

INSPECTION REPORT

CASTLE HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Brockworth, Gloucester

LEA area : Gloucestershire

Unique reference number : 115569

Headteacher : Mrs. S. Rowlinson

Lead inspector : Mrs. E. Camplin

Dates of inspection : 17th – 20th May 2004

Inspection number : 263880

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:	5 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	206
School address:	Abbotswood Road Brockworth Gloucester Gloucestershire
Postcode:	GL3 4NU
Telephone number:	01452 863380
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. P. Raven
Date of previous inspection:	9 th March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Castle Hill Primary is an average sized school. It is situated on the eastern side of the city of Gloucester in a socially and economically mixed housing area where, overall, family circumstances are less advantaged than the national average. Pupils come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Most are white, though the roll of 206 includes a small minority from British Asian, Caribbean, African and Traveller families. Five pupils are in the care of the Local Authority. Children enter Reception in the autumn preceding their fifth birthday and most transfer from the local playgroup with which the school has close ties. Their attainment is lower than the average for children of the same age nationally, due to a higher than normal percentage with delayed speech and social development. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (25.6%) is above the national average. Year 4 has the highest percentage of these pupils. The principle needs are for support with communication, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A small percentage has sensory disabilities, such as hearing loss.

The headteacher was appointed soon after the previous inspection. Since then, the school has received *Investors in People* status and won *School Achievements Awards* in 2000 and 2001. The school is currently involved in educational partnerships with local industry, other local schools and initial teacher training institutions. Its premises are also used by the community for a variety of needs, including family support and medical drop-ins.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3586	Elizabeth Camplin	Lead inspector	Geography History Religious education Foundation Stage
19567	Mary Malin	Lay inspector	
22931	Cheryl Hardy	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology (ICT) Art and design Design and technology
32799	Alistair Bruce	Team inspector	English Music Physical education Special educational needs Personal, social and health education and citizenship

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective school that provides very good value for money for broadly average costs. Pupils in Year 6 achieved very highly in English, mathematics and science in 2003. They made significant progress between admission and transfer to secondary school. By Year 6, pupils' achievement continues to be high and pupils are very mature and very well-behaved. The school's success stems from rigorous and skilful leadership and management and the shared effort of staff and governors in driving up standards. Teaching is stimulating and well matched to pupils' needs.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve highly in their academic and personal development though they make insufficient use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.
- Teaching is good overall, and a third is very good.
- Relationships in the school are excellent and pupils behave very well.
- Provision is excellent for pupils' care, safety and welfare.
- The headteacher and staff work very effectively as a team and receive good support from governors.
- The involvement of parents is good, having improved substantially since the previous inspection, though a few persistently fail to support the school's attendance policy.

The school has made very good improvement since the previous inspection. In particular, improvement in the results of national assessment tests in Year 6 has been outstanding. Its success is due to consistently good teaching based on careful assessment of pupils' needs. The quality of strategic planning is now good rather than weak and there has been a transformation in the way the school deals with concerns raised by parents. Staff and governors are fully committed to making further improvements in the partnership with parents.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils achieve very well. In 2003, statutory test results in Year 6 were in the top five per cent compared with similar schools. During the inspection, all groups of pupils were seen to achieve well in each of the three key stages. Work is demanding and consequently all pupils progress at a good rate in relation to their capabilities. Children in the Reception class start school with below average attainment and exceed the goals expected by the end of Reception in mathematical development. They meet them in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development, the two other areas of learning inspected in depth. They achieve goals to develop early reading and writing skills, and respect and co-operate with others very well. No overall judgements were made for knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development.

Standards achieved are very good overall. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 are above average in English, mathematics, science and geography and they apply literacy and numeracy well in a range of subjects. Year 6 also exceed the standard expected in design and technology, information

communication technology (ICT), art and history. The school is likely to exceed the demanding targets set at the start of the year in English and mathematics. Standards in religious education throughout the school are average and they are average in Year 2 in art, history, ICT and design and technology. No judgements were made for music and physical education in either key stage.

Pupils' personal qualities are very good due to the high quality of provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning, behave very well and their attendance is satisfactory. Pupils are very keen to go to school and most attend regularly because families fulfil their responsibilities well. Despite the school's best efforts, a small number of parents do not.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good and 50 per cent is very good in core subjects, with the highest proportion in junior year groups. It enables pupils in every year group to concentrate very well, collaborate very effectively and progress at a good rate. The curriculum is broad and stimulating and adapted well for pupils' wide-ranging needs, though ICT is not yet used extensively. Procedures for care and welfare are outstanding, ensuring that pupils in care and other vulnerable pupils are particularly well supported.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher and senior staff are very effective at raising and maintaining standards. The governing body is very effective in promoting the school ethos and makes a good contribution to setting the school's improvement targets. Governors produce an interesting annual report to parents but omit some minor information required by law.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents who shared their views with the inspection team think highly of the school. They have considerable confidence in the quality of leadership and management. Pupils are very happy at school and have complete trust in their teachers. They value the school council whose members represent their views very well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

Though the school has no significant weaknesses, desirable areas for improvement include:-

- Promote more extensive use of ICT in all areas of the curriculum.
- Maintain efforts to involve parents further in improving attendance and children's learning.

and, to meet statutory requirements for the content of the governors' annual report to parents:

- Publish the name and address of the Clerk, information about school security and facilities to assist access by pupils with disabilities.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is consistently good in each year group from Reception to Year 5. Pupils in Year 6 achieve highly, to attain above average standards in English, mathematics, science and the other five National Curriculum subjects inspected in detail. They meet the standard expected in the Gloucestershire Agreed Syllabus for religious education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results of national tests in recent years show that pupils achieve very highly in mathematics and science but not as highly in writing.
- Since 2003, standards have improved in writing throughout the school.
- Children in Reception exceed the goals expected in mathematical development.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	15.6 (15.0)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	13.8 (13.6)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	17.1 (15.9)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 26 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.2 (27.0)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	29.5 (26.7)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	31.9 (31.0)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 34 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Commentary

1. Progress is good in Reception. Children who are, overall, below average on entry achieve well overall. They exceed the early learning goals expected for their age in mathematical development and meet them in personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. They develop very positive relationships and the ability to listen carefully when they need to. They progress particularly well with reading, writing and the foundations of science and ICT and higher-attaining children are already achieving National Curriculum Level 1 targets in English as well as in mathematics. Speech, however, is not so well developed, which is why teachers have a very appropriate target to improve it.

2. The achievement of pupils in Year 6 has improved rapidly since the previous inspection. Standards are rising at a faster than average rate compared with all primary schools and were excellent compared with similar schools in 2003. The school has been particularly effective in enabling pupils with special educational needs to achieve highly. In Year 2, test results have improved as well as in all other primary schools. Attainment in mathematics has improved very well. Boys' writing, however, has been a weak feature compared with girls and the school has worked very hard to eliminate underachievement this year.

3. The significant improvement over recent years is substantially due to rigorous leadership and management and good teaching from the time pupils enter school. Underachievement has been comprehensively addressed and the school is justifiably proud that it was placed first in a league table for schools in Gloucester in 2003. There is no evidence of complacency. Most higher attainers achieve to capacity and other groups of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and pupils in care, make equally good progress. However, the school reports that irregular attendance disadvantages a small number of pupils because they miss important lessons. The headteacher's determined approach to counselling parents to address unnecessary absence is, however, paying off. A group of Traveller pupils, for example, has made substantial progress since their attendance has improved.

4. Target-setting in the school is very successful. After careful thought about pupils' capabilities, challenging targets are set each year for all year groups and for Year 6 in accordance with legal requirements. Subsequently, pupils, including those with special educational needs, reach or exceed them every year, especially in mathematics. Standards of work seen are not quite so high as last year but still indicate accuracy in the school's predictions. Teachers forecast that pupils would be above average in each core subject and inspection findings substantiate the view. The school took account of the change in the percentage of pupils in the class with special educational needs compared with when they were tested at age seven. It also acknowledges that some unavoidable staff absence may have affected some pupils' progress at that time. Since staffing returned to normal earlier this term, standards achieved have been consistently very good.

5. Writing shows significant improvement throughout the school. A more rigorous approach to planning opportunities for writing across the curriculum has helped boys and girls in Years 2 and 6, to improve this year. Writing is now above average in both year groups. Nonetheless, objectives for writing in subjects other than English are rather imprecise and could be better communicated to pupils so that they have the very best chance to apply their skills as well as they can.

6. Pupils' special gifts and talents are identified and developed well. As a result, everyone in the class benefits. Pupils with leadership skills, for example, confidently adopt a group leader's role. They manage collaborative tasks very effectively, such as making a diary in Year 1, enabling pupils to participate very well, including those with special educational needs.

7. Having raised standards in English, mathematics and science, the school is now increasing its efforts to help pupils to perform equally well in other subjects. That is why the headteacher asked the inspection team to evaluate provision in the humanities and creative subjects. Where there was sufficient evidence to judge achievement in relevant subjects, it was consistently good in both key stages, making it very good overall.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Their social, moral and cultural development are very good and their spiritual development is good, making these aspects of personal development very good overall. Attendance is satisfactory, despite higher than average unauthorised absence. Punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very effective at promoting very positive attitudes and excellent relationships by providing many worthwhile opportunities for pupils to collaborate in lessons.
- Pupils treat each other with respect and behave very well in class and around the school.
- Pupils mature very well and identify with the feelings of others of different backgrounds.
- A high level of unauthorised absence has a negative effect on the overall data for attendance.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting Year 2003 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.4	School data	0.9
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

8. Attendance was below the national average in 2003. It is likely to match the national average for the current year. Most pupils have good attendance because the school promotes and monitors it very effectively. The introduction of attendance awards has been particularly successful in improving attendance since 2002, when it was well below average. For example, pupils from the Traveller group, whose attendance was irregular, achieved 100 per cent attendance certificates last term. The current unauthorised absence rests firmly with a small group of pupils and the school has worked very hard with the education welfare service to address it. The pupils concerned have been placed in the care of the local authority and now attend regularly.

9. Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements in pupils' attitudes, relationships and willingness to take responsibility. From Reception onwards, they develop excellent relationships, which are a key feature of all lessons. They respond very positively to the very good example set by adults and fair, sensible class rules and reward systems. These work very well, both from the perspective of adults and pupils. Many incentives have been devised and approved by pupils themselves to create harmony and trust between them.

10. A high majority of pupils look forward to lessons and are eager to participate in activities. Often they do not want them to end. They listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. Pupils are trustworthy from an early age and cope very well when given special responsibilities, such as picking up litter or acting as a group leader. A relevant example is from the Year 1 class, when high achievers provided leadership to others in a group task involving measuring with water. All pupils were actively engaged and no water was spilled. The school and class councils are highly popular with pupils because they are involved in taking decisions that make the school a happier or more attractive place. Their ideas to build a pond and quiet garden area, for example, were adopted by governors when they drew up the environment improvement plan.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
190	1	0
3	0	0
3	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

11. Although there was one exclusion in the last academic year, in accordance with the school's behaviour policy, pupils demonstrate very high standards of behaviour. The school is highly effective at motivating pupils to treat each other with respect and to behave very well in class and around the

school. Pupils are constantly reminded of the importance of the bullying policy. Regular drama activities encourage pupils to reflect on the effect of aggressive behaviour or name-calling. Posters that pupils have designed to counteract such behaviour are clearly displayed around the school. A buddy system in the playground also helps older pupils to care for younger ones. Consequently, pupils respect the policy and no incidents have been recorded this year. If any pupil has difficulty in maintaining the school's high standards of behaviour, the school creates a pastoral support plan for each one. These involve parents and the local education authority and they work very effectively.

12. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good because it is integrated sensitively in all aspects of day-to-day school life and adults consistently show respect and concern for each other and for individual pupils. They work tirelessly to help pupils of all ages to develop a strong understanding of what is right and wrong and to promote racial tolerance and harmony. A strong feature of pupils' personal development is the way they are taught to consider wider cultural and religious issues through the subjects of the curriculum. For example, in a Year 4 class, two pupils wore Indian costumes each day whilst the class studied the Hindu story of Prahalad. The pupils explained that this was so they could understand what it felt like to be Asian from the inside.

13. The school's daily act of worship also provides good opportunities for pupils to develop values based on respect for Christianity and other world faiths. Music is used very effectively to provide a spiritual uplift for the beginning and end of assemblies. In the excellent singing assembly led by a senior teacher, for example, pupils sang enthusiastically as they learnt both English and Zimbabwean words to songs praising the Lord.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good because the school provides consistently good teaching for its pupils, a broad, stimulating curriculum and high standards of care and welfare.

Teaching and learning

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 30 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	10	17	3	0	0	0

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

Teaching seen was consistently good in Reception. Half of all lessons in core subjects were very good and two-thirds of lessons in Year 6 were very good. Teaching is almost always imaginative and based on thorough assessment practice. Consequently, pupils throughout the school try hard in all they do and learn effectively, and very effectively in Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in mathematics is a significant strength throughout the school.
- Pupils often collaborate very effectively in small groups.
- Lessons are challenging and based on thorough assessment of pupils' needs, though sometimes adults do not manage time well enough to fully meet their teaching objectives.
- Pupils do not have sufficient access to ICT to support their learning in other subjects.

Commentary

14. Teachers show a good command of the curriculum, plan effectively and use teaching methods that stimulate pupils and promote good learning. They are particularly effective in teaching pupils to

explore number and solve practical mathematical problems, such as when Year 6 were challenged to calculate various costs for a residential visit to the Isle of Wight.

15. Teachers make good use of time in most lessons. The very good lessons are very well balanced. Adults in support of different groups explain objectives carefully and encourage lively discussion and investigation. They begin with very effective exposition that immediately captures pupils' attention and they make time within them or at the end for review of what has been achieved. These lessons result in pupils making rapid progress because their understanding develops well as they share ideas and come to democratic decisions. Pupils in Year 1, for example, delighted the teacher by collaborating to produce diaries about a holiday in France, whilst Year 3 successfully argued the merits of a fictitious but controversial planning application. Learning support workers are usually well briefed and deployed effectively. A group of children in Reception, for example, thoroughly enjoyed learning to double the numbers one to five with a support worker in the playground. Most pupils relish a demanding pace and do not want lessons to end. If and when, however, any pupils are reluctant to contribute, teachers make their expectations very clear. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 4, the teacher made sure that girls, who were very much in the minority, contributed their fair share of answers when the class was discussing how to measure angles and interpret coordinates.

16. In a very small number of lessons teaching was too ambitious or there were difficulties with managing time. For example, too much was expected of pupils in the time available in a geography lesson when they were interpreting information about temperature and climate in India. Also, in an otherwise very productive design and technology lesson the session ended before pupils could review and celebrate progress in designing a pop-up mechanism.

17. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is very aware of the importance of professional development for adults who support pupils with special educational needs. She provides rigorous support to teachers and learning support workers and therefore pupils with special educational needs are usually very well supported in the classroom. This accounts for their interest in learning in most lessons. Individual education plans are carefully devised and regularly updated, so that they present just the right amount of challenge. In one short session concerned with accurately sounding out and spelling a few simple words, however, the lack of a fun element contributed to pupils' lower than usual levels of concentration and progress.

18. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practice ICT in other subjects. The new computer suite is well used to teach new skills, but it contains only ten computers and there is only one computer in each class. Teachers try to plan appropriate experiences and on several occasions pupils were observed waiting to get onto a computer. In other lessons, however, they did not use the computer at all. In a circumstance where access is limited, tighter planning and assessment is necessary to make the best use of scarce resources.

The curriculum

A good curriculum enables pupils of all ages, backgrounds and capability to achieve well in all areas of learning and subjects. Opportunities for enrichment are good whilst accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school ensures that all pupils benefit fully from the curriculum.
- The school plans very effectively for personal, social and health education.
- Limited resources restrict opportunities for ICT across the curriculum.

Commentary

19. The school meets requirements for collective worship and teaches in interesting and stimulating ways all the subjects of the national curriculum, and religious education. It is responsive

to national initiatives that improve the relevance of learning opportunities for pupils. For example, provision for average and lower attaining pupils is met well through the use of special programmes for additional literacy. Planning for areas of learning for children in Reception is based effectively on new national guidelines. The school has also enthusiastically embraced recent recommendations to expand the range of learning opportunities in creative subjects. Consequently, the curriculum has improved well since the previous inspection. Opportunities that challenge the more able and enable investigation and problem-solving across a range of subjects, former weaknesses, are now often very good. In a design and technology lesson, for example, pupils in Year 5 had to work out and explain a way of making a pop-up toy that would stand the test of time. Also, as part of a project on water, Year 5 surveyed different sites after heavy rain to measure puddles and investigate how they evaporate.

20. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs despite the current long-term sick leave of a member of the learning support workers' team. Pupils are normally taught alongside their classmates and work is usually very well tailored to their needs. Their special talents, such as football, are also identified and nurtured very well. The school's register of gifted and talented pupils includes pupils with special educational needs who are particularly good at drama, music or sport, as well as pupils with high academic ability. Recognition of success at assembly enhances pupils' pride in achievement and promotes inclusion very effectively.

21. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. Very frequent opportunities to learn from each other in groups and to participate in whole-school events, such as book week, aid their social development. Lessons are regularly planned to prevent bullying and to teach pupils about alcohol and drugs abuse. Consequently, procedures for dealing with bullying and hazards are thoroughly understood by pupils and used effectively. Irresponsible actions are rare. The school has an unusually high percentage of pupils who have experienced trauma and disruption in their lives, as well as pupils from the Traveller community. The school does very well to integrate all these pupils successfully. There is clear evidence of mutual respect and tolerance for minority views. A good example of how sensitively gender issues are handled was seen in a Year 6 lesson after a pupil suggested that only boys would enjoy a 'Laserquest' visit. A debate followed, productively managed by the pupils and the statement was successfully challenged.

22. Arrangements for the next stage of pupils' education are good. Transition work is well planned between Reception and Year 1, for example, as well as with local secondary schools. There is also a good programme of educational enrichment arising from links with industry, visits and visitors. Opportunities for learning after-school are satisfactory overall. They are good for junior pupils but few are organised for pupils in Years 1 and 2.

23. Teachers are well qualified and effectively deployed. They are supported by a committed team of learning support workers, though currently the school is finding it hard to recruit temporary cover for a well-qualified team member who is on long-term sick leave. This disadvantages the school because it reduces the amount of support available for pupils with special educational needs. It also causes difficulties with delivering the ICT suite timetable. Sessions sometimes have to be cancelled because no support worker is available to support the other half of the class in the classroom.

24. The outdoor facilities are impressive. They have benefited from a lot of improvement work by governors, staff, parents and pupils and include grassed areas, an adventure playground, a wildlife area with pond and 'Demeter's Garden' at the front of the school. All are used regularly to provide a stimulating range of activities, including sports. There is limited space, however, in the ICT suite, meaning that it is not possible to accommodate a whole class at a time. The library is also too small for a whole class to visit to learn reference skills and lacks sufficient space to display books well.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare and safety is excellent with outstanding arrangements in place for child protection. Pupils receive very good support, advice and guidance from staff and the nurse.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very alert to child care and protection issues. It caters very sensitively for pupils at risk, in care and with medical ailments.
- Pupils' views are highly valued and acted upon.

Commentary

25. In this very caring school, high priority is given to child protection and pupil safety. There is significant improvement in provision since the previous inspection. Child protection matters are thoroughly understood by staff, and consistency is applied as they all follow the local procedures. There is exceptionally good training for staff in child protection and close liaison with external agencies to support vulnerable children, when necessary. Regular health and safety checks are a feature of school life, and high quality records are kept. Matters of concern are always followed up with speed and efficiency. Additionally, risks are very thoroughly assessed and the environment is clean, safe and well maintained.

26. Pupils feel very secure and happy at school because relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. It is very evident from talking to pupils that their feelings about their school and the views they express are valued and listened to by their teachers. They are confident and comfortable to approach one of their teachers if they have a problem they need to discuss. Liaison with the nurse from the local education authority, with social services and other support agencies, including the education welfare officer, is exemplary. For example, the presence each week of a nurse who is an experienced counsellor also enhances care and welfare considerably. Parents and pupils, who benefit socially and emotionally from this voluntary service, respect her very well.

27. The school council representatives are very articulate and represent their constituents very well. All pupils accept responsibilities readily, and take their duties seriously. For example, pupils volunteer to collect litter because they want the school to stay clean and tidy. All teachers ensure pupils drink some water after a hot playtime.

28. Staff have a very good understanding of pupils' needs because, from the Reception class onwards, they observe and diagnose how well they are learning, then plan for the next steps appropriately. They record information about pupils' progress meticulously and share views sensitively with parents through meetings to discuss pupils' annual reports. They do not, however, give pupils or parents the opportunity to comment in annual reports on progress. Good induction procedures help new pupils to settle quickly and happily into school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are good links with parents who make a satisfactory contribution to helping children to learn. Links with the local community and other schools are good and help to enrich the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents who responded to the questionnaire have highly positive views of the school.
- Links are excellent with external agencies that support pupils with special educational needs or who are at risk and are very good with teacher-training establishments.
- Very few parents help in the classroom and a small number of parents do not ensure their children attend school regularly or on time.

Commentary

29. Overall, there has been very good improvement in partnership arrangements since the previous inspection. The school now works hard to maintain constructive links with parents. They are welcome at school and are invited to help in the classroom and with many events. These include school productions, assemblies, sports day and special meetings about the curriculum. The 'golden

assembly' is very well attended each week and is a joyous occasion. It enables parents of pupils who have achieved something special to celebrate with the staff. During the inspection, for example, one pupil was given a gold merit star for being chosen to represent England in the world championships for kickboxing. However, parents' support in the classroom is very limited and attendance at curriculum meetings is disappointing. A recent one for literacy attracted only seven.

30. Communication with parents has improved significantly since the previous inspection, when it was a key issue for improvement. Parents receive regular newsletters, and the quality of the school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents is good. They appreciate the fact that their views are sought and this helps to strengthen relationships. For example, governors send out an annual questionnaire and act on the information received. They discovered that parents were unhappy with the amount of homework pupils were receiving. Governors talked with parents and agreed with the staff to review the procedure. This was done and parents are happy with what is now sent home. The school is especially pleased that recent help with science investigations at home is helping to raise standards in this subject.

31. The school provides good opportunities for parents to meet teachers. Annual reports provide parents with clear information about how their children are getting on and what they have to do to improve. They are invited to review meetings and can seek advice from the co-ordinator for special educational needs. This is very constructive. The school has been running training sessions for parents but the take up so far has been quite low with little impact on learning.

32. There are excellent links with external agencies, such as the education welfare service. In particular, the school nurse does sterling work in setting aside a morning every week where parents can drop in and chat either with or without their children. During the week of inspection she met with individual pupils to find out how they were doing and if they had any particular problems.

33. The school has good links with the local playgroup and this enables them to share facilities and get to know children before they start school. Transfer arrangements and links with the secondary school are also good, with joint science events being particularly successful. The school also makes very productive use of the Business Education Partnership to promote learning in science, environmental and health education. The school makes a very effective contribution to the training of college students, one of whom spoke warmly of induction into the teaching profession. A teenager on work experience also gained much from helping in the classroom in April.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is very ably led and managed by the headteacher and senior members of staff. Very effective action is taken to achieve the school's educational priorities. The governing body manages its duties well and its members frequently help in school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management have improved substantially since the previous inspection.
- The headteacher inspires the full confidence of governors, staff and pupils.
- Staff share high aspirations and common goals stemming from perceptive evaluation of the school's performance.
- Governors make a strong contribution to the school's very inclusive ethos but do not include all information required in the annual report to parents.

Commentary

34. This is a rapidly improving school where many groups of pupils have improved their performance in recent years. The headteacher is very effective. She is the driving force in the successful management of change and has introduced comprehensive procedures for collecting and interpreting data about the school's performance. Findings are used to set very appropriate improvement targets, including innovative aims to broaden the creative and aesthetic subjects of the

curriculum. She receives very good support from members of the senior management team. These senior teachers help the headteacher to monitor the work of the school and effectively develop year and subject leadership teams. There is good co-ordination of provision for special educational needs. Training in counselling skills and pastoral support is particularly effective. Consequently all staff feel very well informed, supported and valued. They know what is expected of them and tackle targets for personal and school development with gusto.

35. Governors play a very important part in creating a very inclusive, welcoming school and have a good grasp of its strengths and weaknesses. They communicate with staff very effectively on an informal level and they regularly assist with a variety of projects. They have, for example, contributed significantly to enhancing the learning environment indoors and outside and have improved resources for learning where they were deficient in 1998. Standards have risen in ICT, for example, since the introduction of the ICT suite but governors are fully aware of the continuing need to improve facilities for ICT and the library. Both are included in their long-term strategic plan. Governors focus their energies successfully on setting appropriate performance targets for the headteacher, such as to improve standards in writing, and attendance rates. Their role as critical friend is not so highly developed. Though they help to determine school priorities in the school improvement plan, they do not sufficiently challenge the headteacher and staff to explain progress with them at each meeting. An explanation, for example, of how well writing opportunities are incorporated into other subject lessons, is not expected.

36. Staff and governors have worked particularly hard since the previous inspection to restore the confidence of parents in the school's effectiveness. Though governors have inadvertently made minor omissions from the annual report to parents, this has not detracted from their overall good quality of communication with parents. The lack of information about facilities to assist access by people with disabilities, for example, is easy to put right. Governors recognise, however, that their aim to improve the partnership with parents in order to support pupils' learning has not been precisely defined in the school improvement plan. There is potential for both parties to work even more closely together to capitalise on shared aspirations and values.

Particular aids or barriers to raising achievement, and their impact

37. The school liaises very effectively with the local education authority to provide professional support and advice. This partnership serves the needs of many pupils, including the Reception class and pupils in care. However, members of the learning support workers' team are difficult to recruit and consequently when new staff are appointed some lack experience in catering for the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	558086	Balance from previous year	32188
Total expenditure	519748	Balance carried forward to the next	70526
Expenditure per pupil	2517		

38. The budget has a much larger than usual surplus but this does not signify any shortcomings in its management. £11000 from the standards fund has been carried over to the summer term. £1000 is earmarked for renewing a playground retaining wall. Sufficient funds have been reserved to pay for literacy support until the end of the school year. Most of the funds remaining are due to substantial savings made during the year on staff salary costs resulting from unusual circumstances. These included long-term illness and maternity leave. They could not have been anticipated when the budget was planned.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development were inspected in depth. Other areas of learning were sampled and provision was not judged.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Two skilled professionals share high aspirations for the children in their care and manage their workload very well.
- The curriculum is well planned and all the teaching seen was good, with some very good features.
- Children make a happy start because arrangements for admission work smoothly.

Commentary

39. Children enter school in September with below average standards of attainment. This is due to slow progress in the development of speech and language and some aspects of social development. Provision is very well managed. Children benefit from consistently good teaching across the areas of learning and they receive high standards of care. Consequently, they make good progress in the areas inspected and achieve well overall. They exceed expectations in mathematical development and meet the goals expected in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. In particular, children make very good progress in learning to listen and behave sensibly, in handwriting, knowledge of sounds, and the foundations of science.

40. Teachers and support staff who work in Reception share a good understanding of the curriculum and of what needs to be done to raise standards. Assessment is good. Much progress has been made in the way adults observe and record achievement in the new profile for the age range. Teachers set weekly targets for learning and these are shared effectively with parents and the children. Consequently, children understand them and know when they are successfully met.

41. Teachers get to know children well before they start school and they welcome parents as visitors too. They explain routines carefully and invest considerable effort into ensuring children make a happy start to school. Pupils in Year 6 act as buddies in the playground, thus helping children to feel secure in the knowledge that they can turn to an older friend if they are lonely or upset.

42. There has been good improvement in provision since the previous inspection. Strengths have been maintained and former weaknesses in the range of large play equipment and challenge for higher-attaining children have been addressed.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching team shares high expectations for good behaviour and communicates these well.
- Children are effectively taught to respect class rules and to take responsibility.
- Children quickly develop confidence and self-esteem.

Commentary

43. Good provision results in good achievement in this area. The wide range of opportunities for learning excites children but their behaviour is nevertheless very good. They all thrive through sensitive management and the judicious use of rewards and sanctions. They respect adults, care for each other and their environment and know when it is important to listen attentively, such as when the teacher calls the register. They love to choose their own activities and make decisions, such as to respond to the register in Spanish. When it is time to tidy up they are quick to volunteer to help. Children are patient when waiting to take turns with the computer and are confident to try new activities. They are eager to show adults what they are doing though many do not find it easy to explain in more than a few words what they are doing.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most children know the sounds of the alphabet and form letters correctly. Higher attainers are already writing simple sentences and reading simple texts.
- Children's speech is underdeveloped and staff are working hard to find ways to improve it.

Commentary

44. Children are eager to read and write because teachers provide lots of stimulating opportunities to develop both skills. Reading times are well managed for children of different capability and consequently all achieve well. At least twice a week, teachers and support staff read carefully selected books with groups of children, encouraging talk about the pictures and recognition of key words, such as *storm* or *farm*. There are always books to browse, tapes to listen to, and daily writing times when adults help children to form letters carefully and write about things that interest them. Children enjoy writing favourite nursery rhymes, such as *Incy Wincy Spider*. They are also confident to try writing without direction from adults. Some little girls, for example, spontaneously wrote messages to a visiting inspector using letters and simple words they already knew and making good efforts to spell those they did not. Higher attainers are already reading and writing within National Curriculum Level 1.

45. Children enjoy listening to teachers as they tell or read stories, such as *Noah's Ark*. They answer questions as well as they can but they do not ask many questions of their own. They communicate with short phrases and gestures rather than full sentences. This is why adults recognise the need to provide more opportunities for children to express opinions and ideas. Time to do this was rather short during the *Noah's Ark* story at the end of a day, for example. The best opportunities are often at the start of lessons when adults make effective use of puppets or tape-recorded messages to stimulate dialogue. For example, when *Incy Wincy Spider* asked them to recite the poem about him they did so with enthusiasm in clear, loud voices.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Higher attainers already count successfully to 20 and are able to double numbers from 1 to five.
- Children are quick to learn mathematical vocabulary. They use it well when choosing their own activities.

Commentary

46. Teachers are skilled at developing enthusiasm for number work. A wide range of activities is used to help children to maintain concentration. They have free access to lots of counting and sorting games and apparatus. Children thoroughly enjoy, for example, counting legs on a spider and finding a number between 0 and 9 on their number fans. Outside in the playground they find it fun to throw bean bags onto cards containing the numbers one to five. Higher attainers respond to the challenge to double the number they land on in their heads and their recorded work in number is very advanced for their age. Lower attaining children readily attempt to read a number sentence, such as 5 and 3 make 8. Some children count down from 10 to 0, using the word *backwards* with confidence. Children recognise and name simple shapes, benefiting from using three-dimensional shapes in play activities and practising them in art and craft activities.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

47. There was not enough time allocated to observe a substantial amount of practice in this area. Nonetheless, inspectors saw teachers' detailed written plans and lively displays of relevant work, all of good quality, on the classroom wall. Children could easily remember the work they had done about Mrs. Mopple's Washing Line. Links with mathematical development were very good and with the foundations for science. Children had sorted clothes into different categories, such as for cold and warm weather or by the type of material. Teachers' records show that children especially enjoyed learning how to wash and dry them. Children know how to operate a tape recorder independently because there is always one available and several headsets for listening to taped music or rhymes. The computer fascinates pupils, who concentrate for lengthy periods of time as they experiment with different number games. Folders of work contain some very striking art work produced on the computer.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

48. The school provides a safe and well-maintained environment for physical development. Though lessons for physical development were not observed, there was ample evidence of regular opportunities for learning, indoors and outside. Parents were at pains to report their appreciation of efforts made in recent years to improve the range of outdoor apparatus and sporting activities. Sports day is a highspot in their calendar.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

49. Children have access to plenty of relevant experiences that foster creativity. They enjoy role play, singing, painting and making models daily. They joined in the hymn singing at assembly, knowing exactly when to chant a few lines of the chorus. There were many incidental opportunities to see children happily engaged in organising their own play in the home corner, making their own pictures or building with construction toys. Access to plastic water pipes, a water tray and jugs and little plastic spiders stimulated lots of imaginative play in the playground. This play was supported effectively by a parent volunteer. Understandably, teachers would like more parents to help like this, as extra support make such a positive difference to the quality of children's learning.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in reading and writing are improving throughout the school and presentation is good, due to very good leadership and management and good teaching.
- Speaking and listening are well developed because pupils' collaborative work is very good.
- There is not enough use of ICT within the subject and the library is poorly situated.

Commentary

50. Standards are above average for the age in Years 2 and 6. Pupils' achievement is good overall and it is highly likely that results of national tests in both reading and writing will be better this year than last. This is because the literacy improvement plan is working effectively. By the time they reach Years 5 and 6, pupils are very effective communicators, use a wide vocabulary and swiftly adjust their language and style according to the situation, for example, during a very good lesson on using persuasive texts. Reading is good across all ability groups. Many pupils identified earlier as lower-attaining by the school now demonstrate age-appropriate levels in reading, speaking and listening. Infants and juniors use their knowledge of sounds effectively and use clues from the illustrations and the context to attempt unfamiliar words. For example, pupils in Year 4 concentrated well on deducing the meaning of a Hindu story. Pupils are ably supported to write for a range of purposes and the focus on this area is paying off. Those of lower ability do not give up and higher attainers ably display their creative talents. Writing tasks are carefully selected and explained so that pupils show confidence and enthusiasm. Stories are written with fluency and care over presentation. As a result, pupils are no longer underachieving in writing as they used to be.

51. Teaching across the school is consistently good, and much is very good in the junior stage. Pupils' knowledge and imagination are extended well because of teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of pupils' abilities. The pace of lessons is lively and work is well matched to needs so that all pupils are motivated to succeed. Questions are well directed to different pupils so that all abilities can answer. Learning is fun and all pupils obviously enjoy lessons, especially the activities where they work together, some taking on special roles, such as scribe or spokesperson. Marking and target-setting is also perceptive and constructive, enabling pupils to feel well supported and directed in their efforts to improve. Similarly, good use is made of pupils' work to review progress. This raises self-esteem and results in pupils' very positive attitudes and efforts to do their best.

52. Throughout the school, there is good support for children with special educational needs. The level of challenge is high. Teaching assistants are used well to target specific groups in class. Early and additional literacy support groups are good and pupils often benefit from working individually with staff. In only one short support session did teaching fail to stimulate pupils with special educational needs to persevere with a reading and spelling activity. The initiatives for improving the performance of average-attaining pupils, for example, Early Literacy Support, Further Literacy Support and Advanced Literacy Support, are having a positive effect.

53. Leadership and management are very good. Three teachers who share role across the school work very effectively together. Curriculum planning and support for pupils and staff is their strength. Data from end of year tests and information derived from analysing pupils' work and reading skill is used very effectively to identify pupils who need additional help or a high degree of challenge and to set targets for inclusion in the school improvement plan.

54. Classroom libraries and the school's stock of books and tapes are good and used very well. The school library, however, is situated in a corridor and cannot be used for whole-class teaching. It

is used for small group-work but this prevents pupils from using it independently for research. The co-ordinators recognise that its position and size disadvantage pupils and aim to re-house it when additional space becomes available.

55. Overall, improvement since the previous expected inspection is very good, especially in reading test results, speaking and listening, and lower- and higher-attaining pupils' sustained progress over time.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

56. The use of literacy is good in other curriculum areas, particularly geography, religious education and design and technology. Pupils use their writing skills well, for example to keep diaries of field trips. Pupils make sound use of computers for research and pupils with special educational needs gain from using ICT to practise reading and spelling. Pupils know how to draft and edit on a computer but have too few opportunities to use these skills frequently. The cross-curricular use of English could be very good with more use of ICT.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved markedly since the last inspection.
- The teaching of using and applying mathematics to solve problems is now very good.
- Pupils make very good progress in Years 2 to 6.
- Pupils' ability to work in groups is excellent.
- Planning of use of ICT to support mathematics learning is not yet systematic.

Commentary

57. Overall, pupils achieve highly. Standards are above average, and pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 are highly competent in using a range of different written calculation methods. They are also particularly good at using a computer database to sort information and to draw line graphs and bar charts. Pupils throughout the school benefit from many opportunities to apply the mathematics they learn to practical problems, as when Year 2 pupils give a robot instructions to move and turn. All pupils showed a very good understanding of shapes and angles for their age with higher attainers using terms, such as 'quarter turn' and '90 degrees' very confidently.

58. In the lessons observed, the teaching and learning of mathematics was very good overall and never less than good. Teachers plan to a common format across the school and provide a very good match between learning activities and their pupils' abilities. Pupils are challenged to think hard. Year 3, for example, were expected to use the terms 'numerator' and 'denominator' when they were developing their knowledge of fractions. As a result, they learn very well. Teachers identify what is to be learnt each lesson and share their high expectations with their class so that pupils understand what they are to do and concentrate for extended periods of time. Teachers' skilled questioning provides pupils with ample opportunity to discuss their work with each other and to present their ideas to the whole class. Pupils collaborate with one another exceptionally well. For instance high achievers in Year 1 acted as group leaders in a problem solving activity estimating and measuring how much water different jugs hold. Praise is used effectively to encourage pupils to give of their best, so that pupils apply themselves to their work productively. Classes are very well managed and learning support workers are well deployed to help pupils with special educational needs, who consequently achieve well. ICT is used in some lessons to support pupils' mathematical learning, for example, when Year 4 pupils used a games package to improve. These opportunities, however, are not yet planned systematically. Consequently, pupils do not make as much use of ICT as they should.

59. Planning is effective and includes specific activities for three differing ability groups. Tasks set are well matched to pupils' abilities and they learn effectively. Older children have many very appropriate opportunities to choose mental or written methods that best suit particular calculations.

60. Leadership and management of mathematics are very good. The two subject co-ordinators work together very effectively and monitor each other's work to ensure that practice is consistent across the school. They undertake lesson observation and provide constructive feedback, monitor planning and analyse performance data arising from tests in every year group. These results are used to inform teachers' future planning and set separate improvement targets for each year group and, when appropriate, for the whole school. This year, for example, class targets have been set across the school to improve pupils' mathematical reasoning. Overall, there is a clear relationship between standards achieved, subject evaluation, the school improvement plan and performance management.

61. Improvement since the last inspection is very good with standards having improved markedly. Using and applying mathematics is now very well planned and taught.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62. The National Numeracy Strategy has been effectively implemented in mathematics' lessons and appropriate mathematical vocabulary is used very well in many lessons across the school. For example, in science and geography, pupils use graphs and bar charts to display and interpret data about climate and temperature. Year 6 pupils measure accurately when making models in design and technology.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained in national tests are very high.
- A strong emphasis on investigation and practical experiments enthuses pupils and aids their understanding.
- There is a wide range of learning opportunities, including imaginative activities for homework and learning out of lesson time.
- The use of ICT to support learning in each class is not yet systematically planned.

Commentary

63. Improvement since the last inspection at both key stages has been very good. Pupils in Year 6 have attained very highly in national tests for four years in succession. The standards seen in science lessons were above average in Year 2 and Year 6 despite a year that has been adversely affected by staff absence. They are at least in line with the school's expectations of the pupils based on their prior learning. Pupils are achieving well across the science curriculum and are reaching similarly good standards in their knowledge and understanding of science and in their investigative work. The effect of the emphasis given to science investigations is to enthuse pupils and develop their understanding rather than build their practical skills in isolation from their knowledge. Consequently, pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good. They show respect for each other's ideas and a very pleasing capacity to work productively in pairs and groups.

64. Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers encourage the pupils to investigate and think about science in an inquiring way. The pupils enjoy the subject very much and this helps them to remember what they have done even where they have limited written work. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 2, pupils concentrated exceptionally well whilst they watched one boy build an electrical circuit to light a bulb. Later, they could all use the same circuit to test other materials for

conductivity. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievements. In particular, they are skilled at questioning pupils of different ability and ensure that all are fully included in activities and are challenged to give of their best. In a lesson in Year 6, for example, the teacher drew out ideas from the pupils so that they made good progress in their understanding of the absorption of materials and ability to explain how to control variables. ICT was used within the lesson as pupils used an electronic microscope with the purpose of observing paper fibres.

65. Curriculum enrichment through science is strong. Good examples include a dramatic production about genes prepared by Year 6 for a whole-school assembly and a junior stage project about forces with an emphasis on health and safety. This was run by a Business Education Partnership, and made a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Leadership and management are very good. Both co-ordinators are energetic and enthusiastic, evaluate provision and plan for the future very well. They demonstrate a relentless determination to ensure that standards are as high as possible.

66. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good in terms of results, achievement and curriculum emphasis. Science investigations were previously underdeveloped but are now the central strand to all topic planning in science.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of Year 6, standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good because ICT lessons are stimulating and pupils have very positive attitudes to ICT.
- The subject leader has been very effective in working with colleagues to improve teaching.
- Computers are not used enough in classrooms to support learning in other subjects.

Commentary

67. Overall, standards are average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. Pupils achieve well because they have very good attitudes to their work. Infants use computers purposefully and can change the colour, font and size of text very competently. By Year 2, most pupils, including those who have special educational needs, control a programmable toy. Junior pupils use databases confidently to find information in a variety of subject areas. Pupils with special educational needs in Year 4 respond well to stimulating opportunities to use graphics' programs and word processing. By Year 6, pupils have a wide range of ICT skills. They email and word-process, use the Internet to find information and draw pictures using appropriate ICT packages. For example, in their current preparations for a trip to the Isle of Wight, pupils used spreadsheets to analyse costs for the ferry, board and accommodation and have drawn line graphs and bar charts to illustrate their findings. Pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 are articulate about their achievements in ICT and can describe it with ease.

68. Teaching is good. Two lessons were observed, both with strengths in the way resources were used to stimulate pupils' interest and to promote links made with other subjects. Year 3, for example, read an email from the whiteboard concerning their geography lesson debate about the possible impact of a local planning application. They subsequently worked in pairs to set out their arguments. All made good progress once the teacher had clarified what kinds of things to include in a report. Teachers' subject knowledge is now good. They use data projectors and computer controlled whiteboards competently and they show a willingness to be innovative when planning future work.

69. Schemes of work for ICT have become more challenging as improvements have been made to the school's resources. They now show progression across the age range in the use of increasingly sophisticated equipment, with an intended focus on keyboard skills in Year 1, for example, and on using a digital cameras and data projectors in Year 5. The ICT suite is regularly

timetabled but the size of the suite necessitates teaching half a class at a time. When an experienced learning support worker is available to work with the remainder of the class, the facility is used to very good effect. If support is unavailable due to the absence of a learning support worker, these lessons have to be cancelled and this disadvantages pupils.

70. The experienced and enthusiastic co-ordinator gives a good lead to developments in ICT. She has led staff in their recent training modules and has set a clear direction to future progress in the subject. She is supported in her monitoring and evaluation of the subject action plan by meetings with the school's ICT governor.

71. Improvement since the last inspection is good with significant improvements in software, equipment and in staff confidence and skill. Teachers now use laptops effectively in the presentation of lessons.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

72. There are some very good examples of cross-curricular ICT, notably in English, mathematics art and geography. These include an English and ICT activity where pupils in Year 3 wrote stories from draft plans and chose pictures to insert into their text to illustrate it. In Year 5, pupils used a good quality software package to produce pictures in the style of the artist Kandinsky. Year 6 used PowerPoint to produce individual posters as part of their persuasive writing topic. In the best lessons, planning identified learning objectives for both ICT and another subject. However, teaching objectives are not precise enough to assess progress easily. Computers in the classrooms, as opposed to the ICT suite room, are not used sufficiently often during ordinary classroom lessons. Work undertaken as cross-curricular ICT is not planned into subject schemes of work and this reduces opportunities to practise skills frequently.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- History is popular with pupils and contributes very well to their personal development.
- Pupils have too little time to work on the computer in the classroom.

Commentary

73. History was sampled during this inspection and only one lesson was observed. Consequently, no overall judgement was made about the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 or for leadership and management. However, plenty of evidence of good provision came from sampling written work produced by representatives of three ability groups from Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 and from the very good lesson in Year 6. Evidence was further enhanced by discussions with nine pupils from the same year groups about their work. Pupils whose work was sampled achieve well overall and attainment is average by the end of Year 2 and is above average at the end of Year 6. Provision has improved well since the previous inspection. Good planning has been sustained in junior classes and a recommendation to strengthen planning in Years 1 and 2 has been addressed.

74. In Years 1 and 2, teachers understand pupils' individual needs well and adapt their expectations of what pupils can achieve according to their capability in writing. They clearly expect higher attainers to write in more detail than their peers. They also expect pupils of all levels of ability to try hard to do their best when recording what they have learnt about how to recognise reliable evidence about the past. Higher attainers, for example, produced interesting descriptions of working conditions in hospitals during the Crimean War. Pupils of average attainment recorded key facts

about the Fire of London and explained how it broke out, whilst lower-attaining pupils made a list of suggestions about why the fire spread. Three pupils talked enthusiastically about their learning, showing that they appreciated what famous people, such as Florence Nightingale and Samuel Pepys, had contributed to their own society and bequeathed to subsequent generations.

75. There is evidence of good provision and very good teaching in junior classes. This year, Year 5 covered a topic about Ancient Greece very thoroughly. Pupils produced work of a good standard, some very high. They respond very positively to perceptive marking and adults' obvious high expectations for effort and good quality presentation. Higher-attainers, for example, produced an impressive account of life in Sparta, explaining how boys' and girls' experiences of growing up differed. Middle and lower-attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, also develop literacy well through history as they compose biographies of famous people, such as Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Their work reflects careful research using text and diagrams from books and the Internet. In Year 6, the teaching linked to Victorian Britain was rigorous. A very good lesson was characterised by a fascinating exposition at the beginning. It fired pupils' interest in recognising and interpreting primary and secondary sources of evidence about the past. A very well planned task enabled pupils in pairs to study a wide range of photographs and artifacts from which they made decisions about their age and authenticity. Working relationships were excellent as pupils applied themselves thoughtfully, recording their opinions as well as they could. Overall, pupils' achievement during the lesson was very good.

76. Though very purposeful links are made between history and other subjects, including personal and social development, there are too few opportunities for sustained use of ICT. In Year 6, for example, four pupils accessed a CD-ROM appropriately to seek information. With only one computer in the classroom, two boys were obliged to wait whilst two girls finished reading the information they needed. The boys therefore had insufficient time to use the computer to find the answers to all their questions. This detracted from the progress they were able to make using ICT, though they worked hard at manual recording to fully achieve the lesson objectives.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Shared efforts by staff, pupils, parents and governors have opened up exciting opportunities for learning that are helping to raise standards in geography and personal development.
- Teachers challenge pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding by sharing opinions and ideas about making the best use of different environments.

Commentary

77. Standards are above expectation at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils have a good understanding for their ages of different places and lifestyles and of the influence of people on changing landscapes. This is because the subject is well led and managed and the teaching is good. Teachers have spent a lot of time recently planning cross-curricular links to make the curriculum exciting and inclusive. Additionally, recent landscaping work in the school grounds has broadened the range of interesting places to investigate and explore. Consequently, teachers devise imaginative and challenging tasks that appeal to all pupils and encourage them to do their best. Provision has improved well since the previous inspection, and especially since the subject became a curriculum focus. As a result, most pupils of different capability achieve well.

78. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make very good progress. Already, pupils in Year 1 know something about similarities and differences in living in England and France, draw simple maps and interpret information about travelling distances and times between the one country and the other. They respond very positively to lively learning opportunities. For example, in one lesson they mapped a route from Chester, via Plymouth, to Roscoff. In the good lesson observed they looked forward to

working collaboratively in small groups of mixed-ability to describe, in a diary, imaginary excursions for each day of a week's holiday. Their imagination was fired and they obviously worked very hard over the part of the lesson that was not observed. Sharing ideas together helped each one to successfully write something different for each day of the week. Therefore, when their individual pieces of writing were assembled together by their group leaders, the standard achieved was high.

79. In Year 3, pupils participated in a debate to consider the merits of building a public stadium in a local beauty spot. Guided by the teacher and the classroom assistant, pupils made good progress during the lesson, listening to each other and understanding the perspective of different members of the community. These included farmers, trades-people, ordinary families and conservationists. They steadily identified credible arguments for and against the proposal. Later, elected representatives acted as advocates to represent their views. Pupils did not want the lesson to end, so enthusiastic were they about the outcomes.

80. Pupils' experiences make a very positive contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They also extend literacy and numeracy skills. In Year 4, for example, pupils, especially those with special educational needs, gained from discussing graphs about rainfall and temperature in India. A few higher-attaining pupils in the same class, however, still sometimes lack the motivation to apply themselves when asked to record their learning in specific ways. This is well understood by the teacher who realises that they still need to persevere with current efforts to counsel and support pupils with specific learning or emotional difficulties.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' interest in learning how to share views and opinions about the meaning of life adds substantially to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

81. Provision has improved satisfactorily since the previous inspection. The school has addressed the need to improve the way in which pupils reflect on moral challenges in their own lives. It has established good links with a local church but pupils still rarely visit other places of worship. Pupils have made good progress in religious education during this academic year. Overall, they are now achieving well throughout the school and standards match the Gloucestershire Agreed Syllabus at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Standards are rising and in Years 1 and 5 pupils are on course to exceed the syllabus objectives. This is due to good improvement in teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and good teaching and learning since the school conducted a thorough evaluation of its provision in 2003.

82. There is effective use of writing and improving use of creative subjects to reinforce learning. For their levels of prior attainment, for example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 produce some thoughtful prayers and posters about God's gifts to the world and how to look after it for people and for God. They write their own versions of stories from the New and Old Testament of the Bible. Lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs manage a few lines of relevant detail, with support, but also show their interest and improving understanding through carefully produced pictures and captions. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 2 set out and punctuate their work well. In addition to recording facts about places that are special to them, they are beginning to explain why. One child wrote, for example, *"My bedroom is my special place because it makes me feel relaxed and happy."* In Years 5 and 6, pupils write perceptively about the similarities and differences between Christian values and beliefs and those of other world faiths, such as Islam and Judaism. They compare the Ten Commandments, for example, with modern rules and laws and devise rules of their own for a civilised world.

83. Much of pupils' learning is through discussion about the mysteries of life, either amongst the whole class or in friendship groups. During Easter Week, for example, pupils in Year 6 explored the question, "Why is there suffering in the world?" and "What does humility mean?" Older pupils are beginning to suggest their own answers and to explain why they should respect religious and cultural diversity. In dialogue with an inspector, for example, a mixed-ability group of six thoughtfully evaluated the commandment "Thou shalt have no other God but me." They recognised that to take this literally would be to deny the right of Hindus and Buddhists to worship more than one deity.

84. Religious education is well led and managed. The appointment of a new subject co-ordinator in 2003 was the catalyst for change and the subsequent improvement in the work that pupils produce compared with a year ago. Standards are improving because the quality of professional support has improved and this has led to tighter lesson planning. Assessment is now linked to the attainment targets in the agreed syllabus. After two terms of implementing and monitoring the impact of the plan the feedback from staff is positive. The co-ordinator acknowledges, however, that targets for improvement lack a rigorous focus on raising standards. Plans are in place to assess samples of pupils' work in the summer term to identify evidence of rising standards and to set achievement targets for each year group.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art

Provision in art was lightly sampled and no overall judgements were made about the quality of provision, how well pupils achieve, teaching and learning, or leadership and management.

Commentary

85. Work on display indicates that standards are higher than at the time of the previous inspection. They are at least in line with expectations for pupils of the same age by the end of Year 2 and above expectation by the end of Year 6.

86. In the one very good lesson observed in Year 5, a skilful demonstration of ink printing resulted in work from pupils of very good quality. Pupils observed the technique closely and then tackled their task in a mature manner. The achievement of each was very good. Teachers' planning is of high quality and cross-curricular work in art is a strength. Good examples include exciting work undertaken by older pupils who combined accurate technical diagrams of flowers and their parts with drawings of flowers in the style of Georgia O'Keeffe.

87. Resources are plentiful, enabling pupils to make effective use of a wide range of media and improve their skills as they progress through the school. They make good use of the work of well-known artists to stimulate pupils' own drawing and painting. A new subject co-ordinator is already having a positive impact on improving pupils' attitudes to the relevance of art in their personal development.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum enrichment is a significant strength – after-school clubs are oversubscribed.

Commentary

88. Standards are average at the end of Year 2, and above average at the end of Year 6. Achievement is good across the age range. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good plans and sketches of what they want to make. They respond well to the increasing challenge of the design tasks they

are set. A good example includes Year 2 pupils' discussion of the increased sophistication of the hand puppets they made when key features of faces were included. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrate a good understanding of the design process from preliminary sketches to final model. They use tools safely and are able to modify their designs to reflect practical constraints of materials they use. These standards represent good improvement since the last inspection.

89. Teaching and learning in the lessons observed were good. Pupils worked very well together, collaborating in small groups to very good effect. Clear learning objectives are identified in teachers' plans and key questions are identified for assessment. Developing the assessment of pupils' work is rightly a priority in this year's development plan.

90. The curriculum covers a series of stimulating practical tasks that develop their understanding of how to design, make and evaluate different products. A particular strength of the subject is its curriculum enrichment opportunities. These include visits from skilled craftsmen, oversubscribed after-school clubs and enthusiastic participation in local design competitions.

91. The subject is led and managed well by two enthusiastic and effective co-ordinators, who share their ideas with the whole staff. They review progress regularly and report to governors on an annual basis. This is helping to raise standards.

Music

92. No music lessons were seen during the inspection and it is therefore not possible to make an overall judgement about provision in this subject. However, the music observed at a singing assembly for the whole school was good. Pupils clearly enjoyed singing very much and their performance improved quickly as they practised several songs. The teacher worked very well with pupils so that they developed a relaxed, rhythmic style. Pupils share considerable enthusiasm for musical productions and performances. A recently introduced recorder club has also received a high level of interest and is contributing well to pupils' personal development. Already 26 pupils from Years 3 to 6 attend.

Physical education

93. No lessons were seen in physical education during the inspection and it is therefore not possible to judge provision. During the inspection, however, a tag-rugby team received a special achievement award for coming runners-up in an inter-school competition. Pupils were justifiably proud of winning a cup for their high quality sportsmanship. Pupils and parents report that they are looking forward to Sports day later in the term.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

94. Provision was sampled and no overall judgement was made about the quality of lessons in PSHE. However, one very well planned lesson was seen in Year 6 during which a class council was deciding how to raise money for a residential visit to the Isle of Wight. There was clear evidence of mutual respect and tolerance for minority views. Pupils showed sensitivity towards each other and with very little intervention from the teacher productively managed their own debate.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
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	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
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	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

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