

INSPECTION REPORT

VERNON TERRACE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Northampton

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121920

Headteacher: Mrs Mary Starkey

Lead inspector: Dennis Maxwell

Dates of inspection: 22nd - 24th March 2004

Inspection number: 260587

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 10
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	178
School address:	Vernon Terrace Northampton Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN1 5HE
Telephone number:	01604 633894
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T Gregory
Date of previous inspection:	24 th May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Vernon Terrace is a community primary school with 152 full-time pupils on roll, which is smaller than other schools compared with the average size nationally. In addition, it has a nursery with places for 26 children part-time. The school has an ethnically diverse intake and around one half of the school's population comes from a wide variety of ethnic minority groups, the largest group coming from Bangladesh. Around twenty different languages are spoken and nearly one quarter of the children is at an early stage of English acquisition, which is very high. The level of mobility amongst the pupils is also high (over half of the population move in and out), both of which act as significant barriers to learning. On average, the socio-economic circumstances of the families with children at the school are much less favourable than usual and the percentage of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is above the national average. There is a wide range of attainment amongst the children on entering the nursery with some who have well-developed skills but, overall, attainment is very low. The school has identified around 40 per cent of pupils as having special educational needs, which is above average, ten of whom have a Statement of Special Educational Need. These needs are mostly related to hearing impairment. The school is involved in the Leadership Development Strategy in Primary Schools and has valuable partnerships with local colleges.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8798	Dennis Maxwell	Lead inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education Provision for pupils with special educational needs
9928	Alan Dobson	Lay inspector	
20707	David Brettell	Team inspector	English Provision for pupils with English as an additional language Geography History Religious education
22157	Mike Roussel	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage Science Art and design Design and technology Music

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Vernon Terrace is a successful school. It provides a good quality of education and is highly inclusive. All pupils benefit from the integration of and consideration for the hearing impaired children. Pupils achieve well through the school because there are high expectations for them and teaching is good. Standards are below average by Year 2 and broadly average by Year 5. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and works unstintingly with the staff to achieve it. **The school gives good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good.
- Pupils with English as an additional language achieve very well; achievement overall is good because good, challenging teaching promotes confident learning.
- The standard of English is below average, including the quality of writing across the curriculum.
- The pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to their work have a positive impact on their learning.
- The level of attendance is well below average and pupils' punctuality is unsatisfactory.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The children with hearing impairment receive very sensitive support which ensures that they make good gains and are fully included in the life of the school
- The leadership by the headteacher is very good and the leadership by other key staff is good.
- The roles of subject leaders in delivering the curriculum and of the governing body in monitoring it are under developed.

The school has recently changed its designation from a lower to a primary school so it is not considered to have had a previous inspection. Parents may wish to be reassured, however, that the school has made many good improvements recently, for example in preparation for its new status as a primary school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

It is not appropriate to report the results of national tests for 2003 and previous years because the school has changed its designation to a primary school. There is a very wide range of attainment amongst the children in the nursery. A few children have well-developed understanding and skills but, on average, children's attainment on entry to the nursery is very low, in particular their communication and language skills. A few higher attaining children are on course to exceed the standards children are expected to reach by the end of reception but, on average, attainment is well below average. Nevertheless, this shows good achievement from when they first entered school. There is a very high level of mobility amongst pupils of all ages during the year which requires continual management and effort by the staff to help them become ready to learn. The changes affect learning and standards significantly because pupils take time to adapt to their new school and teachers have to adjust their approach and support.

Achievement through the school is good. Standards overall are below average by the end of Year 2 in the work seen. Standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are below average but are broadly average in physical education and religious education. Pupils'

achievement is good by Year 2 from when they entered Year 1 because good, thorough teaching is focused on a wide range of basic skills and ideas. Children with hearing impairment and other forms of special educational need achieve well while pupils learning English as an additional language achieve very well through carefully focused support. Pupils' good achievement continues in Years 3 - 5 where good, effective teaching, notably in Year 5, has a significant impact on their learning. As a result, standards are broadly average by the end of Year 5. Standards in mathematics and science are average although standards in English remain below average because pupils' writing skills are weaker.

Pupils demonstrate good development in their personal qualities through the school.

Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. By Year 5, most pupils enjoy taking responsibility and take a good interest in the life of the school. Pupils have good attitudes and good relationships together, reflecting the school's very good attention to their personal development and racial harmony. Pupils cooperate well during activities such as food technology and physical education. Most pupils demonstrate good behaviour, responding well to the very high expectations of the staff although a few are challenging. All these good features have a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement. The attendance of a number of pupils is poor and this has an adverse effect on their learning.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching is very good in the Foundation Stage where teachers and nursery nurses work together as a co-ordinated team. The high quality of planning and assessments, and the challenge to children of all attainments by the provision of interesting tasks are significant factors in children's very good learning. In the rest of the school, the teaching of English, mathematics and science is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan consistently and well. Teachers adopt an approach which includes all pupils effectively and this results in good learning and achievement. Pupils of all ages achieve well because teachers ask probing questions to make them think. Weaknesses include some acceptance of poor standards of presentation and inconsistent marking of pupils' work. The higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently and, for example in science, could be more involved in planning their own investigations.

The school provides a good, well-structured curriculum, with interesting and worthwhile tasks. The curriculum for the new Year 5 class is good, and preparations are well in hand for the Year 6 class next year. The school provides good care and welfare for the pupils, which has a good impact on their learning. The partnership with parents is good. Most parents in Year 5, for example, help their children with homework, which helps to raise standards. Extra curricular provision is satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher has a very good sense of purpose and drive to make the best provision possible for the pupils. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator provides very good leadership so that members of staff work together as a strong team. The special needs co-ordinator ensures that support is targeted accurately to pupils' learning and behavioural needs. Subject leaders take their role responsibly but do not have sufficient influence on how subjects are taught. The governors provide adequate oversight of school provision. They are over-reliant on the headteacher and

do not take a sufficiently active role in forming an independent view, for example through regular subject evaluation. They check that the school complies with statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The very great majority of parents thinks the school works hard for their children and that communication is good. They feel comfortable about approaching the school with a question. Pupils think the school is a good place for them to learn and pupils in Year 5 have a responsible attitude.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve standards further, particularly in writing, and the range and quality of writing across the curriculum.
- Develop the role of subject leaders in enhancing teaching and learning in their subject and of the governing body in monitoring it.
- Improve the level of attendance and punctuality.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils achieve well through the school. Standards are well below average as pupils enter Year 1 and standards improve to below average by Year 2. Standards continue to improve in the junior years and are broadly average overall by Year 5, although standards of writing are below average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good overall. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve very well.
- Children enter the nursery with very low attainment overall, particularly in the communication, language and literacy skills; a few children have good development.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well through good support.
- The hearing impaired children receive very good support and all pupils benefit from their inclusion in activities.
- Standards by Year 2 are below average.
- Standards are broadly average by Year 5, although pupils' skills at writing in clear English are below average.

Commentary

1. The school has changed its designation recently from a lower to a primary school so it is not appropriate to report the results of national tests for 2003 and previous years.
2. There is a very high level of mobility amongst pupils of all ages during the year which requires continual management and effort by the staff to help them become ready to learn. The turnover affects learning and standards significantly because pupils take time to adapt to their new school and teachers require time to assess and respond to their learning needs. The new pupils include many at an early stage of learning English. There is a very wide range of attainment amongst the children in the nursery. A few children have well developed understanding and skills but, on average, attainment on entry to the nursery is very low and children's communication, language and literacy skills are particularly low. A few higher attaining children are on course to exceed the standards children are expected to reach by the end of reception. On average, however, attainment is well below average by the end of reception since only around half the children are likely to meet the expectations in the six areas of learning. This level of attainment shows good achievement from when the children first entered school.
3. There is a very good climate for learning and all pupils are included very well. Teachers set high expectations and promote good relationships very well so that pupils are encouraged to learn. As a result, pupils achieve well in Years 1 - 2 and in Years 3 - 5. Standards in the work seen in reading, writing and mathematics have improved to below average by the end of Year 2. Standards meet the expectation in physical education and religious education, but are below average in geography and information and communication technology (ICT). There was insufficient evidence to form a judgement overall for the other subjects.

4. The good approach to learning continues in Years 3 - 5 and as a result standards overall are broadly average by Year 5. Standards in mathematics and science are average although in English standards are below average because pupils have under-developed writing skills despite continual effort by the staff. In English, pupils know how to use a story planner to prepare a piece of writing but the skills for more extended writing have yet to develop. Pupils are developing the use of writing plans but these fail to reach fruition as pieces of extended writing. Pupils in Year 5 understand and have the skills to analyse a traditional story and write their own version, but despite teaching which is inspirational at times, the quality and quantity of writing is still below average. Examples of good quality writing are not in evidence in other subjects of the curriculum either, so writing, in all its forms and in all areas of the curriculum, remains a key area for development. In mathematics, pupils' numeracy skills are broadly average by Year 5 although most pupils find explaining rules difficult. Overall, pupils' previous work indicates good achievement from when they were in Year 2, in number, handling data and geometry. Teachers provide a few examples of investigational tasks but pupils do not develop these as a well-written piece of completed work. In science, pupils are making good progress in investigational skills, such as carrying out a fair test, because the school has focused on scientific enquiry. Pupils use a range of methods for recording their investigations but the cross-curricular links with mathematics and the use of ICT are limited. In ICT pupils have the skills to enter information into a database by setting up field names and entering data by following commands correctly.

5. Pupils who join the school with English as an additional language achieve very well and in every sense play a full and active part as well-integrated members of the school community. The development of pupils' confidence and self-esteem, as a result of the work for those pupils with English as an additional language, ensures a good contribution to pupils' overall personal and academic development. As a result of the school's strong commitment, its provision for English as an additional language is a strength of the school and enables the pupils to make very good progress.

6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well because support is carefully targeted towards their learning needs. Good assessment information provides a very strong basis for identifying the next steps for pupils and they are used effectively to inform teaching and targets. The hearing impaired children receive very sensitive and stimulating support, notably by the teacher of the deaf, which enables them to join in activities with other children. For example, in thinking about measurement, the children did their best jump and compared distances by looking at the markers. The staff include the hearing impaired children very effectively so that they take a full part in activities and make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have good attitudes to school and behave well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Attendance is poor, being well below the national average. Punctuality is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a positive attitude to school life and want to learn.
- Most pupils are well behaved all the time.
- Not enough attention is given to promoting good attendance.
- Relationships throughout the school are good.

- Pupils develop confidence, good social skills and a clear understanding of right and wrong.
- Too many parents do not get their children to school on time.

Commentary

7. Pupils like going to school. They know that they are there to learn and settle down quickly. In lessons they are attentive, interested, and keen to participate. Pupils mostly work hard and are eager to show others what they have learned. However many do not take enough care over their presentation, particularly their writing.

8. Behaviour is good. Teachers have very high expectations and pupils know the rules well. A few pupils find it difficult to behave well throughout the day, but the school's behaviour management procedures are generally effective. The support staff are employed well in ensuring that any disruption is kept to a minimum. Pupils consider the teachers treat them very fairly. Movement around the school is orderly. Playgrounds have a happy and friendly feel, although a few parents expressed concerns about bullying. The school's procedures for dealing with bullying are good. Detailed records are kept and parents are informed when necessary. No incidents of harassment were observed during the inspection. Pupils expressed confidence in the teachers' ability to sort out any incidents - usually name-calling. However this confidence did not extend to the midday supervisors. Pupils do not consider bullying to be a problem in the school. There have been no exclusions in the most recent reporting year.

9. Pupils get on well with each other and the many adults in the school. Many pupils join later than reception during the school year and these pupils are welcomed and very quickly made to feel at home, which is a point confirmed by parents. Good racial harmony is very evident with pupils of different races playing and working together very well, again confirmed by parents. The school places a strong emphasis on building pupils' confidence, particularly through developing speaking skills, and this is effective. All pupils benefit from consistent clear and precise speaking by the teachers, a valuable by-product of having pupils with impaired hearing in the school. Specific and generally effective help is given to vulnerable pupils and those with low self-esteem in an effort to make them realise that they can succeed. A good example is the successful teaching of lace making to small groups of pupils. Moral issues are treated seriously in lessons and class discussions. Spiritual matters are dealt with satisfactorily in religious education lessons and assemblies. During their time at school, pupils develop good social skills, including being courteous and polite, because all adults treat them with consideration and respect. By the time they are in the top year (currently Year 5) pupils can express sensible and interesting opinions.

Attendance

10. Attendance is very much lower than normally found in primary schools. This year's figures show some improvement over a similar period in the previous year but are still well below the national average. The school is not giving the promotion of good attendance a high enough priority. For instance, governors have not effectively addressed the subject, parents are not informed of the school's attitude to holidays in term time (a significant problem) and pupils or classes are not given any form of recognition for good attendance. Comments in pupils' annual reports indicate that some teachers have low expectations of good attendance. Registers meet legal requirements but are not consistently marked in accordance with the school's own policy. Punctuality is monitored well but not enough effort is made to encourage good timekeeping by the many parents who regularly bring their children to school late.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	9.0
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.5
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 a good quality of education and has a strong ethos of inclusion, particularly for the hearing impaired children. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The school has a well-planned and structured curriculum. There is good care, welfare, health and safety. The school has good links with parents and the community.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good in the Foundation Stage and is good in the rest of the school. The school has good assessment procedures.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use well in their lively discussions with pupils.
- Teaching and provision are very good in the Foundation Stage so that children learn confidently.
- The teaching, care and provision for the hearing impaired children are very good.
- Teachers generally give a good emphasis to basic learning skills as well as developing pupils' understanding through challenging practical activities, although in science the higher attaining pupils are not always challenged.
- The marking of pupils' work is usually constructive but it is not always done consistently.
- The quality of teaching of pupils with English as an additional language and of pupils with special educational needs is a strength of the school. The support staff makes a particularly strong contribution.

Commentary

11. The quality of teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science is good so that pupils achieve well. In English, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and they implement national guidance well. The curriculum and lesson planning are good so that work is matched well to pupils' learning needs. They apply very good strategies to manage pupils which are reflected in very good attention and good behaviour. At times, teachers accept pupils' poor standards of presentation of their work and pupils' work is not marked consistently. In mathematics, teachers give good attention to mental calculation and encourage pupils to develop useful strategies such as 'doubling'. Work is planned well to provide interest and challenge for pupils of all attainments, and teachers often demonstrate skilled questioning to encourage pupils to explain their answers. Teachers pose a few problem-solving tasks but this area is less developed than number calculation. In science, teachers ask probing questions to make pupils think and reason, especially about the conclusions from their experiments, and as a result pupils achieve well. The higher attaining pupils are not always challenged to plan their own investigations. Teachers are giving an increased emphasis to developing pupils' enquiry skills and their use of ICT across the curriculum but pupils tend to be dependent on their teachers for their learning. The good features of teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science are usually present in lessons in the other subjects as well.

12. Teaching is very good in the nursery and reception classes so that pupils learn very well. Teachers are assisted effectively by the nursery nurses so that all adults form a strong team. The high quality of planning and observations of the children and the effective deployment of the nursery nurses are significant factors in the high standards of teaching and provision. The teachers also monitor pupils' progress closely and set targets to challenge them.

13. The headteacher provides a good background management that supports teachers in their preparation for teaching. Teachers usually plan a good balance of carefully chosen tasks to challenge and extend pupils at times, and to provide consolidation for their learning at others, since many pupils lack confidence. Lessons are usually structured well with a good balance of time, although on a few occasions the class introductions and discussions are too long, allowing insufficient time for individual work to be of a good standard. A general strength is the way teachers engage with the pupils, intervening thoughtfully or developing lively discussions that extend their learning. There is often a good emphasis on encouraging pupils to reason and explain, although some strategies emphasise the teacher as controller of discussion rather than provoking quality talk amongst the pupils. Teachers demonstrate high

expectations for behaviour and usually use good behaviour strategies to keep attention, although on a few occasions this is less effective.

14. All members of staff are highly committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity. This is seen in many ways, including the good achievements of pupils with special educational needs and the very good achievement of those who are learning English as an additional language. The school's practice for the children with hearing impairment is highly inclusive. They take a full part in many lessons and are withdrawn for small group work as appropriate. On all these occasions the teacher of the deaf provides very good and sensitive teaching and interventions which enable the children to respond and achieve well. Teachers have warm and responsive relationships with the pupils that encourage them to take an active part in their learning and the pupils want to do well to please their teachers.

15. The headteacher has established good assessment procedures, which are focused on the core subjects for whole-school monitoring. These enable her to track pupils' progress and to make forward decisions about provision to meet their learning needs. She uses a good combination of internal testing and national tests so that up-to-date information is available to inform teaching. There are, in addition, sensible routines for teachers to make and record assessments in the units of foundation subjects. Pupils with special educational needs are assessed very thoroughly and their needs are understood and communicated very well by the headteacher to members of staff who work with them. There is good support from external agencies, except that the time allocation for the educational psychologist hardly meets the needs of the school.

16. Pupils learning English as an additional language are highly motivated. They want to learn as much and as quickly as they can, and teaching support staff respond to this very well by providing them with the specific knowledge and skills required. They show great eagerness to read aloud, and because of the very good relationships with adults, they are prepared to 'take risks'. In a group activity with Year 5 pupils, they were working on the text that was to be used for the whole class English lesson. Their experience and learning in the small group gave them the skill and confidence to participate fully in the main lesson, indicating good school and teacher management. The good assessment procedures help to inform teaching and to check pupils' progress, although the high level of mobility presents a continuous challenge to the staff in matching work to pupils' learning needs.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 41 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2 %)	11 (27 %)	19 (46 %)	9 (22 %)	1 (2 %)	0	0

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

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is **good**. There is a satisfactory level of out of school activities. The quality of resources is good and the accommodation is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a good, broad curriculum although design and technology is a developing subject.
- Equality of access and opportunity are very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language is very good.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is good.
- The match of support staff to the curriculum is very good.
- There are only limited opportunities for participation in competitive sports.

Commentary

17. The curriculum is broad and well balanced. It is based upon advice provided by the local education authority and it meets statutory requirements in terms of the National Curriculum and the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. It enables pupils, regardless of ability, to develop their capabilities in all subjects and areas of learning. Pupils achieve well and the school ensures that there are good strategies in place to provide very good equality of access and opportunity to all aspects of the curriculum. However, there is limited evidence of consistency in pupils' experiences in design and technology and of careful progression of skills through the school. Systems for the management, planning and monitoring of the curriculum are good within the school, although the governing body has a limited awareness and understanding of the curriculum to offer appropriate support and challenge.

18. The curriculum ensures that pupils who have special educational needs achieve well and those who learn English as an additional language achieve very well. There are good systems in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and the support provided for such pupils is good. This is particularly so for pupils with hearing difficulties, where the school provides high quality, technical resources and very good input by the teacher of the deaf and well-trained support staff. Similarly, the school offers very good provision for pupils who join the school with English as an additional language, allowing such pupils to achieve at least as well as their peers. Good planning, record keeping, target setting and organisation have contributed towards the development of pupils' vocabulary, understanding and use of the English language, whilst also making a significant addition to their personal development.

19. The school provides a satisfactory range of enrichment activities, which includes visits to museums, the art gallery and the theatre. Visitors to school add enrichment, including contributions to opera, drama and lace making. Participation in the arts is good and the school places a good emphasis on its music curriculum with its choir activities and instrumental tuition. Although visiting sports personalities visit the school from time to time, there are limited opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive sports and team games. All pupils in Years 3 - 5 have the opportunity to take part in a residential visit to environmental education centres in Norfolk and Northamptonshire. Regrettably, a number of parents choose to withdraw their children from this activity.

20. Resources for the curriculum are good, with recently enhanced provision that suits half a class for ICT in the computer area and a new, spacious and well-equipped library. Accommodation is satisfactory overall and the school has done well to harmonise the old parts of the building with the new. The outdoor play areas for children in the Foundation Stage are limited in terms of size. The building is well kept and is a credit to the hard work of caretaking and cleaning staff. The level of staffing to deliver the curriculum is satisfactory with an appropriate match of teachers. The number and quality of support staff are very good and they make a positive contribution to pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

The level of care, welfare, health and safety is good. Pupils' development is supported well by advice and guidance. The school makes good provision to hear pupils' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are looked after well in a caring and trusting community.
- New pupils quickly feel part of the school.
- Teachers respond to individual needs very well.
- Good guidance means that pupils know what they need to do to improve, although there is varied practice in providing helpful comments while marking pupils' work.
- Lunchtime arrangements do not help to develop good table manners.

Commentary

21. Pupils are well cared for while at school. Being a small school the headteacher and staff know the pupils well and often their family backgrounds. Relationships are friendly and pupils' concerns are listened to sympathetically with a very good level of trust between pupils and adults. Supervision is good at all times. Child protection is taken seriously. Health and safety procedures are good, for instance safety is stressed in lessons and there is a good level of first aid cover. Parents are right to feel confident that whilst at school their children are safe and secure. The children with hearing impairment are given very thoughtful and considerate support. Pupils with special educational needs receive good, focused care that has a considerable impact in preparing them to learn.

22. Pupils are given good support and guidance. Their academic development is monitored well by good assessment procedures allowing pupils to know what they need to do to improve. Older pupils know well their individual targets for development in English and mathematics and these are reviewed at least termly. There is varied practice in marking pupils' work since some engages with the pupils and gives helpful comment on how to improve but other marking is just a tick. Personal development is monitored informally but effectively, as a result of the close-knit nature of the small school. Teachers and support staff respond to individual needs quickly with a very good degree of understanding. Many children join the school later than reception during the school year. The induction procedures are very good, new pupils are made very welcome and quickly feel part of the school. The ease with which new pupils are successfully integrated is a credit to the staff and the existing pupils.

23. Lunchtime dining arrangements do little to develop good table manners or the concept of dining as a civilised social occasion. All pupils eat a packed meal, which means no plates or cutlery are used and all food is eaten with fingers.

24. The school makes good use of regular timetabled short class discussions for pupils to air their views. This encourages speaking skills and provides an opportunity for teachers to be aware of any issues that might be developing in the class.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has good links with parents and the community; links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have a high opinion of the school.
- The school's open door policy is effective and parents are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school.
- New parents are made very welcome.
- Not enough information is given to parents to allow them to be involved in their children's learning.
- Pupils benefit from good links with the community.

Commentary

25. Parents consider Vernon Terrace to be a good school. They particularly praise the quality of teaching, the good progress their children make and the approachability of the headteacher and staff. The inspectors agree with these views.

26. The school's open door policy works. Before and after school many parents go into the classrooms. Relationships are easy between staff and parents, ensuring that concerns are dealt with speedily. Procedures for welcoming children arriving during the year are well established and effective. Parents of children new to the school told the inspectors how quickly they feel part of the school community. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school through, for instance, attending class assemblies and helping in the classroom.

27. The quality of information received by parents is satisfactory overall. Adequate notice is given for events. Parents' meetings are scheduled to be convenient for working parents and newsletters, although irregular, are chatty and informative. However, insufficient information is given to parents who want to be involved in their children's learning. Detailed information on what is about to be taught is not sent home for most classes. Apart from the Foundation Stage, parents have not recently had an opportunity to learn how particular subjects are taught. Pupils' annual reports, whilst meeting legal requirements, are not impressive. They do not always give a clear indication of progress, there is virtually no guidance on what the child needs to do to improve and the over-reliance on computer word banks produces commentary that is boring to read and contains too many educational terms that may be unfamiliar to many parents.

28. The school is very much part of the local community and pupils benefit from this. The local area is studied in lessons ranging from looking at the exterior design of nearby houses in reception to considering ways of making the local road system safer in Years 3 and 4. Pupils visit Northampton's Guildhall, the main library, the museum and local parks which provide a good insight into the wider community. Local elderly residents go to the school once a week for coffee during school hours. A retired expert in lace making – a local tradition – passes her skills on to pupils. This is proving very effective in boosting self-confidence and helping to resolve personal difficulties, particularly in boys, who are very proud to show off their lace making skills.

29. The school is reorganising from a lower school where pupils leave after Year 4 to a primary school where pupils transfer after Year 6. The school maintains contact with other schools undergoing the same reorganisation. There is a valuable link with other local schools related to the arts. As no pupils will be moving to secondary education until Summer 2005, there are currently no formal transfer arrangements in place although there is regular informal contact with local secondary schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has a very strong sense of purpose and drive to make the best possible provision for the pupils and to meet the school's aims of producing well-adjusted young people. All members of staff have a high commitment to inclusion for all pupils. Members of the governing body provide adequate oversight for school developments.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides clear and successful leadership for the direction of the school, supported well by the deputy and all staff.
- The management of provision for children with hearing impairment and all forms of special education need is very good.
- The school is managing the change to a primary school well.
- Members of the governing body do not take a sufficiently active role in forming an independent view of provision.
- The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage and for pupils with English as an additional language are very good.

Commentary

30. There is a strong sense of corporate agreement about the work of the school, deriving from a very good team spirit and the clear direction of the headteacher. As a result, matters for improvement are identified through good consultation procedures and there is shared agreement on how to proceed.

31. The senior members of staff provide good leadership and support so that, for example, induction procedures are very good. The management of the provision for children with hearing impairment is a particular strength, ensuring that teachers are prepared and support is accurately targeted. In consequence, the children make good progress and are fully integrated in to the life of the school. All pupils benefit from the most particular consideration given to these pupils by learning alongside them. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are very good, ensuring that provision is matched closely to the children's needs. Pupils who join the school with English as an additional language achieve very well because the management is very good across the school. The development of pupils' confidence and self-esteem, as a result of the work in provision for pupils with English as an additional language, makes a good contribution to pupils' overall personal development. As a result of the strong commitment by all staff, the provision for pupils with English as an additional language is a strength of the school. Performance management is also well established and supports whole school priorities.

32. The headteacher has a very clear vision and strong sense of purpose that infuses the work of the school. She has established good procedures for subject leaders to monitor their subjects through work samples and checking lesson planning, although they do not have formal arrangements to support colleagues in lesson planning and only those for the core subjects have so far observed lessons. This is partly because several are new to their post. Subject leaders produce useful action plans which help inform the school's development plan,

indicating good consultation and review procedures. The development plan acts as a good management tool in providing a structure to support and oversee strategic targets.

33. There are also good procedures to assess pupils and track their progress, so that information is used effectively in targeting identified weaknesses which may also be identified as an area for improvement in the development plan. The information enables the school to track groups of pupils from differing ethnic backgrounds and to check on any variation in progress so that action may be taken.

34. The governing body provides adequate oversight of school provision. Several governors often spend time in the school but there are few formal procedures for regular focused visits. Their knowledge of strengths and weaknesses is satisfactory but they rely unduly on the headteacher to provide information and to raise current issues. As a result they do not have a strong background of independent information to inform discussion and to challenge the headteacher about priorities or the quality of provision. There are satisfactory procedures for governors to check that the school complies with statutory requirements all of which are met. The governors with the headteacher set a balanced budget, taking careful account of the principles of obtaining best value. The expenditure per pupil is above average mainly because the school has designated provision for hearing impaired pupils and the school has the additional costs of changing to a primary school. The balance carried forward to the next year is also higher than usual because reasonable funds are held to meet planned expenditure as the school converts to a primary school.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	508 185
Total expenditure	456 956
Expenditure per pupil	3 372

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	59 050
Balance carried forward to the next	51 228

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good quality teaching and good teamwork with the nursery nurses leads to good achievement.
- Parents like the way their children are introduced to the school.
- The staff are very good role models and manage the children well.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- There is very good monitoring, assessing and tracking of individual children's attainment.
- Attainment on entry is very low, especially in communication, language and literacy.
- Children achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development which is a significant area to prepare them for the next stage in their learning.
- Outside play opportunities for reception children are not up to the same standards as for the nursery children.

Commentary

35. There are 26 part-time children attending for morning sessions in the nursery and 26 full-time children in the reception class. Attainment on entry is very low. This is particularly highlighted by the low levels in communication, language and literacy skills related to the high numbers of children with special educational needs and children whose first language is not English. Further barriers to learning are the mobility of children moving in and out of the school and the children whose attendance is inconsistent.

36. Prospective parents are invited to look around the nursery and are given a nursery booklet. If they choose the nursery they are invited to a new parents' meeting in June along with parents of children who are to join the reception class. The good induction procedures provide good opportunities for parents to discuss issues with the staff. The nursery accommodation is good overall. The outside play area is safe and secure. However, this is not so for the reception class where they do not have the same outside play facilities as the nursery and they rely on the use of the nursery outside area only on some afternoons.

37. Displays are good in the nursery and reception classes. There are very good procedures for monitoring and assessing individual children's attainment by the use of very efficient tracking methods that help to identify areas for development and to set individual targets. The high quality of monitoring and assessment is in part the result of the involvement of the staff on the extended 'Effective Early Learning Project' in conjunction with University College, Worcester.

38. A minority of children are on course to achieve the expected standards by the time they enter Year 1. However, many children will not achieve the standards, although they are all making good progress and achieve well from a low start on entry. Children with special educational needs are identified and monitored very closely so that provision is matched well to their needs. Teaching is consistently very good in the nursery and reception classes so that

the quality of pupils' learning is very good. Their learning is better than their achievement because many pupils rely on adult support during activities and do not have the confidence to apply their skills successfully. Teachers are ably assisted by the nursery nurses who work with the teachers as a co-ordinated team. The high standards of teaching and provision are because of the high quality of planning and assessment, effective deployment of the nursery nurses, consistent monitoring and evaluation of the learning and achievement of all pupils and the setting of targets to challenge at every level of ability. The adults place a very high emphasis on the children's personal development since so many children enter school with low self-esteem and background experience. This is effective in preparing children to learn. The very good leadership and management of the foundation stage ensure that children settle into routines quickly and that provision is focused closely on all areas of their development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of planning and involvement of the adults with the children.
- The stimulating environments and opportunities for children to role-play and develop their skills in interacting with others.
- Children learn the importance of sharing and caring.
- They are polite and friendly to each other and to adults.

Commentary

39. Right from the moment children enter the nursery and throughout their time in the Foundation Stage a high priority is placed on the area of personal, social and emotional development. Children learn to share and care for each other through the activities they take part in. It is noticeable in the 'choosing' and 'tidying up' times that the children are responding well to what is expected by the teacher. For example, in the reception class children had been learning about different types of houses and had built and drawn their own houses. At the end of the lesson the teacher asked the children to tidy up and they did so very quickly with little fuss. When talking to the children they are very polite, friendly and often keen to talk about what they are doing. Although some children struggle with their spoken language they still try to explain in their own way, demonstrating the excitement they have in their learning. Both the nursery and reception classes have been planned to have a range of learning areas, including the Play House and kitchen for dressing up and role play, mathematics, writing, reading, computer and art areas with sand and water play. The quality of teaching is very good in this area and they learn very well. The children's attainment is likely to be well below average by the end of reception which represents good achievement from their very low attainment on entry.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Development of speaking and listening skills are very good from a very low start.

- Mark making and emergent writing opportunities support the early development of writing skills.
- Children enjoy their story times because of the shared reading and support of parents at home.

Commentary

40. The area of communication, language and literacy is generally the weakest area for many children when they enter the school. However, through the many opportunities they have to engage and develop their speaking and listening skills, children achieve well in this area. For example, reception children were thinking about Humpty Dumpty and their teacher's question "Why did Humpty Dumpty fall off the wall?" the children were encouraged to discuss with a partner whether they thought he was too heavy, too fat or did the wall break? Development of speaking and listening skills is often enhanced by the frequent use of music with the singing of nursery rhymes and other action songs which are used frequently in the reception class. Some children in the nursery class are beginning to write their own name and many are keen to sit in the mark making area where they are able to use a range of media to practise their emergent writing skills. They are helped to recognise their names with their name card and photograph on and have learnt to use a name card to put in a container to show they have had their snack. In the reception class children learn to record their ideas on how or why Humpty Dumpty fell in a variety of ways, such as using a tape recorder, copying over letters or having an adult write a sentence and then they copy some or all of the words. Children learn from these experiences that speech can be written down and start to record their own ideas in the written form. Children practise letter formation, then progress to learning to write their first and last names. Although some of the reception children are confidently writing their own names and able to read their writing back to the teacher, some are still in the emergent writing stage and require a lot of support from the teacher. Children join together with the adults to read and listen to stories and are achieving well because of the very good teaching and the support of the parents in listening to their child reading at home. The quality of teaching is very good in promoting the children's language development. Children's attainment is likely to be well below average by the end of reception.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of singing number rhymes and songs to develop sequencing of numbers.
- Children enjoy their lessons because they are fun and this supports their good achievement.
- Good use of mathematical language in lessons and in displays on the classroom walls.

Commentary

41. In mathematical development the nursery children start to learn about numbers through singing number rhymes and songs. For example, a display demonstrates how the nursery children have learned to count from 1 – 5 through singing "Five little ducks went swimming one day". This is supported by pictures of ducks with appropriate numerals to reinforce their

knowledge and understanding of counting in sequence. Children in the reception can count to ten, can tell o'clock time and perform simple number calculations by counting, such as $3 + 5 = 8$. A lesson was observed in the reception where the children were taking part in a jumping and stretching competition. In the jumping competition children had to predict how far they thought they or others could jump and learn to use language such as, far, further and furthest to compare the distances and were introduced to 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Teachers make the lessons fun and one teacher asked the children how far they thought he could jump and he could only make 3rd place! A similar task was required in the stretching competition, but this time the language experience was high, higher and highest to compare the lengths stretched. The quality of teaching is very good and children's attainment is on course to be well below average by the end of reception.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of the school and local environment.
- Attention to safety issues when children are taken off the school site.
- Good opportunities to use tools and equipment.

Commentary

42. In the area of knowledge and understanding of the world the nursery children are given many opportunities to operate simple equipment such as the listening centre and computer and to use tools such as play power tools and screwdrivers. In the reception class the children have been learning about different types of houses and had walked along Vernon Terrace to look at the differences between terraced and detached houses. This was followed up in the classroom where they were able to construct objects using construction materials and then worked with a partner to construct a home for a family, a dog or the three bears. They had had some experience of homes because they had already designed and made a home for a pet that was displayed in the classroom. While this was going on the teacher was recording children working and also gave children the experience of taking photographs with the digital camera. It was notable how well prepared the staff are in their instructions and attention to safety matters when taking the children off the school site. The quality of teaching is very good in developing children's understanding of the world around them and their attainment is likely to be well below average by the end of reception.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good support of the visiting music teacher in the nursery singing session.
- Opportunities to develop skills in cutting, sticking, constructing, moulding and painting.

Commentary

43. The nursery children have many opportunities for creative development through activities such as making patterns, using clay, cutting and sticking scrap materials, feeling different textures and using implements for scooping and filling, painting and making collages from recycled materials. Displays in the classroom of children's art included, house collages, colour mixing, introducing the new colours of pink, orange and black, chalk rubbings from the playground, colour marks with brushes and colourful handprints. Children in the reception also build and construct objects using recycled materials and have been engaged in computer art. Children have many opportunities for singing and experimenting with sounds. During the week the visiting music teacher took the nursery for a short session where they all thoroughly enjoyed singing the action songs. The quality of teaching is very good and has many strengths in this area. Children's attainment is on course to be well below average by the end of reception.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is very **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The interesting themes that stimulate children's imaginative and creative physical movement.
- The opportunities for nursery children to have access to the outside play area.
- The limited opportunities for the reception children to have access to outside play.

Commentary

44. In physical development nursery children learn to co-operate with each other by playing in the outdoor play area with a variety of equipment. This is not so easy for the reception children because they can only use the nursery outside area in the afternoons. However, the reception children were observed thoroughly enjoying themselves in the school hall where they had a music and movement lesson. This was on the theme of 'Bob the Builder' working on a building site and included the children imagining they were walking in mud or balancing on an imaginary plank. The building site orchestra consisted of children moving to sounds and representing in movement activities such as sawing, mixing, and hammering and good use was made of untuned percussion musical instruments. The quality of teaching is very good although children's attainment is likely to be well below average by the end of reception.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good because adults match tasks closely to the pupils' learning needs.
- Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language is very good because teachers and other adults use very good strategies to promote understanding.
- Standards are below average, especially in writing.
- Marking of work is inconsistent.

Commentary

45. Factors which need to be taken into consideration in relation to standards include the fact that children enter the foundation stage with very low attainment and even though children achieve well, only a small number attain the expected standards in communication, language and literacy. Other factors which have an impact upon standards are the high incidence of mobility, with many pupils entering and leaving the school throughout the year and the comparatively high proportion of pupils who enter school with English as an additional language. Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work show that standards are still below average at Year 5 with writing remaining a concern. However, the achievement of pupils as they pass through the school is good and indications at Year 5 are that a substantial number of pupils will reach an average standard by the end of Year 6. However, current standards by Year 5 in speaking and listening, reading and in writing are below average. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils receive support that is matched very well to their learning needs through very thorough diagnosis, although for several pupils the extent of their needs tends to limit the immediate benefit to their learning. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language achieve very well because support and the tasks encourage active participation and their use of spoken language.

46. Speaking and listening skills are weak on entry to the school so their development, together with reading, are the main priorities for development. Much of the work seen in Years 1 and 2 shows good progress in pupils' phonic development and improvements are evident in reading. The school is well aware of the weakness in writing and plans are in hand to address this issue. There is good emphasis upon writing in sentences and in Years 1 and 2 pupils are learning to use capital letters and full stops in their sentence writing. They know how to use a story planner to prepare a piece of writing (main characters, setting, opening, main story line and ending). However, more extended writing has yet to emerge. Writing plans seen in pupils' literacy folders show how they are planning to write instructions for a game, a letter to a pop hero, instructions to make a snowman and how to make gingerbread biscuits but the plans fail to reach fruition as pieces of extended writing. Year 5 pupils are able to analyse a traditional story and write their own version, but despite teaching which is inspirational at times, the

quality and quantity of writing is still below average. Examples of good quality writing are seldom in evidence in other subjects of the curriculum either, so writing, in all its forms and in all areas of the curriculum, remains a key area for development.

47. Teaching and learning in English are good. Teachers have a good and secure knowledge and understanding of the national literacy strategy, which has been implemented well. Strengths of teaching include good, consistent planning and very good management of pupils which is reflected in very good behaviour. The very good promotion of equality of opportunity is seen through the good and very good achievements of pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as a second language. Weaknesses include the acceptance of poor standards of presentation and inconsistent marking of pupils' work. Marking ranges from ticks only to comments such as "Well done, James! You have remembered how to write a list and have tried very hard to make it look neat." Teachers assess pupils work regularly and keep suitable records, using sampling of pupils' work to help consider standards.

48. Management and leadership are good. The English co-ordinator has worked hard to improve standards. She has sought help from the local authority's literacy consultant, has carried out an audit to reveal where improvements are needed and has written a good subject action plan to address the issues. She has taken a lead role in developing the new library and with the support of the school library service has discarded old and irrelevant books, restocking with new material. A scheme of work has been produced for the library and all classes are timetabled for its use. She provides strong leadership and presents herself as a good teacher and role model for her colleagues.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. Teachers give good attention to language and technical vocabulary in other subjects, for example mathematics and history. They develop pupils' ideas and knowledge through good discussions and questioning which are effective in helping to overcome pupils' weak speaking and listening skills. However, there is less consistent attention to encouraging pupils to write, and there is a need to extend the range and quality of writing in other subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching overall promotes good learning and achievement.
- Standards are below average by Year 2 but improve to broadly average by Year 5.
- Teachers make a good choice of tasks linked to a well-structured curriculum, although there are few opportunities for pupils to write up problem-solving and investigational work.
- The subject leader has a good understanding of the role.

Commentary

50. In the Foundation Stage, very good teaching enables children to begin to learn the number names and sequence from a low start, through songs and rhymes. They begin to count in sequence, and this continues in reception where children use counting to perform simple

counting on calculations. Standards are well below average since many children are at a very early stage of number understanding.

51. Standards by the end of Year 2 are below average. The good quality of teaching and pupils' good attitudes to the subject contribute to pupils' good achievement. The teachers focus carefully on building pupils' knowledge and skills through well-presented class discussion. There is a good emphasis on reinforcing mental patterns such as doubling or counting on to find a total and, as a result, pupils achieve well. Teachers make a good choice of task which are usually, but not always, supported by suitable practical resources. Pupils with special educational needs and the lower attaining lack the skills and understanding to perform simple additions by counting on to find a total. The average attaining pupils understand addition and can rearrange the numbers to form the subtraction, although many are still reliant on fingers to find the totals. The higher attaining pupils have an early understanding of division but rely on adult help to follow the practical process. Pupils' previous work shows satisfactory coverage of topics such as measurement of length and weight, and simple shapes, indicating below average standards overall. In some cases there are considerable gaps in the dates of pupils' recorded work, although it is recognised that many activities are practical.

52. By Year 5 pupils' numeracy skills are broadly average. This was evident in a card sequence game where pupils had to give the answer to one question and read out the next. The main task of identifying rules of divisibility was introduced carefully by the teacher, who brought out pupils' observations well through good questioning and discussion. Most pupils recognised rules for division by 2, 5 or 10 although found explaining a rule for division by 4 more difficult. Overall, pupils' previous work indicates good achievement from when they were in Year 2. Their work shows satisfactory subject coverage, including rules of number operations, handling data and geometry. There are a very few examples of more open investigational tasks but their potential to challenge pupils and produce a well-written piece of work is not brought out. Standards by around one quarter of the pupils, who are higher attaining, are on course to reach Level 5 by the end of Year 6. Overall standards are broadly average.

53. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 3 - 5 and as a result pupils achieve well. Children with special educational needs are included well along with all pupils. In lively and well-presented explanations about fractions in Years 3 and 4 classes, the teachers gave a good emphasis to visual patterns and relationships so that pupils gained new understanding. For example, in using a counting stick to count in halves, the teacher had good interactions with the pupils that brought out the values of positions well. In another clear explanation, the teacher built a fraction wall enabling pupils to see the connections between equivalent fractions. The higher attaining pupils showed good understanding and could say 'if it's a higher number the fraction is smaller'. The teachers' good questioning skills brought out pupils' understanding well. They sustained good interest and attention and, for example, this had a positive impact on the higher attaining pupils' achievement as they recorded equivalent fractions.

54. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils which encourage them to work hard. Teachers have good subject knowledge which is used to good effect in their explanations. These are usually supported by good, practical demonstrations. Questioning is clear and precise, often prompting pupils to explain their answers although opportunities to encourage pupils to discuss answers amongst themselves are not often exploited. Subject planning is good, providing tasks that are suitably varied for pupils' differing attainments, and the subject curriculum meets statutory requirements. There are good whole school assessment procedures and on-going records. The quality of marking is variable. While teachers provide pupils with an idea of their progress verbally during lessons, much of the marking consists of a tick with no comment as to how pupils may improve. At times, the amount of recorded work in pupils' books is also thin. The subject leader is relatively new to the post and is rightly taking a sensitive approach to establishing her role, but she demonstrates a good understanding. She has prepared a useful action plan and recognises the need to become more familiar with the work of the younger pupils.

Mathematics across the curriculum

55. There are many examples where mathematics is used to communicate ideas or to provide information. These are found in science, physical education and ICT for example, and teachers help to make simple applications of mathematics relevant through their discussions. Pupils demonstrate satisfactory understanding of these applications because they are relevant to the activities.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching overall.
- There is a good emphasis on investigation.
- The work of the subject manager is very good.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress because of the support they receive.
- Higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently to meet their potential and do not take enough responsibility for organising and planning their own work.
- Cross-curricular links with mathematics and ICT are too limited.
- The pupils' attitude to their learning is good

Commentary

56. Standards in science are below those expected by Year 2. The present Year 5 pupils are reaching similar standards to pupils of the same age nationally. There has been a strong focus on the development of pupils' investigative skills that is now beginning to have an impact on standards. Furthermore, the good quality of teaching and pupils' good attitudes to the subject contribute to pupils' good achievement. The support given to pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language all contribute to pupils' good achievement because adults make thoughtful interventions and help the pupils to interpret the language and ideas.

57. The pupils like their science lessons because they regularly conduct experiments and activities are often practical. By Year 2 pupils have looked at healthy living, particularly the need for a balanced diet and the importance of exercise. For example, they have undertaken an investigation into measuring the heartbeat before and after exercise and compared the results. In their studies on 'Force' pupils have investigated pushing and pulling and used magnets in an experiment to move a model car whilst learning about how magnets attract and repel. Pupils have learned to identify which materials conduct or act as insulation by using a battery and bulb where materials that conduct electricity light the bulb. In a Year 1 and 2 lesson pupils were working in the ICT suite investigating the effect on the distance a car travels down a ramp covered with different surfaces that included sandpaper, smooth, carpet and sponge surfaces. The results of the investigation were recorded on a graph package on the computers. Pupils have a basic understanding of the ideas of diet, force and electricity, for example, but their practical enquiry skills are under-developed so that standards are below average.

58. To ensure consistency in progress in the science scheme of work the mixed Year 3 and 4 classes have their science lessons separately. In a lesson observed in Year 3 pupils were looking at unhealthy and healthy gums and teeth following a visit the previous week from the dental health nurse to talk about the importance of cleaning teeth. In this lesson they were planning to investigate how fluoride in toothpaste helps to make our teeth strong. Pupils have investigated different materials and learned how some materials are better at heat insulation than others. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, pupils became very involved in discussions in an experiment where they were testing with thermometers the temperature of water in jugs, that were insulated by a variety of materials, in order to identify the transfer of thermal energy over a

measured period of time. The pupils are making good progress in making predictions and carrying out fair tests because the school has focused on scientific enquiry. Pupils use a range of methods for recording their investigations and some examples of diagrams, charts and graphs were seen in pupils' books. However, with the exception of some very challenging mathematical work linked to their science investigation in Year 5, where pupils were looking at 'gases around us', the cross-curricular links with mathematics are limited, as is the use of ICT for researching scientific information or using it for recording their investigations.

59. Teaching and learning are good overall. Pupils of all ages achieve well because teachers ask probing questions to make them think. Marking is satisfactory, but lacks consistency because in some classes very little correction of punctuation and spelling was seen in the books, notably the spelling of subject vocabulary words. There is some good practice in marking where the teachers challenge the pupils to think more deeply, especially about the conclusions from their experiments. However, higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently to meet their potential and could be more involved in planning their own investigations, as well as independent scientific research. Children with special educational needs are included well along with all pupils. The children with hearing impairment receive very good support and consideration from the specialist teacher.

60. The subject is very well managed by the subject co-ordinator, who has specific knowledge and expertise in science. Science is planned in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum and national guidance on the teaching of science and is supported by a published scheme of work. There are suitable assessment procedures to record pupils' progress at the end of each unit of work. The subject co-ordinator has only been in the post for a short time, but in that time has audited the provision for science, identified and purchased new resources to teach the subject and has written an action plan for future development. A good start has been made in setting up a science portfolio of pupils' work and in monitoring the work through the sampling of pupils' work. In addition, the subject co-ordinator has sought and has been given the advice and support of the Local Education Authority Science Adviser to identify and develop areas for development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject leader has very good knowledge and understanding which she applies well to her role.
- Pupils achieve well in ICT because teaching is good.
- Teachers make a good choice of interesting tasks, with several good applications across subjects.

Commentary

61. Pupils achieve well through the school from a low start in the Foundation Stage because they are given worthwhile tasks to do and have good attitudes. Standards by the end of Year 2 are below average and by Year 5 are broadly average. Pupils in Year 1 know and can explain about a good variety of sources of information, such as the print in books, pictures, the radio and computers. By Year 2 pupils have the early skills to enter the Internet and open a web-site, going through the steps correctly to find historical information on World War 2. They demonstrate developing confidence in using the icons and features of sites to locate relevant information. Their mouse skills are satisfactory and keyboard skills are adequate. Some very good questioning by one teacher brought out the significance of differences between life in the 1940's and the present so that pupils demonstrated good achievement. Her high expectations and warm relationships ensured that pupils concentrated well and wanted to discuss their ideas. Children with special educational needs are included very well along with all pupils. The children with hearing impairment receive very good support and consideration from the specialist teacher.

62. In Years 3 and 4, pupils responded well to the challenge of entering information into a database in order to find the best pet for their teacher. Most pupils, with suitable help, set up the field names and entered data by following the commands correctly. The teacher was active around the class, helping to maintain the pace and pupils' concentration. She led a good discussion towards the end of the lesson where most pupils understood how a database might be useful in making decisions. They understood, for example, that some pets would not be suitable on the 12th floor of a block of flats. In a further lesson with a Year 3 and 4 class, the teacher provided suitable challenge to find the moral of various fables. This led to good discussions amongst the pupils, who usually agreed on the solution. The times of lessons for

ICT in Year 5 prevented a lesson from being observed. The indications are that standards are on course to be broadly in line with expectations by the end of Year 5.

63. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with a good choice of relevant tasks, which have a positive impact on achievement. The very good understanding of the subject leader is influential in teachers' planning and approach, ensuring that pupils acquire skills of ICT well. Teachers demonstrate generally good subject knowledge which they use well during explanations and questioning. The current arrangements in the ICT suite are not ideal because there are sufficient computers for only around half a class to work comfortably. This usually requires teachers to provide a supporting task for the other pupils, which are useful but mean that pupils have less time at the computers. Assessments are carried out appropriately at the end of each unit of work, usually each half term, and the information is used well to identify where further teaching is needed. The subject leader provides very good direction and support and is bringing valuable experience from across the local authority to bear upon school developments.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

64. There is a good, growing range of applications of ICT linked to other subjects. For example, pupils searched the Internet for historical information. They have the early skills to set up a database which may be applied to any subject. There are close links with literacy skills as pupils search for and extract relevant information.

HUMANITIES

The school has sensibly decided that topics in geography and history should be 'blocked' so that study can be carried out to a suitable depth and detail. It is not possible to make secure judgements regarding provision in **geography** as only two lessons were observed. However, from those lessons observed, scrutiny of work and display and discussion with the co-ordinators, the evidence indicates that provision, overall, is satisfactory. No lessons were seen in **history** therefore no judgement could be made. There is a satisfactory allocation of curriculum time for geography and history. The areas covered in history and geography fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum and provision has been planned in line with the advice provided by Northampton Improvement and Advisory Service's curriculum map. Lessons seen during the inspection dealt with the topics of reducing waste in Years 3 and 4, with saving water the topic in Year 5. Consistency in planning is assured through the subject co-ordinators collecting planning from the teachers to scrutinise, alongside monitoring samples of pupils' work. Materials and resources are circulated by the co-ordinators to support teachers. Assessment is carried out at the end of each unit of work, usually each half term, and pupils are assessed against expectations gathered from national advice. A good feature of the assessment process is the gathering of samples of assessed pupils' work to help teachers set their own expectations. Subject co-ordinators are aware that a weakness in geography and history is the failure to encompass a fully cross-curricular philosophy where, for instance, extended writing in subjects such as geography, history and religious education can serve to develop pupils' literacy skills. They are also aware that planning needs to provide for the needs of pupils in Years 3 to 6 as the school grows towards being a complete primary school.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good scheme of work which reflects the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus.
- Good resources and artefacts to support the religious education curriculum.
- Enthusiastic leadership by the subject co-ordinator.
- Good contribution towards pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Assemblies make insufficient contribution to pupils' spiritual development.
- Teaching needs to encourage a more personal response to religious events for example, Lent.

Commentary

65. Only one lesson was observed in religious education, so judgements are based upon other sources of evidence as well. From work seen, display and discussion with the co-ordinator there is every indication that provision is good. The co-ordinator provides very enthusiastic leadership, acting as a source of advice and support for teachers. She has gathered a good range of resources, books and artefacts to support the subject, including material for the study of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.

66. Teachers' planning and samples of pupils' work indicate that teaching is at least satisfactory and that pupils are achieving well. In the one lesson observed, in Year 5, pupils showed a very good understanding of the events in the story of Joshua. They showed considerable maturity in the activity in which a volunteer took on the role of Joshua and answered an array of questions from the class about his experience and feelings at Jericho. In discussion, pupils did well to relate the historical events of the story to present day situations.

67. Although religious education gives pupils a good opportunity to learn about the major faiths and contributes well to helping them to develop self-knowledge and spiritual awareness, the school assembly fails to provide a consistent and effective contribution towards spiritual development. While the provision in religious education reflects all the aspects of the locally Agreed Syllabus, the co-ordinator's view, supported by the inspector, is that more emphasis should be placed upon the section that deals with pupils' reflection on and personal response to religious events.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

The subject managers for art and design, design technology and music are all new to the posts. In that time they have audited resources and have written action plans for the development of their subjects. All are keen to promote the teaching and learning in their subjects and have availed themselves of in-service training courses in their respective areas to develop their knowledge and understanding of the teaching and learning in the subject. No teaching was observed during the inspection in these subjects so that it is not possible to make a judgement on provision in the subjects. The subject manager has been in post for **art and design** since January 2004 and during that time has been involved in a 'Managing Change' project with two other schools. This has involved having two professional artists in to work with pupils in Year 5 and the evidence of the pupils' work is clear to see in the excellent displays of relief prints and hand sculptures. Some good work was seen in action with a group of pupils engaged in lace making with an experienced visiting lace maker. There was a range of other artwork on display seen around the school, including Tiger prints, Portrait studies,

pastel reflection studies, Van Gogh sunflowers, observational drawing, still life on the theme of the sea and a range of computer art. There is a range of claywork and the school has its own kiln where the pottery work is fired and glazed. A good start has been made by the art manager, including starting a portfolio of pupils' artwork and advising, supporting and working alongside staff in art and design lessons. Priorities at the moment are to develop the art and design curriculum, especially for the Year 6 class starting in September and to introduce a new assessment and monitoring system for art and design. **Design and technology** is a subject that is in urgent need of development. Although food technology is taught across the school and there is a good display of the bread making in Year 5, there is little evidence of consistency and progression of the subject across the school. The only examples seen on display were of the reception class project where they had designed and built a home for a pet and photograph frames made in a Year 3 and 4 class. However, the new design and technology portfolio has the early design sheets for a train design to be undertaken in Year 1 and 2 and an example of a mini-sewing project where pupils designed and made bookmarks in Year 3 and 4. Other examples in the portfolio show further work from Year 3 and 4, including, researching a range of pencil cases in advance of undertaking a project 'to design and make a container capable of holding 10 pencils' and photographic evidence of the of the completed pencil cases. However, there is limited evidence, with the exception of the photograph frames, of pupils' work with rigid materials where pupils use a range of tools to cut and join these materials. The new subject manager has worked hard in the short term to address these issues. This has included updating the subject policy, an audit of the resources and circulation of a questionnaire to all staff to establish their requirements with regard to in-service training. It has also highlighted essential resources to support the teaching and learning in the subject. The school has focused on the development of **music** and this has included providing a well-equipped music studio that has a very good range of tuned and untuned percussion, electronic keyboards and string instruments, including violin and guitar. In addition, the school has invested in providing visiting music teachers to teach the violin, keyboard, guitar, recorders and to take the music lessons for all classes. There is a school choir of approximately 40 children who sing in school concerts and special assemblies, such as the Spring Assembly taking place just before Easter. They have sung for Age Concern and sometimes in church and in the rehearsal that was observed they were very keen and thoroughly enjoying the experience of singing together. There is a new music manager who teaches part-time in the school, but does not teach music. This is taught by a visiting music specialist and the music manager ensures that regular liaison is maintained with the visiting teacher. Since being in post the music manager has recently updated the music policy, (although that has yet to be shared with the staff) and has audited the music provision and resources, noting areas for development. The Northamptonshire Music and Performing Arts Service provided a woodwind recital group to visit and play to the pupils in the autumn term. At the present time all classes have their music lessons with the visiting music specialist on a Tuesday and no music teaching is undertaken by the class teachers. No further music teaching is undertaken during the rest of the week and there was no singing in assemblies, so it not possible to give an overall judgement on the provision of music. Music is a subject that some teachers lack confidence in teaching. At the present time no class teacher remains with the class while the visiting teacher takes the lesson. These are missed opportunities for the teachers to afford themselves of regular in-house training by working with the visiting teacher in the lessons and then leading another lesson in the week where they could practise and enhance their knowledge and understanding of teaching music. At the present time this is a weakness in the provision of music. The **physical education** curriculum provides pupils with a good range of tasks across all areas of activity. From the evidence of three lessons, one in reception, one in a Year1/2 class and one in a Year 3/4 class, it is likely that pupils' attainment will reach the expectation by the end of Years 2 and 5. The children in reception took part well in their warm-up session, following the

teacher's very good control and direction. Children moved as though on a building site, taking on the style well. By Years 1 and 2 pupils are introduced to more controlled games skills. The class teacher provided a good, motivating task for pupils to improve their throwing skills with a beanbag, but for most pupils their aim and control were inaccurate in landing the beanbag in or through a hoop. The classroom assistant was very active in supporting pupils, which helped their achievement. The teacher provided a good development to the lesson, but opportunities to help pupils evaluate their work were missed. In a Year 3 and 4 dance lesson, pupils succeeded in completing a full sequence of various moves, following the clear direction of the teacher. The behaviour of most pupils was good for much of the time, although there were instances of very challenging behaviour which the classroom assistant tried to control by applying good strategies. The subject leader has carried out a careful audit and is helping planning for the transition to a primary school through his good leadership. He recognises that aspects of provision need further development and through his effective management staff training sessions are arranged. There is some use of a digital camera to record pupils working which encourages them to improve and provides a good source of self-evaluation.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The school provides a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education which gives a good basis for learning about issues such as care and responsibility for example. A very good approach to promoting children's personal development is evident in the way children and parents are welcomed at the start of the day in the nursery. Very good class organisation ensures that attractive activities are available to encourage choice and independence which has a good impact on children's development. Standards by the end of Year 2 are below average but by Year 5 are average, showing good achievement. Teachers in the Years 1 and 2 classes use class discussions in a productive way to help resolve any difficulties carrying over from playtimes and to prepare the pupils for the following session. Teachers create a thinking atmosphere during class assemblies to help pupils consider others' or their own lives. For example, after a lively discussion about how special shoes are needed for different occasions the pupils reflected on how they or others were special in some way. In Years 3 and 4, pupils discussed how to make the road outside school safer, and the importance of building healthy bodies. All pupils were included well and contributed to discussion. The pupils were keen to read out their ideas for a high-exercise game to encourage fitness and most pupils listened well. They demonstrated satisfactory understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The very good relationships which all members of staff promote act as a significant support for pupils' personal development and understanding alongside the formal curriculum. Pupils' personal development is monitored and tracked closely and members of staff are very responsive to identified needs. The quality of teaching and learning is good and the subject leader provides good support and direction.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	6
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	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	4
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3

The effectiveness of management

3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7). The grade 8 shows the judgement does not apply to this school.