standards.
38. Most of the subject leaders have been in school a short time and are new to their posts of responsibility. Those responsible for English, mathematics and science acknowledge that there is underachievement and that standards need to improve. Senior managers are aware of the need to give these teachers opportunities and training to develop their role in monitoring performance in their subjects. A legitimate priority in the current school development plan is to increase the effectiveness of subject leaders in order to raise standards.
39. Budgets are set in accordance with statutory requirements, governors are supplied with detailed information and all are fully involved in the budget setting process and in monitoring expenditure. This helps them to support the school in pursuance of its educational priorities. For example, the school is prudently carrying forward a larger percentage of its budget than is normally found. This is to help off-set additional costs associated with the school's expansion and to ensure that the quality of education is maintained throughout the transition. The cost per pupil at the school is well above average for a school of this size. Due to the high costs of educating each pupil compared to the below average standards achieved by the time the pupils leave the school at the age of 11, the school currently provides unsatisfactory value for money.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	572,296
Total expenditure	509,113
Expenditure per pupil	2,367

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	22,733
Balance carried forward to the next year	49,206

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

Provision for children in reception is **good** overall. There was no provision for children less than five years of age at the time of the last inspection.

- The quality of teaching is good and children achieve well in lessons.
  - Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is good.
  - The school has successfully introduced an appropriate broad and balanced curriculum for children in the reception class.
  - Staff work well together as a team.
  - There are good links with parents and pre-school providers network.
  - Staff make good use of assessment information to plan purposeful activities.
  - Use of the outdoor area is restricted due to current building works.
40. Children are admitted into the 30 place reception class in the autumn term during the year in which they will be five, with the youngest pupils attending on a part-time basis until January, when they become full time. This is the first year of such admission arrangements, as prior to this children joined the school during the term in which they would reach the age of five. There were 28 children in the reception class at the time of the inspection with seven pupils new into school as part of a staggered entry approach. There are favourable staffing levels of one teacher and two classroom assistants. Attainment on entry to school is slightly below the county average in communication language and literacy skills and broadly average in all other areas. Children make good progress during lessons due to the good quality of teaching. It is likely that the majority of children will reach the expected targets set for this age by the end of the reception year and some will exceed them.
41. The school has successfully introduced an appropriate curriculum for reception age children and assessments are well used to inform teaching. Staff work well as a team and a new support assistant was given appropriate support to enable her to fit quickly into the routines of the day. The reception class is accommodated in a classroom with only restricted immediate access to an outdoor play area due to the current on site building works, but staff make good use of this small space and also make effective use of the outdoor playground for physical activities and learning activities. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and is enthusiastic and well informed. Links with parents are good as all families have an opportunity for a home visit and an informative booklet introduces parents to the curriculum and school life, with positive suggestions on helping children with their learning at home. Links with pre-school providers are also good and there is a strong local Early Years network within the local education authority which provides training for staff.

### **PERSONAL SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Provision in this area is good.
- Adults provide good role models for children.
- Staff have high expectations of good behaviour.
- Children learn the rules of school well.
- Children are encouraged to plan independent tasks.
- Good use is made of praise.
- Children learn the difference between right and wrong actions.

## Commentary

42. From their earliest days in school, children are encouraged to treat one another with respect and they quickly learn the classroom rules because adults make clear their high expectations for good behaviour to children and constantly reward effort. Children learn the difference between right and wrong behaviour, for example, through the good use of stories and puppets that need to be reminded of what to do. Adults treat children with much respect and kindness and children learn to imitate this. Children have good opportunities to plan their own independent activities, although there is scope for even more adult interaction to extend the quality of such activities through questioning and discussion.

## COMMUNICATION LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for communication, language and literacy is good.
- Staff model reading and writing processes well.
- Children have good opportunities to handle books and share stories.
- Staff encourage children to talk about their discoveries.
- Children have good opportunities to make their own books.
- Fuller use of the reading area needs to be promoted in independent play.

## Commentary

43. Teaching is consistently good in this area as staff teach early reading and writing skills in a consistent manner and make good use of ongoing assessments to plan work at appropriate levels of challenge. Children particularly enjoy their earliest experiences of reading together using a large story text as the teacher makes good use of a large puppet to capture their interest. They delight in helping the puppet to use the correct sounds in a motivating game linked to the story. Book handling and early reading skills are taught consistently and children are well encouraged to use their early knowledge of initial letter sounds when they attempt their own book-making activities using *lift the flap* stories. Although an inviting book area is set up in a classroom bay, few children were seen to use this during self chosen activities, and there is scope to further promote interest in this area.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for mathematical development is good.
- Staff plan good practical mathematical tasks.
- Adults focus on appropriate mathematical vocabulary to extend new learning.
- Children have good opportunities to record mathematical discoveries.
- Children are taught how to form numerals correctly.

## Commentary

44. Teaching in this area is good overall. Staff are careful to identify key vocabulary to develop early mathematical ideas and concepts and good use is made of assessment to plan activities for pupils of different ability levels. For example more able pupils were challenged to measure large plastic dinosaurs against towers of unifix cubes and the teacher encouraged children to estimate before measuring. She noted a child counting on from six to seven and explained why this was a good idea to the rest of the group. This helped them to make connections with a whole-class counting activity undertaken earlier.

45. Practical tasks in the small outdoor area leading out from the classroom are well resourced. Children were fascinated by the sticks, straw bales and large wooden bricks placed there and

staff promoted mathematical skills well, as the children were encouraged to find items taller or shorter than themselves. Sand and water play is well structured to encourage active problem solving and enquiry.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Provision for pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world is good.
- Good first hand learning opportunities extend knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching of early computer skills is well structured.
- Children are encouraged to investigate and solve practical problems.
- Good promotion of early scientific and technological skills.

### **Commentary**

46. Teaching in this area of learning is good because very effective use is made of visits and first hand experiences to extend children's knowledge and understanding of the world. In a well organised lesson children explored a range of materials which could be used to construct houses and made good gains in attempting to use the correct scientific vocabulary. For example, several children responded enthusiastically with "Ocake" when the support assistant held up a piece of *opaque* plastic and asked "Who can remember what sort of material this is?" Staff planned challenging problem solving tasks and children were well motivated to construct a range of different houses, as in the story of the three pigs, using sticks, straw and bricks in the outdoor area, being particularly fascinated by a large straw bale Children learn about the passing of time through looking at past and present photographs and artefacts. Good use is made of class books and displays to record learning undertaken. Children learn early skills in handling a computer mouse and use on screen tools on the computer to create house pictures and portraits. Good use is made of the school computer area and interactive whiteboard in teaching.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision is at least sound, with appropriate use of the hall and the outdoor playground. No overall judgement is made on teaching as it was not possible to see any lessons in this area. However, children have daily opportunities to use a satisfactory range of outdoor apparatus including balls, bats, skittles, double bikes and trolleys and this is well supervised by adults. Fine motor skills are developed well through the good opportunities to handle scissors and a range of other tools and construction materials. Due to the current site development, there is no fixed outdoor apparatus for climbing, balancing and jumping nor outdoor safety surface at the present time and so related skills are underdeveloped. However, the school improvement plan and early years action plan include extensive plans for the future redevelopment of the outdoor area.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Provision for creative development is good.
- Good opportunities to try out a range of art materials.
- Well structured music making sessions.
- Good role play opportunities.

### **Commentary**

47. Children are well supported in their creative development through the provision of well structured learning activities in lessons. Teaching in music is good. The children are encouraged to experiment for themselves using an exciting musical stand made up of different types of kitchen

implements to tap, bang and shake. They also enjoy working in small groups to make up sounds to accompany the story of "A Sleepless Night" using a wide range of percussion instruments and behave very well when taking turns to play their parts. Children have good opportunities to use a range of different materials for painting, printing and drawing, and the staff encourage detailed close observation. The children produce well observed portraits and lively paintings, print patterns and pastels with good awareness of shape and colour. Appropriate role play areas are set up in the classroom and the playground outdoors to promote imaginative play and children enjoy acting out different roles.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH

The provision for English is **unsatisfactory** but improving.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Due to considerable staffing difficulties, standards are unsatisfactory by the age of 11.
- The subject co-ordinator is new to the school, and has made a good start.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The accommodation detracts from efforts to raise standards.
- Significant improvements have been made to provision.

#### Commentary

48. The very high teacher turnover and considerable difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers have resulted in standards falling slightly since the previous inspection. The results of last year's national tests show that at both seven and 11 years of age pupils' standards are well below the average for all schools and in the lowest five per cent for similar schools. The scrutiny of the work of pupils currently in Year 2 shows that pupils are working at the level expected for their age. Pupils in Year 6 work below that level because they have been affected far more by staffing changes and unsatisfactory teaching in the past. Comparing last year's work with this year's shows that considerable improvement has taken place in what pupils are expected to do and, as a result, standards are rising.
49. Standards in speaking and listening are broadly average. Pupils in Year 2 speak confidently in discussing their own experiences. This was evident in a geography lesson when they were using aerial photographs. In Year 6 pupils' talk fits its purpose effectively. When writing reports in a literacy lesson, one pupil pointed out the reason for including part of the text by saying: "*This information is difficult for the reader to picture in their head.*" In school council meetings older pupils speak with confidence and reasonable eloquence. All pupils in this situation, listen attentively to the contributions of others.
50. Reading standards are average at age seven but below average at age 11. In Year 2, pupils read fairly accurately, but lack confidence. Average Year 6 pupils are sometimes slow and hesitant. They correct mistakes, but do not '*read ahead*'. Pupils in Year 2 know where the index and contents are to be found in a book but are unsure about the difference between fiction and non-fiction. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught to find information from books, but because their classrooms are away from the main building, they lack regular opportunities to practise their skills.
51. In writing, average pupils in Year 2 work broadly in line with the level expected for their age. They are capable of extended writing of more than a page. They begin to include some punctuation in pieces such as "*Katie's Surprise*". In work about the senses they communicate meaning beyond simple statements; one pupil wrote "*I like (pop) because it fizzles in my mouth.*" Handwriting and spelling are average, although the attention that is given to formal handwriting practice is not always reflected in work in other subjects. The scrutiny of Year 6 books shows

that pupils' knowledge of techniques such as drafting play scripts is relatively well-developed. However, the impact of disrupted learning is clear in pupils' basic writing skills which are well below average at 11. Factual writing about frogs is not divided clearly into sentences and often their handwriting is not joined. Spelling is below average. Many do not apply the correct spelling method for forming plurals such as '*bodies*'. In writing stories such as "*The Mysterious Mask*", description is limited.

52. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is good overall. It varies significantly, with some very good teaching and one unsatisfactory lesson. Currently, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are satisfactory, overall. Strong features of the teaching and learning are:

- the breadth of opportunities provided, for example, using computers and role play to enhance pupils' learning of English;
- most teachers understand the national strategy for literacy well;
- most insist on high standards of behaviour and pupils respond well by working hard;
- teaching assistants and learning resources are deployed well;
- pupils are encouraged effectively and develop good attitudes to learning; and
- homework is used well to prepare for and follow up work in class.

Areas for development include:

- the setting of more specific and appropriate individual targets for pupils to achieve in lessons;
- ensuring that corrections are done;
- making greater demands of pupils to present their work neatly and to use their handwriting skills widely;
- prioritising the teaching of skills, so that, for example, pupils attain a basic level of competence in the use of capital letters and full-stops before speech marks are taught; and
- providing a greater sense of '*audience*' for pupils' writing in order to make their work more purposeful.

53. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well, as are others who need additional assistance through the school's well-planned intervention programme to improve pupils' literacy skills. Teachers provide appropriate tasks, resulting in these pupils making good progress in relation to their prior learning.

54. The subject co-ordinator is new to the school. She is knowledgeable, committed to raising standards and has a clear vision for improving performance. She is a very good practitioner and has already identified areas for development.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

Pupils' skills are developed satisfactorily in other subjects. In history, good practice includes the writing by Year 2 pupils of accounts of life through the eyes of an Anglo-Saxon entertainer. Good provision was made in Year 2/3 geography lesson for pupils to develop their skills of speaking and listening by talking about maps. In science however, pupils' achievement is hindered due to unsatisfactory literacy skills. The school has yet to plan formally such opportunities for language and literacy across the curriculum.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory** but improving.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a strong focus placed on developing pupils' numeracy skills.

- Teachers have a clear understanding of the national numeracy strategy.
- The new subject leader has a clear plan for developing the subject.
- Standards by the age of 11 are unsatisfactory and pupils throughout the school do not achieve as well as they should.
- There are inconsistencies with the way the subject is taught including some unsatisfactory elements to teaching.
- There is insufficient emphasis on developing problem solving and resolving real life situations.
- The school's main building does little to promote uninterrupted teaching and to aid pupils' concentration.
- Pupils are not always clear about what they have to do to improve.

## Commentary

55. Standards in mathematics by Year 2 are average but by Year 6 they are below average. Standards are not as good in Year 6 as they were at the time of the last inspection. In 2003 national tests, the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected standards in Year 2 and Year 6 were well below average. The proportion of these who reached the higher Levels 3 and 5 respectively were also well below average. There have been many changes of teacher over the past three years which have had a disrupting effect on pupils' learning and a negative impact on their achievement. This applied particularly to pupils in Year 6 who took the national tests last year. Pupils in Year 2 achieve better than test results indicate because teaching has improved and now includes some good and very good teaching compared with some unsatisfactory practice in previous years.
56. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and support assistants. They achieve as well as their classmates. Boys and girls are currently making similar progress, but more able pupils do not regularly get sufficiently challenging work and consequently do not achieve as well as they should.
57. Most pupils enter the school with average understanding in mathematics, and by Year 2 are working at the level expected for their age, developing an understanding of the value of different numbers and recalling addition and number facts to at least ten. They are taught to recognise number patterns such as the position of people in a bus queue and use different strategies to answer questions such as *'Who is the ninth person?'* and *'Which person stands between the sixth and eighth in the queue?'* As pupils progress through the school, the speed and range of their ability to calculate mentally develops too slowly. This is because not all teachers use the time for mental calculation at the beginning of lessons well enough to foster pupils' mental agility and so achievement is erratic. Year 4 pupils use tables and number patterns to identify multiples of four, five, six, or ten and learn to multiply and divide by 10 and 100. By Year 6, pupils add pairs of two digit numbers confidently. They plot co-ordinates within the first quadrant. More able pupils do this easily and are keen to progress to more difficult work.
58. Pupils make good use of computers in the computer area, in conjunction with their mathematics work. For example, pupils in Years 2 and 3 create block graphs to investigate any correlation that might exist between the size of a person's feet and the size of their hands.
59. There is sound emphasis placed on pupils' numeracy skills but not at the expense of other areas of mathematics. Pupils in all classes complete a good range of work, but opportunities to use their skills in problem solving with a practical emphasis are too few.
60. Teaching was satisfactory overall. It was occasionally good and in one lesson it was unsatisfactory.

Strong features include the following:

- carefully planned lessons with clear learning objectives shared with pupils, which makes learning more purposeful;



- good incisive and well focussed questioning in most classes has a positive effect on pupils' learning;
- sound emphasis on the correct use of mathematical vocabulary;
- good use is made of support staff to help pupils learn more effectively; they perform their roles well;
- there is a clear focus upon developing pupils' understanding of numbers.

The following are areas in need of improvement:

- teachers do not regularly expect enough of more able pupils particularly and so do not provide them with work that challenges them sufficiently;
- low expectations of pupils in what they can achieve and how they present their work in a significant minority of classes, gives pupils the wrong messages about what is acceptable;
- teachers do not always make the best use of the start of lessons for 'quick fire' questions to increase pupils' mental agility, or the end of lessons to assess whether lesson objectives have been met;
- very occasionally teachers do not explain tasks clearly enough, pupils are confused and time is wasted;
- marking is inconsistent and does not regularly indicate to pupils how well they have done and how they might improve. Sometimes work is not marked for several days.

61. As with English, the subject leader is fairly new to her role and has yet to make a full impact on teaching and learning. Nevertheless she has a clear view of standards in the subject and has thought carefully about how the subject needs to be developed. The internal accommodation of the main school building is of open design and is unsatisfactory. It does not facilitate uninterrupted whole-class teaching or help pupils to concentrate where noise intrudes from other classes.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

Pupils make satisfactory use of their mathematical skills in other subjects such as science, ICT and design and technology for measuring and weighing materials and entering data. For example pupils in a mixed Year 2/3 class investigated the relative size of boys' and girls' hands and considered how to investigate if people with bigger hands had bigger feet. They entered the data into the computer and created bar charts which they later interpreted.

### **Science**

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**, because pupils do not make the progress that they should and achieve below average standards by the time they leave the school at age 11.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well below expectations in national tests by the age of eleven and have fallen considerably since the time of the last inspection.
- The school has appropriately identified the need to focus on investigative and enquiry based work in order to raise standards.
- Standards of work seen are below average for older pupils and broadly average for younger pupils.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some good lessons observed.
- Teachers emphasise the development of scientific vocabulary and enquiry skills.
- Marking is inconsistent with insufficient attention to presentation in some classes.
- The school analyses test assessment information in detail, but individual pupil targets are not shared with pupils.
- The newly appointed subject leader, although inexperienced, receives good support from the senior management team to develop her role.

## Commentary

62. Since the time of the last inspection standards have fallen considerably. The school's difficulties with staffing and recruitment over recent years have clearly been a major contributory factor in this. Pupils' performance in the most recent national tests for eleven year olds show an upward trend, although remain well below average with few pupils achieving above average standards. Boys achieved better than girls in the most recent tests. However, inspection findings found no significant differences between the work of boys and girls in science. Teacher assessments indicate that an above average number of seven year old pupils achieved the higher Level 3. However, analysis of work from last year and the current Year 2, together with pupil discussions in lessons indicate overall standards to be broadly average.
63. In Years 5 and 6, there are signs of improvement in the presentation of work undertaken by pupils during this term, an indication that these pupils are starting to take more pride in their own work. Pupils usually behave well in lessons and discussions show that they enjoy science, especially when they undertake practical work. Year 6 pupils were able to explain the conditions for fair testing when recounting experiments undertaken to investigate the effect of exercise upon pulse rate.
64. The headteacher has led recent staff training on assessment and moderation of standards in science and the school has recognised the need to focus on the development of investigative and scientific enquiry skills across the school in order to raise standards. This remains a priority area for school improvement.
65. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection varied between good and satisfactory. In the best lessons teachers maintained a lively pace, planned work which was matched to the different learning needs of pupils in mixed age and ability classes, and encouraged first hand practical observations and investigations. Other positive features of teaching include the following:
- good links were made with mathematics through the need for careful data;
  - teachers clearly identify new scientific vocabulary in their lesson plans and ensure that these are directly taught;
  - pupils with special educational needs receive good support for their learning from the well trained classroom assistants, which helps them to take a full part in lessons.

The following are areas for development:

- there is insufficient guided support to ensure that pupils with low levels of literacy are able to record their scientific knowledge and understanding with greater speed and accuracy;
  - in a very small number of lessons teachers do not make the best use of time available and talk for too long;
  - marking of pupils' work is unsatisfactory. It lacks rigour and is inconsistent across the school with too little guidance on how to improve standards of presentation and content.
66. The school has adopted a two year rolling programme for science to accommodate the needs of the mixed age classes, and care is taken to identify the scientific skills, knowledge and understanding which are appropriate to different learning needs in lesson planning. Links with other subject areas such as mathematics, design and technology and ICT are sometimes made in lessons, but there is scope to extend these further.
67. Subject leadership is satisfactory overall. The subject leader is in her second year of teaching and new to her role. She brings good specialist subject knowledge to the position and has been given appropriate training and release time in order to monitor teaching, planning and standards of work. The senior management team of the school continues to provide good support to enable the subject leader to take on full responsibility for subject development. Resources are

satisfactory and a support assistant linked to the subject area has undertaken a useful recent audit of these.

## Information and communication technology

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**. With the purchase of up-to-date equipment and improved staff confidence the school has kept abreast of the increasing demands of the subject.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improved resources are used well and the school has made good progress in developing the subject.
- The ICT co-ordinator is enthusiastic, has a clear vision for improvement and the knowledge and understanding to support her colleagues effectively.
- Pupils enjoy the subject and are keen to improve their skills.
- The provision of extra-curricular ICT activities – including the Internet café for pupils and their parents, makes a positive contribution to standards.
- The location of the computers, centrally, in an area that serves as a thoroughfare, is not conducive to the most effective teaching and learning.

### Commentary

68. Standards by the end of Year 2 and by the end of Year 6 are average, as they were at the time of the last inspection, with a minority of pupils achieving beyond this. As national expectations are now higher than at the time of the last inspection this represents an improvement.
69. Pupils use the computers regularly and develop a good range of skills across the full ICT curriculum. For example, throughout all year groups pupils gradually develop their skills of word processing. They change the way in which text appears well, add labels to pictures and pupils in Year 1 create their own pictures experimenting imaginatively with colour. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 gather data related to the human body and know how to enter this into a spreadsheet and reproduce in the form of a block graph. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 control household devices on screen, by adding instructions. However skills introduced are similar for these three age groups in this activity and progress is less evident. Pupils use the Internet for research but do not send messages electronically.
70. Teaching is satisfactory overall and occasionally it is very good. It makes a sound contribution to pupils' learning and to the standards they achieve. Teachers compensate well for the fact the computers are situated in an open thoroughfare and do their best to make sure lessons proceed with minimum interruption. Occasionally however, a teacher's presentation has to wait whilst a class passes through. This slows the pace of learning. Teachers make good use of resources available to assist their teaching; for example, the use of an interactive whiteboard on which they can demonstrate clearly the different functions of a computer program is particularly effective. In a very good lesson observed in a Year 2/3 class the teacher set a very good pace for learning. Her knowledge of the subject was very good which resulted in challenging questioning that built effectively on what pupils had learnt previously and took their learning forward. Her high expectations of pupils were reflected in her insistence that pupils use the correct terminology when entering data, for example she reminded pupils that they put information into a *cell* not a *box*.
71. The subject is well managed by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable subject leader. She is intent on improving the use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum, has prioritised needs and drawn up a plan to implement them. She has started to monitor teaching and learning both through the scrutiny of teachers' planning and assessments of pupils' work. However, opportunities provided for the subject leader to observe, work alongside and support teachers as they adjust to the new routines that will be used in the new computer suite, have been disrupted due to staff absence.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

Satisfactory use is made of ICT for research purposes in history and geography and in other ways in connection with subjects such as English, mathematics, science and art.

## HUMANITIES

### Religious education

Provision in **religious education** is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The planned curriculum meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.
- Older pupils have limited opportunities for extended writing linked to work undertaken in religious education.
- The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory.
- Pupils gain respect for individual beliefs and special places and celebrations through work undertaken across a range of world faiths.
- There is scope to improve recorded work and marking.

### Commentary

72. Standards of work seen are broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, as at the time of the last inspection and the school has a comprehensive scheme of work. It was only possible to see two lessons during the inspection as a part of lesson sampling, but judgements also take into account the analysis of pupils' work and displays.
73. In the lessons seen teaching was satisfactory, and sometimes good. Pupils in a Year 5/6 class made good gains in their understanding of the meaning of the story of the prodigal son as a part of their focus on Christianity. Good use of questioning on the part of the teacher meant that pupils were encouraged to reflect on the deeper meaning of the story and began to relate this thoughtfully to their own daily lives as they explored the nature of forgiveness and being lost. In a lesson in a mixed Year 1/2 class pupils gained sound understanding of the celebration of Purim within Judaism. The children were very respectful as they passed around a small scroll of the Torah in their circle, because the teacher stressed the special nature of such an object and encouraged reverence.
74. Older pupils prepare some thoughtful questions for a visiting vicar about the nature of Christian belief and his role in a parish. Pupils throughout the school learn about the significance of various artefacts within a range of world faiths and gain a sound understanding of different beliefs and values, through a focus on celebrations and stories.
75. The quality of recorded work is of variable standard across the school, and presentation is a weakness. Marking does not sufficiently help pupils to improve their work. Although pupils undertake reading and writing tasks linked to work undertaken in religious education, there are insufficient opportunities for older pupils to undertake extended writing and independent research. Resources are satisfactory and the school makes effective use of the local resource centre loan service to supplement materials.
76. There is insufficient evidence to judge the provision in **geography** and **history**. Only one lesson was seen of geography and none of history. Pupils' work was scrutinized and informal discussions were held with them. Lack of development in older pupils' literacy skills detracts from the progress they make in these subjects.
77. In geography, the lesson observed was of very good quality. It was taught at a good pace and the teacher expected much of her pupils. The lack of space in the classroom detracted from pupils' learning. The scrutiny of work by Year 2 shows that last year standards were broadly

average. The early start pupils make in local studies – “*Changes in Thatcham*” – enhances their skills. Work on Chembakoli, an Indian village, contributes well to their cultural development. Good demands are made in this unit of study, resulting in pupils recognizing India’s neighbouring countries and the seas surrounding the sub-continent. In Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of the human aspects of geography, such as the environmental impact of changes to the road system in Thatcham. Their study of Plymouth develops their understanding of contrasting locations well, but they do not do enough work on physical features and processes. There is too little evidence to judge the standards attained currently in Year 2 and Year 6.

78. The limited evidence available in history indicates that standards are average. The good expectations and subject knowledge of teachers of Years 1 and 2 ensure a clear focus on developing historical skills. As a result, pupils are good at recognizing sources, such as Sutton Hoo and identifying changes, including those made to nursing by Florence Nightingale. Inconsistency in teachers’ expectations of standards of presentation and some unwarranted praise for inaccurate work detract from the progress pupils make. In Years 5 and 6, interesting tasks, such as writing newspaper reports for the “*Greek Times*” and good, ‘sharp’ marking, which picks up mistakes and points the way to improvement, have a positive effect on standards. Pupils show appropriate factual knowledge of the periods they study and start to link information from different sources, sometimes using note taking to help. However, pupils do not recognise sufficiently well the consequences of major events such as wars.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

Only one lesson in **art and design** was observed during the inspection. There was insufficient evidence to judge the quality of provision overall, but that seen was satisfactory. From the one lesson seen, examination of pupils’ past work and displays around the school it is apparent that an appropriately broad curriculum is followed and standards are average by the ages of seven and 11 as a result.

### **Commentary**

79. All pupils use sketchbooks to practise pencil drawing, but there are few examples of other media being used in these books. Although some sketches are produced with care to a good standard, including appropriate shading, others are less carefully completed and there is insufficient guidance in teachers’ comments to help pupils develop their skills further. There are examples of other media in displays around the school, including three dimensional work; for example in the form of Greek masks, in moving figures made out of newspaper and tiles in clay based on a visit to the local church. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn to mix paints carefully and achieve a ‘flesh’ colour to use in their self portraits. In the lesson observed in Years 3/4, pupils studied pictures by Salvador Dali and worked hard to emulate his style, by ‘stretching’, ‘dripping’, ‘elongating’ and ‘reflecting’ simple images such as coins.
80. Pupils benefit from additional activities to enhance their appreciation of art. There are many examples of the work of famous artists around the school to inspire pupils and trips to exhibitions, such as that to the Tate Modern Gallery in London, do much to enhance the curriculum.
81. No lessons were seen in **music** during the inspection and it is not possible to make an overall judgement on provision. The school benefits from productive links with the local authority music trust, as through this, instrumental groups are invited into school to perform to pupils and pupils have an opportunity to learn to play instruments such as keyboard and violin from visiting peripatetic instrumental teachers. There is a thriving recorder club and also a school choir which a parent leads. Singing in assembly is of a satisfactory standard, although a few pupils lack confidence in joining in and are given no additional encouragement to do so. Despite the current lack of any teachers with specialist music skills on the staff, good links with the local secondary school mean that a secondary music teacher has undertaken staff training sessions and lessons with pupils, to increase staff expertise. The school makes effective use of a commercial

scheme to support non specialist teachers and displays around the school demonstrate how pupils learn appropriate musical vocabulary, compose using music box program on the computer, and make their own percussion instruments with parent help. Resources are satisfactory and include a good range of percussion instruments from a variety of cultural traditions.

82. Only two lessons were observed in **design and technology**. In addition, pupil discussions, scrutiny of work and displays around the school provided additional evidence. As at the time of the previous inspection, indications are that standards are average at ages seven and 11. Displays show that pupils are encouraged to design, make and evaluate a range of products. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 design and make different types of sandwiches and packaging, using their knowledge of instructional texts and pupils in Years 1 and 2 explore different types of sandwich fillings linked to work undertaken in science on healthy eating.
83. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 talked animatedly about their focused practical work when they designed, made and modified a range of different outdoor shelters. They enjoyed handling a range of tools and construction materials and the collaborative nature of such tasks. A lesson on investigating different types of bread was well received by Year 5/6 pupils, as it included evaluative tasting of a range of breads from many cultural traditions. Year 1/2 pupils also enjoyed a lesson on evaluating different types of fruit salad products. However, teaching does not always give sufficient challenge for more able pupils and introductions are sometimes over lengthy. There is scope to make fuller use of ICT to develop work undertaken in design and technology. Resources are satisfactory and the school has established useful links with the local business education partnership to promote learning linked to the subject, for example through a planned visit to a pizza outlet.
84. There is too little evidence to judge the provision in **physical education**. One dance lesson was observed in a Year 1/2 class and another for pupils in Years 3 and 4. It is therefore not possible to judge overall standards in the subject. However, the subject is planned into the weekly timetables for all classes.
85. The quality of teaching and learning in the two lessons seen was satisfactory overall with some good elements. Strong features included:
- effective control and management of pupils, leading to pupils listening carefully;
  - guidance on how to achieve quality in movement;
  - suitable opportunities are provided for pupils to evaluate the performance of others;
  - planning to ensure that lessons are more energetic and challenging higher attaining pupils are areas for development.
86. Pupils' standards are in line with national expectations in dance. They find suitable solutions to the challenges set, sometimes responding imaginatively. For example, in the Year 3/4 lesson most were able to devise a range of stretches from standing, kneeling and sitting positions to illustrate the theme of elasticity. Many pupils do not use the space available in the hall to best effect. Years 1 and 2 responded well in a dance lesson held in the school playground. They moved creatively and with sound co-ordination and control.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Although no sessions were seen in this subject, it features in the weekly timetable for all classes and is a reflection of the very good contribution that the school makes to pupils' care and welfare. A meeting of the school council was observed over lunch break in which pupils discussed matters of common interest and concern, such as the possibility of providing bicycle racks for those who cycle to school. Such meetings are organised and run by the pupils themselves with gentle guidance from the subject leader. Pupils from all year groups are represented and care is taken by the older pupils to ensure that those who are younger have the opportunity to make a contribution. Overall it makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal and social education and to their understanding of citizenship.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>5</b>
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	5
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>5</b>
Pupils' achievement	5
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	2
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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