

INSPECTION REPORT

**ASHBURY WITH COMPTON BEAUCHAMP CE
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Swindon

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123220

Headteacher: Mr D Howlett

Lead inspector: John Lilly

Dates of inspection: 2 – 3 March 2004

Inspection number: 260669

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:	Church of England - Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	54
School address:	Ashbury Swindon Wiltshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Richard Taylor
Date of previous inspection:	29 September 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ashbury is a very small Church of England primary school with 54 girls and boys on roll between the ages of 4 and 11. Most pupils join the school with above average attainment. However, there are also several pupils with significant special educational needs, some of whom have joined the school following lack of success elsewhere. The school takes pupils from a fairly wide area of rural villages and most pupils come from families that are more socially and economically favoured than average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. A large majority of pupils are white/British, and all pupils speak English. A separate pre-school operates on the school site and the school is working with this school to provide an 'Early Years Unit' that will integrate the provision for children from aged three until the end of the reception year.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
12487	John Lilly	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage English History Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) Special educational needs English as an additional language
9282	Clare Lorenz	Lay inspector	
32327	Sue Alton	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology (ICT) Art and design Design and technology Geography Music Physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Ashbury is a good school with strong values, high aspirations and a warm, purposeful and family ethos. The headteacher provides good leadership for staff and pupils alike, and this is underpinned by strong governance and efficient management. Children join the reception year with above average attainment, achieve well throughout the school and progress to secondary education with well above average attainment, especially in literacy and numeracy. Provision for reception age children and support for pupils with special educational needs are very good, and pupils who join the school with a lack of success elsewhere rapidly improve. This makes it a highly inclusive school in which all pupils achieve well. Teaching and learning are good and often very good. Relationships are excellent and pupils develop very well as rounded and confident young people. The school offers good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The warm and caring ethos of the school makes it a very good place to be. Consequently, pupils develop very well and are very keen and eager to learn.
- The headteacher's leadership creates a staff team with high expectations and very strong values.
- Very good teaching of literacy and numeracy helps pupils achieve very well.
- Management provides staff with insufficient guidance on how to improve their performance.
- Standards in science are not as high as in English and mathematics.
- Although staff identify very able pupils, the teaching sometimes offers them insufficient challenge in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen faster than at the national rate and are now high overall. The curriculum is better planned and provision in the reception class is now very good. Provision in information and communication technology has improved and the school's planning for improvement gives a much clearer direction to the school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

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

Pupils achieve well in Years 2 to 6, and very well in Reception and Year 1. Most pupils in the reception year achieve very well and exceed the goals set nationally for the end of the reception year.

The comparisons in the table above should be treated with caution as the attainment of just one pupil can change them considerably. The picture overall is that standards are rising at faster than the national rate and are well above average. Standards in science are significantly lower, however, than in English and mathematics.

Standards in national tests and assessments at the end Year 2 are also improving and in 2003 were well above average overall, although only above average in writing.

Standards of attainment seen during the inspection remain high. Writing has improved in Year 2 and there has been some improvement in attainment in science in Year 6. Standards in subjects other than English and mathematics tend to be average rather than above average. In information and communication technology they are below average in Year 6, although improving as pupils benefit from the improved resources.

Pupils develop very well, becoming rounded, confident young people. **Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.** Consequently, they relate extremely well with others, are keen and eager to learn, try hard and their behaviour is very good. Their attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides good quality of education and very good provision in reception and Year 1. **Teaching and learning are good and very good in literacy and numeracy.** The curriculum is broad and relevant, although the high priority given to English and mathematics leaves too little time and emphasis for other subjects. Improved planning is rectifying this weakness.

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. Support, advice and guidance for pupils are very good. The school listens very closely to pupils' views and acts upon them.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good, creating a purposeful, orderly and successful school community, but managers give too little time to monitoring and improving standards in lessons. Governance is good, giving clear direction and challenging aims to meet.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents value the school highly and make a very positive contribution to the pupils' learning. Pupils love their school and feel very valued and safe. They appreciate the way their views are sought and acted upon.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that managers have more opportunity to monitor standards in classrooms in order to guide colleagues on how to improve.
- Give the same priority to science as English and mathematics, and so raise standards.
- Consider in greater depth what very able pupils need to achieve their potential.

The school meets statutory requirements.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects.

Attainment by Year 6 is well above average in English and mathematics, and average overall in other subjects. Pupils achieve well throughout the school, and very well in the reception and Year 1 class.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in English and mathematics is well above average.
- Achievement in Reception and Year 1 is very good.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well.
- Able and very able pupils do not achieve as well as they could, except in English and mathematics.

Commentary

1. Children join the school with above average attainment and leave Year 6 with well above average attainment, especially in literacy and numeracy. Almost all pupils achieve well and many very well, including pupils with special educational needs. Achievement is very good in the reception year.
2. Results in national tests and assessments at the end of Years 2 and 6 show good improvement overall since the last inspection, and at a higher rate of improvement than nationally. Overall, results compare well with standards in similar schools. In these tests and assessments in 2003 at the end of Year 2, most pupils attained well above average standards in reading and mathematics, and average standards in writing. Standards were average in writing because no pupils attained the higher level 3. Standards in science were also good but again fewer than average pupils achieved the higher level 3. In these tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003, standards were well above average in English and mathematics, with all pupils attaining the expected level 4, and half attaining the higher level 5 in English, and a third in mathematics. Standards in science were average, with a third of pupils attained the higher level 5.
3. Standards during the inspection show that above average attainment has been maintained, with good improvement in writing in Year 2. The difference in standards tends to reflect the school's priorities. Standards are highest in English and mathematics because these subjects are given very high priority, and lower in science, which tends to be given too low priority.
4. Attainment overall in other subjects is average and pupils' achievement is sound and often good throughout the school. The better resources for information and communication technology are raising attainment. Attainment in this subject is average in Year 2. It is below average in Year 6 because there has not been enough time for these pupils to benefit from the improved teaching that has been made possible by the better resources. In most subjects other than English and mathematics teaching does not offer able and very able pupils enough challenge and consequently they do not always reach their potential.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal qualities, together with their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Pupils' behaviour is very good. Attendance is good and pupils are punctual.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between teachers and pupils and amongst pupils are excellent.
- Pupils are very confident and wish to learn.
- Behaviour is very good.
- Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils' cultural development is good.
- Attendance is good and pupils are punctual.

Commentary

5. As at the last inspection, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils say that they are expected to work hard and that they like to learn. They respond very well to stimulating lessons. They are articulate and express their views politely and clearly. They work well in class groups and individually, although sometimes they are unwilling to research on their own.
6. The school has very high expectations for pupils' conduct and they live up to this. They understand, like and respect the systems of rewards and sanctions. They behave very well and show care and consideration for other pupils and adults. This caring attitude, which is enshrined in the school's aims, is inclusive and ensures that children with difficulties are looked after very well.
7. Assemblies mainly follow the pattern of the Christian year and are a rich and very effective source for pupils' spiritual development. Pupils have many further opportunities for spiritual development, for example in history and PSHE lessons. Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong and understand the effect of their words and actions on others. There is a strong sense of community within the school. For example, older pupils read with, or to, younger ones and members of the school council took part in the interviews for a new head teacher. The school is conscious that in a culturally homogenous area pupils may have scant experience of life in a multi-cultural society and takes good care to broaden pupils' knowledge and appreciation of other cultures and religious beliefs. The displays from different cultures around the school are one result of good provision.
8. The good level of attendance and pupils' punctual arrival at school, as at the last inspection, are the basis for the good progress that pupils make. There have been no exclusions within the last two years.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.5
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.2
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 good quality of education, with several very good features.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good in reception and Year 1, and good overall in Years 2 to 6. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is usually very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers help pupils with different abilities and attainment to achieve well.

- Teaching is full of pace and exciting challenge.
- Marking is too often lacking in guidance on how to improve. It is, however, very good in literacy and numeracy for Years 4 to 6.
- Teachers do not always understand the types of learning very able pupils need in order to achieve well.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 14 lessons or parts of lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	5	4	4	0	0	0

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

- Teaching is good throughout the school and very good in Reception and Year 1. In Years 2 to 6, it is often very good and universally so in literacy and numeracy. In these years, however, the quality varies and, while usually at least satisfactory and often good in subjects other than English and mathematics, it is rarely very good. A strength of the teaching and, therefore, learning is the success teachers have in helping pupils with special educational needs achieve very well.
- When teaching is very effective and learning rapid:
 - Lessons are very well planned and managed so that pupils learn at the right pace and level of challenge.
 - The objectives for the lesson are very clear and pupils know what they need to achieve and try hard.
 - The lessons are full of pace, exciting and challenging, and pupils respond with ambitious attention.
 - There is very effective partnership between teachers and skilled teaching assistants.
- When teaching is less effective and learning slower:
 - The teaching is not well matched to each level of ability, and the more-able pupils become bored and lose concentration.
 - Teaching does not make effective use of the teaching assistant.
 - The planning does not take enough account of what the pupils already know. This restricts the pupils' ability to use skills and knowledge already learned; their unidentified lack of knowledge sometimes leads to misunderstandings.
- Teachers know their pupils well and use this knowledge to match the learning to individual needs. They are usually very skilled at managing the many ages in each class, making certain that, whatever their age, pupils learn at a level appropriate to their ability and attainment. This strength is underpinned by the pupils' willingness to take on challenges, often helping others who find the work more difficult.
- Assessment is accurate and continuous, and teachers track and evaluate pupils' progress. This effective use of assessment helps teachers to identify problems and to put things right when learning slows. Marking, however, does not always show pupils clearly enough why they succeed, why they meet problems and what they need to do to improve. Teachers identify very able pupils, but do not always understand what they need to achieve their potential. Teachers make good use of targets in English and mathematics, but these tend to be long-term. The school could usefully consider shorter-term targets agreed with pupils that pupils evaluate each week, writing their own plans for improvement. Although pupils take responsibility for their own learning, they do not always have the skills and understandings necessary to manage their work effectively, for example independent research skills by able pupils.

The curriculum

The curriculum is broad, satisfactorily balanced and very relevant to the needs of all pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for reception pupils is very good, providing a very good foundation for future learning.
- Staff are well deployed to help all abilities and ages to achieve equally well.
- Teachers are linking learning across subjects increasingly well.
- Very good support enables pupils with special educational needs and those who have not had success elsewhere to have full access to the learning.
- The curriculum does not always provide sufficient opportunities for very able pupils.

Commentary

14. The curriculum is broad, satisfactorily balanced and very relevant, and it meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and for religious education. The curriculum for reception children is very good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
15. The curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of all pupils and is significantly enriched through links with the local community, parents and other schools. The key strength is the way staff are deployed to overcome the small size of the school. The headteacher teaches every morning so that pupils can be divided into three classes for literacy and numeracy; this leads to a marked and positive improvement in their progress. In particular, it allows Reception and Year 1 pupils to learn effectively not only in smaller groups but also in ways specific to their needs. Similarly, Years 2 and 3 work together, the higher attainers bringing on the lower attainers. In Years 4 to 6, these arrangements allow very able pupils in Year 4 to do work not normally available until Year 6 because it is easier for able Year 4 pupils to try the work that the Year 6 pupils are attempting. These curriculum arrangements are a key reason why pupils achieve so well.
16. Teachers carefully plan and deliver the curriculum to provide for each level of ability; this enables each pupil to progress at the right speed. The school has placed very high priority on literacy and numeracy, and this has, to some extent, led to the quality of provision for other subjects improving at a slower rate. Management realised this and the school improved resources for, in particular, science and information and communication technology; this investment is already showing benefits. Similarly, instead of thinking of, for example, history and literacy as completely separate subjects, improved planning now allows history to be learned through literacy or literacy through study in history. This is again bringing benefits and offers potential for further development, creating better balance within the curriculum.
17. Pupils with special educational needs, some of whom join the school later than the reception year, have very good access to the curriculum. Some, who came from other schools where they were not successful, now feel fully included and able to succeed. The school identifies very able and gifted pupils, but recognises that it needs to have a better understanding of their learning needs and how to plan a curriculum to meet them.
18. Underpinning the whole curriculum is the very good provision for personal development. There is a well planned personal, social, health and citizenship programme (PSHCE), enhanced by such as the school council and circle time (times when pupils can talk through problems and concerns).
19. The accommodation is used well and provides a lively and efficient place in which to learn. Displays are not only attractive but also stimulate learning, excite curiosity, give clear messages to make pupils think, and celebrate with joy the pupils' achievements. Staff are well

qualified, well deployed and of sufficient number to meet the requirements of the curriculum. Resources for learning are of good quality, sufficient range and very accessible.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. Support, advice and guidance for pupils are very good. The school listens very closely to pupils' views and acts upon them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good procedures ensure that pupils are well cared for in a safe and healthy environment.
- The school seeks the pupils' views through the school council and takes action as a result.
- Very good support and guidance is based upon good monitoring of academic progress and personal development.

Commentary

20. The school's 'We CARE' mission and highly inclusive values embody and lie behind the care and guidance pupils receive. The school has a well-earned reputation for helping all pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs and those who have not been successful elsewhere.
21. As at the last inspection, the staff know pupils well and this gives pupils a very strong sense of belonging to a stable and secure community. Pupils respond to this well and value highly that their needs and concerns have individual attention. 'I like my school because it is like a family. I like one of my teachers because I can go to her and talk about my problem - and she will sort it out.' Pupils of all ages are looked after well, and this is not easy when each class has a wide age and ability range. Child protection procedures are thorough; health and safety issues are regularly reviewed and concerns remedied.
22. Pupils of all ages confirm that their views are listened to and valued. School council members represent their own class's views and contribute actively to school decision-taking. They have recently put forward their ideas for the re-design of the grassed area and have been involved in the appointment of a new headteacher.
23. The staff use an effective mixture of formal and informal methods for monitoring pupils' personal development and academic progress. Teachers are well aware of pupils' achievement and potential, for example through regular assessment and analysis of attainment in national tests. In literacy and numeracy, this leads to teachers guiding pupils by setting targets. These, however, tend to be longer term, and the school could consider agreeing smaller, more immediate and shorter-term targets with pupils. Achievement is not as high in subjects where pupils are less clear about the standards they need to and can reach, for example in science. Booster classes are run prior to the national tests for pupils in Years 2 and 6 to make them familiar with examination techniques and to guide pupils on how to achieve higher level results. Pupils receive guidance, however, more on how to do well in tests, than on developing the thinking skills that they need to underpin high attainment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnership with parents and the community are very good. Links with other schools are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school seeks and values parents' views highly.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and contribute very well to their children's learning at home and school, and this raises achievement.
- Local community involvement is very good and this enriches the curriculum.
- Information about pupils' progress and standards is good.

Commentary

24. Parents are valued and their views listened to closely. For example, they are asked for their views on many matters including the school development plan. They support their children very well, as at the last inspection, in hearing them read or ensuring that homework is done. This powerful partnership and good communication could be developed further, for example through home-school books that ensure continuous communication.
25. The 'School Friends' association makes an important contribution to the financial well being of the school and many members of the village contribute very effectively to pupils' classroom learning, for example by reading with pupils. Strong links with the local church are further strengthened through partnership with other Christian denominations. Links with the Faringdon Partnership schools and the sports community college work well and give pupils and staff opportunities for wider study and discussion which would not otherwise be available in a small school. There are, however, comparatively few cross-phase lessons, such as classes held jointly with the secondary school or ICT linked lessons. These might be of value to the academically most able older pupils. Children from the on-site pre-school are gently introduced to Reception by joining the class for two days per week as they approach five years old. Year 6 pupils have a suitable programme for transfer to secondary school.
26. The quality of information given to parents about pupils' standards and progress has improved since the last inspection when it was satisfactory. It is now of good standard.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher creates a school with very strong values and high aspirations.
- The governing body is developing a good strategic plan for the school.
- Managers do not monitor standards in lessons sufficiently and, therefore, miss opportunities to help teachers improve.

Commentary

27. The headteacher provides good leadership for pupils and staff. A significant strength is the way he has created a school with strong values, inspiring beliefs and the ethos of a loving, caring and purposeful family that cares for every member.
28. Staff work very hard, conscious that they are all essential parts of a single team. Subject managers ensure that colleagues have the plans, resources and training they need, but have too little opportunity to display the leadership that can only come from working closely with

colleagues in classrooms. This reflects overall performance management in the school. The school meets statutory requirements for the appraisal of teachers, but has not moved on to making such aspects of performance management as lesson observation a continuous and powerful way of guiding others. This means staff have too little opportunity to learn from their talented colleagues, and new staff do not receive enough support. A way forward can be seen in the decision of governors to buy in very expert support for special educational needs. This is a high value investment because the teacher concerned brings high expertise that she passes on to others through guidance and training and observations of her working in classrooms.

29. The governors have recruited a wide range of expertise and experience and represent their community well. They have addressed the need to improve development planning identified by the last inspection by using the 'Business Excellence' model, and this is helping staff see how each part of the plan contributes to meeting key priorities and objectives. They could consider using the materials developed nationally through sponsorship by a major bank for schools when using this approach. They have a broad understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school but have yet to develop sufficiently ways of evaluating and interpreting information, for example by using data produced by Ofsted. Even so, raising achievement of all pupils is at the heart of their planning. Consequently, the governors working closely with the school managers give the school strong strategic direction, for example overcoming problems to create an 'early years' unit' that will release the potential of both the on-site pre-school and the school's reception provision.
30. The governors and staff manage finance extremely well. Ongoing expenditure is tightly controlled and evaluated, and future expenditure precisely predicted. Careful and innovative planning, for example, of staffing, makes very good use of financial resources available. Realising that finance is very tight, they have used innovative ways of raising considerable extra revenue, and this allows them to maintain a separate fund to cover contingencies and buy additional resources. Consequently, the surplus in the school's main accounts appears low. Although the funds for each pupil are well above average, the schools gains best value from what it receives. Leadership and management overall have improved since the last inspection and have put in place strong foundations for further improvement. The school ensures that it provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	185232
Total expenditure	182882
Expenditure per pupil	3891

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	9128
Balance carried forward to the next	2349

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

31. Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good. Most children join the reception year in the term in which they are five with above average attainment. At the time of the inspection there were some pupils who were not yet five and others who were five. They settle very quickly and work happily and confidently, often in small groups of their own age, sometimes with Year 1 pupils and at other times within a class that includes Year 2 pupils. They make very rapid progress and, by the end of the reception year, most will have exceeded by a considerable margin the early learning goals (ELGs) set for the end of the reception year and are confidently learning within the National Curriculum. They achieve very well, including those with special educational needs and the very able.
32. This does not happen by chance. Firstly: staff make extremely good use of the small classroom, adjacent areas and the hall. This allows groups to work together and separately. The limited space, instead of seeming cramped and overcrowded, is very skilfully arranged to provide areas to work as a class, to work more independently as groups and to choose from a satisfactory range of structured play opportunities, including a 'post office'. When young children need more individualised support from an adult, they work with the highly skilled teaching assistant in the hall. Secondly: the children's learning is extremely well managed and, consequently, even the very young children know the routines, moving sensibly from task to task. Thirdly: very skilled teaching ensures that each child is and feels fully included, and even in whole-class sessions they are able to contribute in ways that are appropriate to their level of development. Lastly: planning is very good, taking a single topic and using this to provide focused learning that meets the needs of each age and pupils of varying abilities. This powerful inclusivity extends to children who have significant special educational needs. Leadership is excellent, creating a team of one teacher, one main teaching assistant, volunteers and, once every two weeks, an advanced skills special educational needs specialist.

Example of outstanding practice

Ashbury overcomes the problems facing very small schools when providing for pupils at the Foundation Stage through excellent management of the physical setting and curriculum, and perceptive and innovative leadership.

The problems facing very small schools are not insoluble. At Ashbury, excellent leadership and management make very good use of the limited space available, plans simply and flexibly to meet the children's varying needs, and inspires a small and highly skilled team of adults. In a numeracy lesson, children from four-years-old to six knew exactly what they needed to do, some working in a structured way and the youngest working in a small group with the teaching assistant in the hall. Mathematics was fun, important and useful. The lesson was so enjoyable and intense, and the learning so rapid, that the inspector had little chance to ask what was going on. Reception children and Year 1 pupils moved seamlessly from class learning - to small group learning - to individual learning and structured play. The children related so well and cared so much about each other that at a time when they could play with the sand or in the post-office, older and younger pupils played purposefully and meaningfully together. Their talk developed continually, with adults joining in at just the right moment to move things forward. This all happened in the small room that was alight with sparkling displays, children's work and immediately available and very well organised resources. In this school, when someone said that he expected they had problems providing for reception-aged children, the class teacher replied - 'Why?'

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Individual care makes children feel very secure.
- Pupils copy the very good attitudes of older Year 1 pupils.
- Teachers explain and expect clear routines.

Commentary

33. Teaching is excellent and almost all pupils at the time of the inspection had met their ELGs. This is because of the teachers' high and very clear expectations. These are explained, justified and continually discussed with the children. They quickly learn good work and behaviour routines, and use them to manage themselves. Their rapid progress is because they feel secure and gain confidence, they are held to account and learn responsibility, and above all they learn to model the very good attitudes and behaviour of older pupils, many of whom take it upon themselves to help their younger classmates.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers focus on the meaning of words and their use, and check children's understanding.
- Reading and writing are taught individually and systematically.

Commentary

34. Reading and writing are taught systematically and very well. The core skill is the way staff keep every level of attainment moving forward, from the just five-year-old who can already read, to the almost six-year-old who is still finding sounding letters difficult. In a religious education lesson, the teacher had made her own 'big book' in preparation for a visit to the local church. This led not only to reading and writing, but to very skilled development of the children's speaking and listening. She expected children to use structured sentences and new words, giving them time to do so. They then could practise by talking in twos and threes to find a solution and come to a decision. The key skill was the way she encouraged pupils to use their talk to think – 'I know you can say 'celebration', but what does it mean? Why do we need to understand this word, when we think about baptism this afternoon in the church?' Most pupils will exceed their ELGs by a significant margin.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning is immediately linked to activities that use new skills.

Commentary

35. The very good teaching balances direct teaching with very well-structured tasks and mathematically-related play. Children see solving number, size and weight problems as exciting and go on to use what they learn when playing with sand, water and doing business in the post office. Small-group work with the teaching assistant adds the essential chances to feel the size of objects and find out ways that things group together, while talking about why this is. Most children will have met the ELGs well before the end of the reception year.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff choose the right way of learning very skilfully.

Commentary

36. Teaching is very good and children make very good progress. Most will exceed their ELGs well before the end of the reception year. This is because the planning creates such a fine balance between learning by finding out and more structured learning with Year 1 pupils and, sometimes, with Year 2. The teaching does not see these different types of learning as necessarily leading from play to formal learning, but as each type of learning working in parallel. Staff spot very quickly what type of learning helps each child most.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are many opportunities for children to use their fingers skilfully.
- There are too few opportunities for children to learn to control their bodies.

Commentary

37. Teaching is good and most children will exceed the ELGs well before the end of the reception year. This is because almost all topics include opportunities to practise using tools, structures and pencils, which moves seamlessly to the dexterity needed to write. The planning gives good opportunities for children to use their bodies with good control, for example in physical education lessons. Even so, at the time of the inspection opportunities to use wheeled vehicles or adventure and large play equipment to try out the more demanding skills were too limited. The school realises this, and hope to address this deficit when setting up the Early Years unit, combining resources with the pre-school.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Despite good planning, the accommodation restricts children's opportunities to work creatively.

Commentary

38. Teaching is good and most pupils will meet the ELGs before end of the reception year. Staff build in artistic, creative and imaginative work wherever they can, but this area is the aspect of the curriculum that suffers most from the restricted accommodation. Despite these restrictions, children have many opportunities to learn through music, painting, collage work, clay, and role and imaginative play.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good, leading to high achievement.
- Teachers teach literacy very effectively by planning their teaching alongside other subjects.
- Able pupils do not receive enough guidance on how to improve their reading.
- The subject manager does not have enough opportunity to monitor teaching and learning in lessons.

Commentary

39. Most children join the reception class with above average attainment in speaking, listening, reading and writing. They make an excellent start in the reception and Year 1 class, and pupils throughout the school make very good progress overall; consequently, pupils in Year 6 attain well above average standards. Achievement throughout the school is high.
40. This is because the learning is very well planned and the level of challenge is usually well matched to each pupil's ability and level of attainment. Very good teaching carefully guides each pupil to the next steps they need to cover; for example, the marking of books in the Year 4 to 6 class is extremely helpful. Curriculum planning is good and the more recent move to teaching literacy alongside such subjects as religious education and history is raising standards further.
41. In lessons, teachers take every opportunity to develop the pupils' speaking and listening skills. They expect high standards and give pupils time to order their thoughts and then speak in structured and very purposeful ways. They check that pupils not only listen attentively but fully understand – and can use – what they hear. This leads to good thinking skills and subsequently good quality writing. Systematic teaching in the lower years ensures that by Year 2 pupils have a well-formed script and can write quickly and easily in structured and meaningful sentences. They often link these together to build a description or write creatively. Older pupils continue to make very good progress because they are taught and learn ways to improve their writing. For example, highly-focused teaching in a separate group for most Year 6 pupils and taken by a specialist teacher, concentrates on high level skills. Structured and systematic teaching of reading ensures that most pupils progress well; the progress of very able pupils is satisfactory. Assessment overall is used well and practically to ensure that each pupil is reading books of appropriate challenge. Opportunities are missed, however, to build a highly productive reading partnership with parents.

42. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported. Although Ashbury has several very able pupils, to balance this there are also some with significant barriers to their learning, and these include several pupils who have joined the school after lack of success elsewhere. The progress of all these pupils is very good and those joining from elsewhere rapidly find success. Although staff identify very able pupils and make good attempts to meet their needs, there is not full understanding as to the teaching and learning opportunities they need. This was most clear when listening to Year 6 readers. They read fluently and with much enjoyment but, even though some are very able, they still read with little expression and pass over words they do not understand. This is because they have not learned through practice to grasp the meaning of sentences rather than just adding one word to the next. This showed when they were asked to find information in a book and select the most significant fact from several. This essential skill for high attaining pupils was lacking.
43. The subject is well led and very well managed. The management ensures that staff have a clear scheme of work, that assessment guides learning and teaching, and that resources are both available and appropriate. However, the very expert subject manager has too little opportunity to lead by working with colleagues in classrooms. Consequently, unrecognised weaknesses are not addressed and very good practice is not shared. This aspect of leadership is necessary if full advantage is to be taken of recently improved resources for information and communication technology, for example for pupils to use word-processing creatively, and for the development of the school's future focus on speaking and listening. Both provision and attainment have improved since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

44. This is a strength in all teaching, especially in speaking, listening and writing. Even so, reading tends to be taken more for granted, and opportunities are missed to help pupils find meaning in text.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching helps pupils attain high standards.
- Careful assessment of pupils enables teachers to give individual guidance to pupils. This encourages high achievement.
- Marking does not always show pupils clearly enough how to improve.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics and have the confidence to try new strategies.
- The subject manager has too little opportunity to monitor teaching and learning in lessons.

Commentary

45. Standards of attainment are above average and all pupils make good progress and achieve well. Results in national tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 and 6 in 2003 were well above average, and current attainment in Years 2 and 6 suggests that these high standards will be maintained. Standards have improved considerably by the end Year 2 since 2001 and by the end of Year 6 since 2002. This improvement is because staff have reviewed and improved the management of the curriculum and have used a recently purchased commercial scheme effectively. The subject manager analyses and acts upon assessment data. All the teaching seen during the inspection was good or better. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of careful planning and good teaching. Features that contribute to the high quality of teaching and learning include:
- Good pace in lessons that makes pupils keen learners.

- Good planning that matches the teaching to each level of ability.
46. In a very good Year 2 and 3 lesson, the teacher planned activities carefully so that all pupils could learn at the right level of challenge. The teacher encouraged the pupils to talk about and explain how they solved problems. Consequently, pupils confidently used a very good range of strategies to arrive at their answers, showing good understanding of previous teaching.
47. The subject manager has recently purchased a published scheme and this has led to more systematic planning. Further improvement in achievement has been supported by effective use of recently purchased computer programs. The manager knows how well all pupils are progressing, and their potential, because the assessment and recording system provides clear tracking information on pupils' progress and attainment. This assessment does not always lead to marking that guides pupils clearly enough on how to improve. Currently, the manager does not have enough opportunity to provide the leadership that comes from working with colleagues in lessons, addressing problems and sharing successful teaching strategies. Provision in mathematics and pupils' attainment has improved since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

48. Teachers use mathematics well to support learning in other subjects and to develop pupils' mathematical understanding and skills. Even so, managers have not placed enough priority on ensuring that this is achieved systematically, for example through the use of bar charts in geography.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good** in Reception and Year 1, **satisfactory** in Years 2 and 3, and **unsatisfactory** in Years 4 to 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Not enough priority is given to raising standards, especially in Years 4 to 6.
- Teaching and learning are very good in the reception and Year 1 class.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to plan their own investigations and record their findings.
- Teaching provides able pupils with insufficient challenge.

Commentary

49. Standards have improved since the last inspection, but not by enough. Attainment is below average because too few pupils attain the higher levels in Year 2 or 6. The very high priority given to numeracy and literacy has led to too low priority on achievement in science, which results in insufficient time being given for appropriate coverage of the curriculum, and teaching that is not as well planned as in literacy and numeracy. Pupils are likely to attain similar levels to last year in national tests and assessments.
50. The quality of teaching and learning is good in reception and Year 1, satisfactory in Year 2 and 3 and unsatisfactory in Years 4 to 6, where science is not given enough time. When teaching is good it is because:
- The teaching is planned accurately to meet the needs of all abilities.
 - Pupils are highly involved in practical investigations.
 - Pupils are given time to complete their records and guided on how to do this well.

Where teaching and learning are weaker it is because:

- Teaching does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to plan and take part in their own investigations.
 - Pupils receive too little guidance on how to improve.
 - Able pupils find the work unchallenging.
 - There is too much reliance on worksheets.
51. The time and priority given to the teaching of science are a concern; the school is addressing this weakness, for it has purchased better resources. Even so, planning shows that not enough time is allowed to cover the required curriculum properly and there is not enough co-ordination with learning in, for example, English, mathematics and ICT. The school has realised this and has improved staffing. However, lack of sufficient staff development support means full value is not gained from this investment.
52. The leadership and management of science are satisfactory but have weaknesses. The manager does not monitor the quality of teaching and learning in lessons enough and therefore weaknesses are not identified and rectified, and good practice cannot be shared. The school is beginning to recognise the weaknesses in provision and has invested in improvement. These investments form a good foundation for future improvement.
53. Assessment systems have been sensibly revised and now include an end of unit assessment for each area covered. Marking in books, however, does not give pupils enough guidance on how to improve and is too often limited to ticks. Resources in science are satisfactory. The school makes good use of the local community including doctors and a member of the National Research Council, to talk about their work. The school grounds are being sensibly developed for science activities and there are plans to build a weather station.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 6 are below average.
- Improved resources for learning are helping to raise standards.
- Opportunities to improve standards and use ICT to support learning in all subjects are not sufficiently guided by observation and evaluation of learning in lessons.

Commentary

54. Attainment is average in Year 2. It is below average in Year 6 because these pupils have not had time to benefit fully from the improved provision. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and are improving. For example: Year 2 and 3 pupils learned securely how to create a 'decision tree' database and most pupils showed good keyboard skills, using the mouse appropriately and understanding the questions required to make the database. In a Year 4 to 6 lesson, the teaching effectively introduced pupils to how computers sense and record data, control machines and give people essential information. This led to a good discussion as to how computers are very quick but it still needed a human brain to make full use of what they recorded. Teaching is much more effective since resources, for example, the computer suite, have improved. The school recognises that Year 6 pupils need to make up for previously inadequate provision and has introduced a typing programme to improve pupils' competence in keyboard skills.
55. The leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory. The manager has actively promoted the school as a pilot school for 'ICT Active'. Involvement in this programme has led to good staff development, improved resources and better progress by pupils. The revised assessment scheme usefully tracks pupils' progress. A very good initiative was the sending of

old computers to South Africa and Uganda because it contributed considerably to pupils' cultural development and increased their awareness of how essential computers are. There are plans to review the geography curriculum and develop ICT links with these schools. The school has clear and sensible plans for continued improvement. Currently, the manager monitors ICT through tracking pupils' records and progress. There is, however, insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning to identify ways to improve achievement and raise teachers' awareness of how ICT can be used in other subject areas. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and is becoming more rapid. Parents have made a major financial contribution to making this improvement possible.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

56. Teachers are making better use of ICT in lessons than at the time of the last inspection, but improvement is not fast enough and misses opportunities offered by the improved resources.

HUMANITIES

The following subjects were sampled and judgements are based upon a wide range of evidence including pupils' previous work and teachers' planning.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum provides rich and varied opportunities to learn.
- Teaching and learning are insufficiently monitored.

Commentary

57. Standards of attainment are average in Year 2 and 6, and the curriculum is broad and relevant. For example: pupils in Years 4 to 6 have surveyed people's reasons for choosing holiday destinations, recording this data in bar charts in preparation for producing a travel brochure. Other pupils have brainstormed facts about the local area and researched Uganda, for the beginnings of a comparative study.
58. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but vary too much between very good and only just satisfactory. The best teaching is closely linked to learning in literacy and numeracy and carefully planned to provide challenging work suitable to each level of ability. This is not the case when teaching is weaker and pupils become bored and lose concentration.
59. Leadership and management are satisfactory but the manager has too little time to monitor standards in lessons, give advice to rectify weaknesses and share good ideas. The school is planning an exciting curriculum link with a school in Uganda and Ugandan teachers have already visited Ashbury. Teachers are beginning to plan for greater use of ICT in geography, for example creating graphs and using the internet to research information, but the use of ICT in this subject is still a weakness. Teachers make productive use of homework for research. There has been improvement since the last inspection, and there is now a good scheme of work. However, important links to other subjects, for example history, are insufficiently clear. The scheme of work ensures that planning covers the required curriculum, and that plans help pupils to learn one step at a time and with increasing challenge. Even so, management does not ensure that teaching always enables this to happen.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching ensures that pupils gain appropriate skills, understanding and knowledge.
- Teaching of history is linked profitably with literacy.
- Teachers do not make enough use of local resources to enliven the learning.
- Teaching provides insufficient challenge for able pupils.

Commentary

60. Standards are average in Years 2 and Year 6. Careful planning ensures that pupils cover the required historical topics and pupils are taught the skills they need. Displays and resources help pupils to gain a rich understanding of the periods they study and this is sometimes profitably extended through visits. Teaching overall is satisfactory.
61. A lesson observed on the Saxons showed good teaching and learning. A strength was the way the teacher used literacy to support history and required writing in history to support literacy. There is good empathetic and descriptive writing on history topics in many literacy books, although history books are too often limited to worksheets. In the lesson, the teacher helped the pupils to think for themselves and to gain understanding through well developed talking. Even so, the work set for each level of attainment did not offer very able pupils sufficient challenge and opportunity. In part this was because the historical ideas were at too high a level and beyond their broader knowledge and understanding. This missed opportunities to start from where the pupils were, for example by recognising that Ashbury was a fortified Saxon settlement chosen because of the village's spring and finding out that nearby villages were offshoots from this centre.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

The following subjects were sampled and judgements are based upon a wide range of evidence including pupils' previous work and teachers' planning.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy art and are keen to work creatively.
- There are not enough opportunities to use ICT creatively.

Commentary

62. Planning and pupils' previous work indicate that teaching, learning and coverage of the art curriculum are satisfactory. Attainment in Year 2 and Year 6 is average and standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
63. Pupils enjoy art activities and learn about art in other cultures; for example, in Years 3 to 6 pupils studied Australian Aboriginal art patterns and made their own picture stories in preparation for making a didgeridoo in design and technology. Resources in art are satisfactory and there is a good selection of books in the library on artistic techniques as well as the history of art. There was too little evidence that pupils use ICT in support of their learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn through interesting and varied projects.
- Teachers make positive links to learning in other subjects.

Commentary

64. Standards of pupils' work in Years 2 and 6 are average and this indicates that teaching is at least satisfactory and pupils make sound progress. Pupils in Reception and Years 1 and 2 designed and built good playground models using construction kits, art straws and a range of other materials in well thought-through ways. The teachers and pupils usefully recorded and evaluated the learning using digital photographs and individual books on the project. This is good practice. The mixed-aged grouping provided good opportunities for older pupils to support younger pupils so that the younger pupils with less developed fine motor skills did not become frustrated and were able to achieve their ideas. Other examples of good provision are:
- Making interesting and attractive leaflets for the toy museum in Reception and Year 1.
 - Investigating quilts in Years 3 to 6. Pupils investigated what a quilt designer would consider when making decoration for a didgeridoo, for example tessellations and patterns. They considered wear, fabric, pattern, texture, warmth and the need to evaluate quality. This work grew from and was enriched by a visit by an Australian.
 - Designing and making 'moving monsters' in Years 3 to 6 in ways that use all stages in the design process.
65. There has been an improvement in provision since the last inspection. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Displays and planning show a varied approach to the subject, and there is a good range of resources. Good use is made of the subject in other areas of the curriculum, for example English, science, mathematics and music. A good scheme of work is in place and pupils are beginning to use control and mechanical systems in their work. Consideration should now be given to how ICT can provide further support to learning and raised achievement.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is rich and varied.
- Teachers give appropriate emphasis to the teaching of music.

Commentary

66. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection and there is insufficient evidence to report on the subject fully. Observation of a class lesson and good individual instrumental tuition, pupils' singing in assembly and extra-curricular provision indicate that standards of attainment are average, and teaching and learning satisfactory. Pupils say how much they enjoy music, especially performing. The timetabling of individual instrumental tuition sometimes disrupts learning in other lessons because teachers do not always explain to these pupils what they have missed.
67. There are three well-attended recorder clubs according to ability. Pupils have easy access to individual tuition for guitar and piano from Year 2, paid for by parents.
68. Leadership and management are satisfactory, and the manager is knowledgeable and enthusiastic. A music scheme has been profitably introduced to support planning, especially for teachers who lack confidence in the subject. Currently, the manager teaches music to all classes and this ensures that pupils cover required skills and knowledge and at the right level of challenge. Teachers assess music against the National Curriculum attainment targets and track each pupil's progress. Resources for music are good. The school has a wide range of instruments, including some from other cultures. They are well organised and in good condition. From time-to-time, good use is made of visiting groups including an African culture group and an Australian to talk about didgeridoos. There are regular end-of-term concerts, which are enjoyed by pupils and parents. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

Physical education

69. As no teaching was seen, it is not possible to make judgements on teaching, learning and attainment. Planning, however, suggests that provision is **satisfactory**.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social, health and citizenship education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is well planned, offering a wide range of appropriate topics.
- The lessons are linked very productively to other subjects, the work of the school council and 'circle-times'.

Commentary

70. The PSHCE programme gives a very positive and strong core to the curriculum. Consequently, children join the school with well developed personal and social skills and by Year 6 are mature, aware and perceptive young people, capable of managing their own lives. The subject is taught by the two subject managers, when the school operates in only two classes, Reception to Year 2 and Year 3 to 6. By following a good and well-resourced scheme of work this allows pupils to cover a wide range of topics at a level appropriate to their level of attainment and maturity. The curriculum is significantly extended and enriched by visitors to the school and by visits further afield.
71. The strength of the provision is that the subject does not stand alone, but is very productively linked to 'circle times' (opportunities to discuss problems and concerns) and taking a part in the school council that pupils value highly. What the pupils learn creates a strong thread through other subjects and assemblies.

72. The subject is soundly led and well managed by two knowledgeable managers. Even so, they have too little time to observe each other teach and brief others. This restricts opportunities for further improvement. Although no teaching was seen, discussion with pupils and work in books suggests that teaching is good, and the pupils' very good personal development suggests it is very effective.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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