

INSPECTION REPORT

ABINGTON VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Abington Vale

LEA area: Northampton

Unique reference number: 121923

Headteacher: Mrs Freda Jones

Lead inspector: Jo Cheadle

Dates of inspection: 29th November – 2nd December 2004

Inspection number: 266271

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	303
School address:	Ashford Close Abington Vale Northampton
Postcode:	NN3 3NQ
Telephone number:	01604 635071
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Jackie Frampton
Date of previous inspection:	May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Abington Vale Primary School is an average sized school, with 303 boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 11. The school is currently working through a period of change, as it becomes an all-through primary school. For this reason, numbers in year groups are uneven and there are three mixed classes with Years 5 and 6 pupils. The current Year 6 will be the first cohort to take Key Stage 2 national tests at the school. The school is popular with local families and has a long-standing reputation of providing good quality education and care for pupils. The local area is largely owner-occupied housing and the socio-economic status of most families is generally better than the national average. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is much lower than the national average. Most pupils (around 80 per cent) are from white British backgrounds. The next largest ethnic groups are those children from other white backgrounds (almost nine per cent) and those from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds (two and three per cent respectively). While there is a high proportion of pupils who speak English as their second language, most are fluent English speakers and there is only one pupil receiving support to learn the language. Currently, around 20 per cent of the pupils are supported for a range of learning and behavioural needs, which is higher than the national average. At lower than one per cent, the proportion of pupils with a statement to support their special educational needs is lower than the national average. Standards on entry to the school are generally better than expected levels. The school received an Achievement award in 2001 and a Healthy Schools award in 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23233	Jo Cheadle	Lead inspector	Mathematics Religious Education History Geography Special Educational Needs English as an additional language
9053	Viv Phillips	Lay inspector	
27654	Robina Scahill	Team inspector	Science Physical Education Music
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Abington Vale is an effective school that provides a good quality of education. Pupils' academic, personal and social achievements are good, and standards by the end of Year 2 and in Year 6 are better than national expectations. Teaching is of a good quality and pupils learn well. The headteacher leads the school effectively and the school is well managed. Governance of the school is satisfactory. The school provides good value for the funds it receives.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Standards are above expected levels and pupils do well
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and very keen to take advantage of all that is on offer to them
- Teachers and support staff know pupils very well and provide very good levels of care and support
- Due to recent changes in the school's status, leadership and management roles have become blurred
- Cramped and unsuitable accommodation hinders pupils' learning in some subjects

The school was last inspected in May 1999. Since this time the school has changed its Lower School status to become a Primary School catering for pupils up to the age of 11. It is clear that the school has maintained the strengths highlighted in 1999 and continued to improve its work. Extra-curricular activities have increased and there are good opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through a range of interesting clubs and sporting links. The general curriculum has been extended well to meet the needs of the older pupils. They are very motivated by the interesting work that is presented for them. There is now an attractive combined library and computer suite, which has benefited pupils' enthusiastic approach to reading and their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Staff have readily accepted new ways of working and understand the responsibilities they have to cater for the full age range. While the school has changed significantly, and this has caused difficult times for parents, pupils and staff, the school's ethos and family feel has been well maintained. There is a secure base for future developments.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
reading	B	B	A	A
writing	C	A	A*	A
mathematics	B	B	A*	A

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

Pupils achieve well. Most children have attended nursery school and when they join the reception class their skills and knowledge are generally above those expected. Children build effectively on their strengths and learn to work and play together. The majority of children are on line to exceed the goals expected for their personal and social, language, mathematical and physical development, and their knowledge and understanding of the world by the end of the reception year. In areas of creative development, children will reach the standards expected of them. Throughout Years 1 to 6 pupils achieve well. Standards in English, mathematics and science are better than expected levels by the end of Year 2 and in Year 6. Higher attaining pupils generally achieve their potential, although some do not do as well as they should in mathematics lessons. Lower attaining pupils, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are successfully supported and achieve well, so that the majority reach nationally expected levels by the

end of Year 2 and in Year 6. Standards of work in ICT, history, physical education and music are all better than generally found.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are developed well. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work, thoroughly enjoy learning and behave very well in lessons and around the school. They are very supportive of each other and share very good relations with their teachers and the staff that help them. Rates of attendance are very high in comparison with the national average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. The curriculum for children in the reception classes is satisfactorily planned. In Years 1 to 6, the curriculum is broad and interesting and keeps pupils of all abilities very well motivated. A good range of extra-curricular activities supports their learning and provides positive opportunities for pupils of all ages to learn and play together. **Teaching is good** and has many very positive features that encourage good learning in lessons. Carefully thought-out teaching groups and good use of support staff enable pupils of all abilities to learn effectively. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. The school has a good number of competent teaching assistants who provide effective support for pupils with a range of learning and behaviour needs. There are suitable ways of gathering and recording information about pupils' progress. Systems have developed satisfactorily as the school has catered for the needs of older pupils. The school has a satisfactory range and number of resources that are well used by teachers and pupils. The current accommodation, however, is unsatisfactory. Some pupils work in cramped and shabby conditions. The school playground is too small and affects pupils' development of ball control. In difficult conditions, however, very good attention is given to pupils' general health and safety. Pupils are very well cared for and good links with parents support their learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher leads the school well. She has kept a firm hold on the priorities for developments despite working in very unsettled and challenging circumstances. Staff at the school work well as a team but, generally, subject leaders do not yet have a full enough understanding of strengths and areas for development within their subjects across the whole school. Planned, long-term developments are appropriate and well-organised and day-to-day management is good. Finances are kept well in order, but attention is not always given to how spending will directly influence pupils' achievements. Governors have a useful range of skills and knowledge and are supportive of the school. During recent changes, there has been some confusion over the carrying out of their statutory duties and the general management of the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The majority of parents are happy with the school and feel confident that their children are taught well, make good progress and are happy. Some parents have been very affected by the changes and have been especially worried by the mixing of age groups in Year 5 and 6 classes. Inspection findings are that pupils are learning well in these classes and the school works in effective and flexible ways to make sure that their needs are met. Teaching in these classes is good. Pupils are very happy at the school. They talk about their work with a sense of pride and promote the school very well. Visitors to the school are delighted by the pupils' very positive attitudes.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Clearly establish the leadership roles and management responsibilities of key staff and governors
- Ensure that accommodation difficulties do not affect the way that pupils learn

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils achieve well to reach standards that are better than expected levels by the end of Year 2 and in Year 6. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs are good, and many reach nationally expected levels. Those who speak English as an additional language achieve well. There are no significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Year 2 do very well in national tests and tasks
- Pupils read very well
- Pupils achieve well in almost all subjects
- Pupils make good use of their numeracy and literacy skills in all subjects
- Pupils' ICT skills help them to achieve well in other subjects
- Higher attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as they could in mathematics

Commentary

1. Children begin school with levels that are generally better than would be expected for their age. Children build satisfactorily on these good starting levels in the Foundation Stage and do well in their social and personal development. Most children will exceed the goals for early learning at the end of the reception year. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils' achievements, both in academic terms and in their personal and social development, are good. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and this is key to their good achievements. They build their basic skills successfully and this enables them to feel confident with new work. They are easily ready to tackle national tests at the end of Year 2. In the most recent tests (2004), the proportion of pupils who gained the expected level or above was much higher than the national average in reading and in the top five per cent in mathematics and writing. These are higher proportions than in 2003 and are indicative of an upward trend over time. Pupils currently in Year 6 have achieved well on their past attainment levels. They are set to do well in the national tests in 2005.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	18.2 (16.8)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	17.3 (16.1)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	18.0 (17.2)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 58 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Pupil's reading skills are particularly well developed. While many children start school with good phonic awareness and a love of books, the school does well to build on these skills and maintain interest levels. There is now a focus on a small group of boys who are more reluctant to read, to ensure that they achieve as well as others. Pupils' reading skills are a fundamental aspect of their overall good achievements, enabling them to access new information easily and with high levels of understanding. In many lessons, new learning begins from the point of a reading task completed in a previous lesson or for homework. Essential facts and knowledge are quickly assimilated, and this encourages rapid and good achievement based on prior levels. For this reason, pupils' achievements in most subjects are good. In ICT, pupils are now doing well, and this is an improvement since the last

inspection. In design and technology and religious education, pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

3. Pupils' well-developed basic skills are of great benefit to how well they do at school. Because pupils have a good grasp of spelling, grammar, reading and number skills, they rarely struggle to understand new concepts and they produce work that shows their understanding. The school capitalises on these good basic skills by providing interesting work that makes pupils think hard and test out their skills to an appropriate level. Most pupils are articulate speakers because they are encouraged to extend their contributions and use a wide range of vocabulary. Listening skills, which are not as good as speaking skills on entry to the school, are well developed through structured tasks that require pupils to listen for increasing lengths of time and in various situations. The benefit of such support is especially seen in the achievements of pupils with special educational needs who gain confidence and self-esteem as they build their learning "tools". They spell, speak, read and use grammar with increasing accuracy as they move from year to year and, despite starting with levels that are below expectations, many achieve the expected levels by the end of Year 2 and in later year groups. In the current Year 5 and 6 classes, pupils with specific learning and behavioural needs are very well supported. Not only are they accomplishing much in their academic work, but also good attention is given to relationships and behaviour, preparing them well for the next stages in their education.
4. In mathematics, some higher attaining pupils could do better. While they are reaching levels that are better than would be expected for their age, it is clear that they are capable of working more independently, at a higher level. Mathematics investigations and problem-solving are sometimes not taxing enough for them. Moreover, such activities are not always well thought out in teachers' planning, to ensure that high-level skills are not simply consolidated, but that pupils move on to extend their understanding and use their existing skills and knowledge in increasingly more complex tasks. Because pupils behave very well and are enthusiastic to learn, there is nothing to stop them working independently in lessons, using the mathematics they know to solve challenging problems and increase their achievements.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils are really keen to come to school so attendance is excellent and attitudes to learning are very good. Behaviour is very good. These very good personal qualities help pupils of all backgrounds to take advantage of the school's good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils want to make the most of the opportunities offered to them in school, which ensures that they do well
- Pupils behave very well in response to praise, encouragement and high quality care from staff
- Very high attendance and good punctuality give pupils every chance of success
- Older pupils are very responsive to good opportunities to take the lead, think for themselves and show initiative
- Chances are overlooked to nurture the best understanding of how special each individual is and how rich the world is in different ideas, traditions and values

Commentary

5. The school, under the leadership of the headteacher, has worked very hard to retain and develop the positive, lively, caring atmosphere that characterised it as a 'lower school'. As a

result, pupils are overwhelmingly positive about school life and very keen to enjoy it to the full: "I like this school because everyone is friendly – all the things teachers prepare are really fun". Pupils enjoy their work and develop a strong love of learning. They respond very well to teaching in the best lessons and other activities that inspire them to think and work out things for themselves. Year 6 pupils have thrived here, regardless of changes that caused their parents much anxiety: "I'm sad that I have to move up next year because I love this school. It's the best". Pupils of all ages are very happy here because of their friendships, lively extra-curricular activities, interesting lessons and teachers who are, as a pupil said, "wonderful – all a child could want".

6. Most pupils behave very well in class and outside lessons because they know and understand the 'golden rules' clearly and relish the positive, warm atmosphere in which their good deeds count more than the occasional mistake. The way in which the school shows pupils that they are valued and rewards their effort, kindness and good conduct at Friday celebration assemblies, leaves them in no doubt about what is right and wrong. One or two pupils find it very difficult to follow the rules and avoid being drawn into clashes. Staff and other pupils are usually sensitive and helpful in tricky situations that pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties find very hard to handle. This minimises the likelihood of bad behaviour and disruption to lessons. However, on occasion, temporary exclusion has been inevitable, to allow things to calm down and give troubled pupils a fresh start. Generally, exclusion is rare.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	216	7	
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	25		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3		
Mixed – any other mixed background	1		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	9		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	5		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4		
Black or Black British – African	1		
Chinese	2		
Any other ethnic group	2		
No ethnic group recorded	29		

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

7. Punctuality is good, although one or two families arrive just as registration begins, which is unhelpful for a settled start to the day. Attendance levels are very high in comparison to the national average, which means that pupils of all ages, abilities and backgrounds are in school regularly ready to learn and to make the most of the opportunities the school offers.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	3.5
National data:	5.1

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0.1
National data:	0.4

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

8. Older pupils are very keen to help teachers and office staff with jobs around the school. They relish their newfound status as role models for younger children. When given the chance, they enjoy using initiative with their work and in the life of the school. They are very enthusiastic about the possibilities offered by the development of a school council. Pupils of all ages are highly receptive to challenges and questions that fire their curiosity, stimulating them to think for themselves. In a dazzling Year 5 lesson in mathematics, the teacher's expressive, imaginative sequence of challenges left pupils bursting to reply to "This is going to be a humdinger: I wonder who knows the name of the point where two axes meet?"
9. The school's high quality of care shapes pupils' personal qualities and the school ethos strongly. The strong learning culture and the very good relationships between staff and pupils ensure that children blossom and become mature by Year 6. The smiles and praise from staff that make pupils of all abilities and backgrounds feel welcome and the pleasure adults take in the smallest achievement make a real difference to pupils' self-esteem. Daily routines and interactions do more to enhance pupils' personal development than formal input in lessons and other activities. Pupils find it hard to imagine what life is like for people different from themselves and to understand that others may not share their own view of the world. Even in good assemblies, chances are sometimes missed to probe issues such as why people go hungry in Africa and to explore what the words of 'Band Aid 20' really mean, and to allow pupils to be moved and to experience feelings such as empathy and compassion.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality education in an environment where the curriculum is good, teaching is effective, pupils are cared for very well and good links are made with parents, the local community and other schools. These factors all support pupils' good learning.

Teaching and learning

Pupils learn well because teaching is of a good quality and has many very positive features. Teachers know pupils very well and use a wide range of assessment procedures to check how well they are doing in their work. The use of this information is improving as the school gets to grips with the full primary age range. Information is currently used in a satisfactory way to plan for the next steps in their learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan lessons well and make good use of interesting resources, so that pupils are interested in what they learn and maintain good levels of concentration
- Teachers explain new learning very clearly, use very effective demonstrations and motivate pupils with their own enthusiasm, so that pupils follow instructions easily, feel confident as they work and complete their work in good time
- Teachers think very carefully about how pupils will learn best and are very flexible, open to new

ways of teaching and determined to help pupils learn well

- Some lessons are not always delivered in the best way and, as a result, pupils' learning is sometimes satisfactory rather than good

Commentary

10. Planning for lessons clearly reflects teachers' good knowledge of pupils' starting levels. There is a positive understanding of the need to maintain interest and motivation for pupils who are generally able learners. Therefore, lessons are built on interesting topics, or novel ways of presenting information. In a Year 2 history lesson, for example, teachers organised for a professional actor to visit, in the guise of Samuel Pepys. His dialogue with the pupils allowed them to demonstrate what they already understood about the Fire of London. They asked questions of him that extended their learning. They clearly learned the importance of diary writing to pass on information from the past. Their work in subsequent lessons, when they wrote diary entries as an independent task, clearly demonstrated a wider use of vocabulary and the inclusion of far more detail about the event, because they had been inspired by their learning. Teachers understand that pupils' good starting levels demand a high level of stimulation to ensure consistently good learning. In the best lessons, teachers allow their own enthusiasm to overflow and this engages the pupils very well. In a Year 6 lesson where Macbeth was studied, the teacher's comment "I love that bit, I'm going to read it again", ensured that all eyes were down on the text to fully understand what the teacher had found so interesting. Video technology and subsequent digital editing work ensured that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, were fully enthused by this study of Shakespeare.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 42 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (5%)	7(17%)	16 (38%)	17 (40%)	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.

11. Teachers speak to pupils in a clear and precise way, modelling good use of effective and appropriate language. Pupils learn to listen well and enhance their spoken language by replicating the structure of spoken contributions. This was evident in a Year 6 mathematics lesson for lower attaining pupils. The teacher's deliberate use of subject relevant language was later employed by pupils in attempts to explain their work with shapes. The pupils demonstrated how well they had understood by using similar language to the teacher, in an accurate way. In a physical education lesson, short, clear, punchy instructions enabled the lesson to run smoothly and pupils to learn very well, despite the difficulties of having to work in a difficult playground space. Teachers speak directly and openly with pupils and pupils respect this. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson where one boy was struggling with a particular aspect of time, the teacher quickly overcame the pupil's panic, by explaining that he should listen, try to understand as much as he could and then he would work with the teacher later. The pupil relaxed, listened carefully and in later discussion with the teacher was proud of his own achievements. Pupils learn well because they have trusting relationships with their teachers.
12. Through recent changes and in cramped conditions, teachers and support staff have not lost sight of the fact that pupils' needs must always be of priority concern. While parents have worried that mixed aged classes may have a detrimental effect on their children's learning, quite the opposite is true. Teaching in the Year 5/6 classes is consistently strong

and pupils gain many benefits by working in mixed groups. When it is felt to be advantageous to the pupils, groups are taught in single year groups. Teachers are well-organised and flexible in these arrangements. They work together well to ensure that no time is wasted when pupils move between groups, work is appropriately levelled and pupils are not affected adversely by working in the main hall. Money has been used wisely to enable an additional teacher to facilitate these arrangements and this has a positive impact on learning.

13. In some cases, while lessons are well prepared and the intended outcomes for learning are very appropriate, the actual delivery of the lesson does not engage and stimulate pupils to the same extent as in good and very good lessons. The pupils arrive to lessons with an eagerness to learn and be stimulated and sometimes this falls flat when the teacher is unable to inspire by the style of delivery or the nature of the activity provided. In these lessons, pupils' learning is satisfactory rather than good. In the Foundation Stage, some activities are repeated too often and children find limited stimulation in repeating the same task. In these cases, while teachers know pupils' starting levels and plan work that is appropriate for them, they do not give enough consideration to how they will engage the pupils and use appropriate teaching styles and methods.

The curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum that meets the learning needs of all pupils and ensures progression in pupils' learning. The curriculum is well enriched by a range of extra-curricular activities. The accommodation and resources for learning are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and good links are made between subjects
- There is good support for pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language
- The curriculum is well enriched by extra-curricular activities
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and affects pupils' learning in some lessons

Commentary

14. The school's curriculum caters well for pupils in the full primary age range. Focused attention is given to building on pupils' good starting levels to ensure that they do as well as they can academically and maintain their motivation and enthusiasm for learning. The curriculum has been effectively reviewed and updated to take account of local changes (the transition from lower to primary school status) and national developments. Good work has been carried out to make sure that foundation subjects are promoted and developed in equal proportion to English, mathematics and science. Importantly, there are good links made between subjects that enable pupils to demonstrate and enhance their good basic skills and this promotes good learning in all subjects. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage provides satisfactory coverage of all areas of learning. Statutory requirements are fully met.
15. Provision for pupils with a range of learning and behavioural needs is good, as is the support given to pupils who speak English as an additional language. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress with support provided by well-trained teaching assistants and differentiation in teachers' planning. The special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that Individual Education Plans are in place and that all staff work towards meeting the pupils' individual targets. The school is inclusive and ensures equality of access for all pupils. It meets the statutory requirements of the Disability Discrimination

Act and has an action plan in place. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are well supported by a bilingual assistant.

16. A good range of additional opportunities supports the curriculum. These include residential and other educational visits linked to work that the children are studying. For example the pupils in Year 6 reported that they had visited London Zoo, the local church and museums. The school also has a programme of visitors. For example, Denis Bond, a children's author had visited the school to support pupils' work in literacy. The curriculum provides an interesting range of learning opportunities, such as the drama group that visited Year 2 to support the work on the Fire of London. The school has looked at the Excellence and Enjoyment document (national guidance on primary education) with a view to starting work on enriching the curriculum. Pupils have opportunities to take part in sports and music initiatives with local secondary schools; for example, the choir was taking part in a show, with other local primary schools, hosted by Northampton School for Girls.
17. Teachers are suitably matched to the full primary age range and the staff have a good mix of skills, knowledge and previous experiences. There is a good number of teaching assistants who are well used and support pupils' learning effectively. Resources are satisfactory in number and generally of a good quality. However, artefacts for religious education are limited. The library and ICT suite provide very beneficial and attractive accommodation for pupils and this enhances their enthusiasm for reading and the development of ICT skills and knowledge. The school recognises that computer space is too small for a whole class group and has plans to make changes. Particularly good use is made of computer software during lessons, and pupils are highly motivated by, and skillfully use, video editing programs. The school's overall accommodation is unsatisfactory. The school is too small for the current number of pupils, and temporary, yet long-standing, accommodation is in bad repair. Funds have been raised by the school to create changing rooms and build a new classroom, which will mean that lessons do not have to take place in the school hall. However, the changing rooms have taken space used for artwork from one Year 5/6 class and this has not pleased pupils. The reduction of the school size to one form of intake will ease demand on space, but some existing classrooms are too small, as is the school playground. While there is a large grassed area, hard surface for physical education lessons is very limited and the playground is on a severe downwards slope that makes ball control very difficult. Teachers work around this situation very effectively and pupils do well in lessons, but the potential to do even better is hindered by the accommodation. The outdoor accommodation for children in the reception class is large enough, but resources are not good enough to provide the best experiences for climbing, balancing, running or using large wheeled toys.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils are cared for very well and given good support based on a good understanding of their individual strengths and weaknesses. Consultation and pupil involvement in improving school life is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school pays very good attention to pupils' well being so they feel very well cared for and happy
- Pupils are very well known to staff who give well-targeted help based on good general understanding of each pupil's academic and personal needs
- The school welcomes pupils' views and ideas but has missed opportunities to consult them fully and allow them to have a real say on changes that affect them
- Pupils settle in happily when they join the school

Commentary

18. The school has built well on strengths it had as a 'lower school' in caring for pupils. It takes very good care of children, from when they start school through to Year 6 as they prepare confidently to move on to secondary education. Trusting relationships between teachers and pupils are the key to the high quality pastoral care provided. What many pupils like best about the school is "the teachers, because they help us when we are stuck or worried". "All our teachers are really kind and we are trusted to do things ourselves. Our school is really well run." Pupils feel very well looked after, safe and happy, regardless of background and ability because as one of them said, "boys and girls, children with problems are all treated the same. The teachers are kind and loving".
19. The school takes great care to ensure that health and safety matters, welfare procedures and first aid are all checked and carried out as required. Child protection arrangements are very good and benefit from the headteacher's very clear grasp of what needs to be done, including staff training. Office staff and other adults are very helpful when children feel unwell or hurt themselves, in spite of the lack of anywhere suitable for pupils to recover or receive treatment.
20. Teachers and non-teaching staff know the pupils very well. They recognise their talents, abilities and personal qualities and know what they find hard. This enables staff to give encouragement and specific guidance to individuals, both with particular tasks they find difficult and with extra challenges when they romp through the work set. Assessment and careful marking help with this although, as the school recognises, it has scope to fine-tune and improve its checks on whether individual progress is fast enough. In general, pupils have a good idea of how well they are doing and respond well to effective help focused on the next steps they need to take with their learning. The few pupils who need extra help with their behaviour and personal development receive very good support from individual staff, including very well thought-out, imaginative activities at lunchtime for a small group of boys. Induction is good; clear briefings and a gentle introduction worked well in the previous academic year, so the school used the same approach this September. "When I started at this school, straight away I made friends." Children have settled in well and are confident and ready for new challenges.
21. The school takes pupils' views very seriously in lessons and values what they say, but is at an early stage of developing ways of seeking and acting on their ideas for improving school life. Pupils are disappointed that they were not consulted fully about the loss of art space to changing facilities that they value less than their parents had thought. They are very keen to have a real say in future developments, so welcome the prospect of a school council with a meaningful voice.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good relationships with most parents and partnership between home and school is good, overall. Links with other schools, colleges and the community are good. All these partnerships help to extend pupils' experiences and enthusiasm for learning effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Partnership with most parents is close and focused positively on working together constructively to do the best for the child, whatever the circumstances, but a few parents are critical of the school

- Communication with parents is not always timely and imaginative enough to show just how positive the children are about school and their achievements, and to help parents to feel that things are going well
- Links with the local community and other schools are helpful in enriching pupils' experiences and giving them extra opportunities to identify and practise their skills and talents

Commentary

22. Parents are generally very supportive of the school, in practical ways through helping in school and on trips and visits, through FAVLS (Friends of Abington Vale Lower School), and by regular attendance at events and meetings. They want the very best for their children, which means that they bring them to school every day and help them with reading and other work at home. Parents are actively involved in their children's learning. Most parents understand that the school wants the best for the pupils, above all for them to be happy and to enjoy learning. "The school has managed well to ensure that (recent changes) have had minimal negative impact on the children. In addition to providing a good academic basis, the school also provides strong personal support to its pupils - it has an atmosphere that welcomes." As a result we never hear the phrase 'I don't want to go to school' and this is due to the sound learning environment and strong relationships made at school".

23. A few parents have strong reservations about aspects of the school's work, largely to do with its daily management, such as notification of closures for snow, arrangements for setting and very specific teaching or behaviour management issues. Inspection evidence showed that not all parents have noted the clearly set out complaint procedures in the prospectus and the importance the school gives to discussing concerns face to face, first, to try to deal with them swiftly and effectively. The school recognises that it is sometimes impossible to please everyone. It knows it has scope for better consultation to check how all parents feel about the quality of education offered.
24. The local decision to change from a three-tier system of lower, middle and upper schools to a two-tier, primary and secondary system upset some parents. It has resulted in understandable anxiety and a far greater need than usual for reassurance, which the school has not always been able to give, through no fault of its own, but because everyone is going through new processes. For example, arrangements for transfer to secondary school are being used for the first time so there is no past history to draw on to assure parents that things will work out in the end. The school has done its best to share information, although occasionally, for whatever reason, this has not reached parents as expected. Information for parents is generally easy to read and clear about what is going on in the school. Reports give a good outline of pupils' progress, although targets are not always clear enough about what the child should do next to improve and how the parent can help. The school recognises that it needs to share its pride in pupils' achievements and its own everyday successes in livelier ways. It has useful plans to make it easier to share concerns and suggestions more swiftly and productively, for example, with frequent senior management 'surgeries'.
25. Links with the community and schools in and beyond the local cluster group are effective in offering valuable extra-curricular experiences to pupils, particularly in sports and performing arts. Basketball coaching before school is a huge success, inspiring the coach to praise pupils for their very enthusiastic commitment. The sports partnership with Northampton Academy helps develop individual talents and hone pupils' skills successfully. Local parents, grandparents and neighbours come into school with great enthusiasm to help pupils with their work and particular projects. Local business links are used beneficially to teach aspects of citizenship to pupils of all ages.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership and the school is well managed. Key staff carry out their roles to a satisfactory level. The school's governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school
- Staff work well as a team and there is a very good ethos at the school
- The governing body's strength and rigor occasionally blur its focus on asking the right questions and making the right decisions to help the school move forward
- Not all subject co-ordinators have sufficient influence over the development of their subjects throughout the school

Commentary

26. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and shares this with all other members of staff. It is evident that with the staff, building and curriculum changes that have been made through the period of reorganisation from a lower school to a primary school, the school is

moving from strength to strength. Although there have been difficulties, the head's good leadership and effective teamwork have ensured that standards have continued to rise year on year and the school has maintained its very caring ethos. Key staff are growing into their roles and responsibilities across the full age range and are currently working in a satisfactory way. They recognise that there is some way to go before they have a full and useful understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility throughout the whole school. The headteacher is now empowering senior managers and subject co-ordinators to be fully involved in the school's strategic planning and to take a more proactive role in leading their subjects.

27. The governing body is well organised with committees that meet regularly. Governors have developed their knowledge and understanding and are well informed through regular visits. They also receive good quality information from school staff and continue to increase their expertise through training. Several governors, including the chair, are regular helpers in school, giving them firsthand experience of its work. Governors are well aware of the strengths of the school. However, some governors do not always distance themselves enough from the day-to-day running of the school to be able to appropriately fulfil their role to the best effect or support the senior management team as critical friends.
28. Management of the school is good. The school's performance management systems are used well to set targets for staff development. The plans include the expansion of the roles of senior managers. Subject co-ordinators have been given the responsibility for the spending of budgets. However, with the exception of the co-ordinators for ICT and science, there has been little monitoring of the impact of spending on standards. The management of the school's cramped accommodation and its resources is good. Space is generally used well, but accommodation is so restricted that there is little room for flexibility. For example, the use of the hall for teaching has restricted its use by pupils in other classes for physical education during much of the day. The leadership and management of the school's provision for special educational needs are good. One key area of success has been the good use of teaching assistants and regular liaison between the co-ordinator for special educational needs and all support staff. Their training and careful deployment has been particularly beneficial to pupils' progress. This is also true of the support given to pupils who speak English as an additional language.
29. The school's finances are well managed. Money has been set aside to fund the building programme, which is already well underway. Administrative staff are effective and the school makes good arrangements for the day-to-day administration of its budget. The headteacher and chair of the finance sub-committee receive frequent and detailed information about the school's budgetary position so that they can monitor spending closely. Care is taken to make sure that bulk supplies are purchased at advantageous rates. The headteacher checks how well the school is performing in comparison with other schools, but ensuring best value is not yet common practice in all decision-making. Overall, however, the school provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	£490,870
Total expenditure	£469,199
Expenditure per pupil	£2,220

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	£108,550
Balance carried forward to the next	£130,221

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

30. Children start school with good skills and knowledge for their age. The Foundation Stage provides children with a satisfactory range of activities that allow them to make sound progress on their existing skills. By the end of the reception class, standards exceed expected levels overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers and support staff know the children and their families very well, and are quick to identify those who need extra support. Good provision is made for children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. The Foundation Stage accommodation is adequate in size and the internal accommodation is attractive and well used. There is an easily accessible outside area, but the atmosphere here is not very stimulating for young children and resources are limited. There is also a lack of space beyond the enclosed area to use large wheeled toys and erect climbing and balancing equipment. The Foundation Stage provision is satisfactorily led and managed.

Personal, social and emotional development

Provision in personal and social development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children settle well into the reception class and enjoy coming to school
- Children play and work in a caring environment
- The range of activities within this aspect of learning are limited

Commentary

31. Children achieve well in this aspect of their learning and are likely to exceed the goals for early learning by the end of the reception year. They enjoy coming to school and, as a result of good teaching, settle well into the reception class routine, taking an active part in the range of activities provided. The caring environment effectively supports the development of their social skills, although some children still find difficulty in taking turns, listening to others and not calling out when adults or their classmates speak. The 'pirate' role-play seen during the inspection encouraged children to play and talk alongside each other as they searched for treasure, looked at maps and dressed up in pirate clothes. Children relate well to one another and are confident to ask each other for help instead of being reliant on adults, for example when finding the right size dressing up clothes and helping each other to fasten them. They relate well to adults and respond well to instructions and praise. The children are confident to approach adults in the room to discuss their work. Children enjoy taking 'Monty', the class mascot, home to look after and to keep a diary of what he gets up to. They are confident to talk to the whole class about this. A range of turn-taking games and small world activities are planned to encourage the children to share with others. The classroom is well organised and labelled and this helps the children to gain independence in organising the equipment they need. They learn to tidy up and put things away. However, the range of activities is limited and does not provide varied and challenging opportunities for children who can become easily bored by repeating the same tasks over a number of days.

Communication, language and literacy

Provision in language and communication is good.

Main strengths

- Children are interested in reading and know how to handle books properly
- There is a good programme for the development of phonic awareness that effectively supports children's reading and writing
- Adults provide good role models for the development of speaking and listening skills

Commentary

32. Children achieve well in this aspect of their learning and most will exceed the goals for learning by the end of the reception year. Teaching and learning are good, and adults provide good role models for the development of children's language and pay particular attention to encouraging good listening. Children sustain dialogue, and when playing with small world equipment based on the pirate theme, they could name sea animals and explain that the pirates have to use the anchor 'so the boat doesn't float away'. The children took turns in conversation, sequencing events and ideas. Children identify initial and final sounds in words during phonic work sessions and they put these into practice when writing. They show an awareness of rhyme and rhythm in spoken words, and matched sounds to words in a group activity observed. Children thoroughly enjoy books and retell simple stories with finger puppets, using conventional book language, such as 'once upon a time'. Children who speak English as an additional language are well supported and are confident to join in with conversations. Children learn to form their letters correctly and make good progress from copying to the beginnings of independent writing. They hold a pencil correctly to form recognisable letters, sometimes correctly formed. During a writing activity based on the story 'This is the Bear', children copied, writing left to right, underneath a sentence written by the class teacher. They enjoyed making attempts to write independently, making cards at lists. They could recognise their own name and the names of some of their friends.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical understanding is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children count with confidence
- Good use is made of mathematical language in play
- There is not enough challenge for the higher attaining pupils

Commentary

33. Children's achievements are satisfactory in their mathematical development. From good starting levels, satisfactory teaching and learning enables almost all children to reach the expected goals and many will exceed these levels. Children count and add in play-based activities and real situations. During a number game, they matched dots on the dice to the correct number. They have a good understanding of 1-1 correspondence and are beginning to understand and use accurately the vocabulary of time. They sequence familiar events using yesterday, today and tomorrow. When the class teacher read Mr Wolf's Week the children enjoyed predicting the next day. Wall displays help the children remember the days of the week. While most children are interested in their work, the range of activities is limited and some higher attaining children are not challenged well enough to ensure their continued high interest levels and good progress. Children who are ready to record their work in a more sophisticated way are not regularly required to do so and oral repetition becomes tedious for them.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for the development of ICT skills
- Role play areas change focus on a regular basis

- Other opportunities to learn about the world are limited, as is the range of outdoor activities

Commentary

34. As a result of satisfactory teaching and learning, children achieve satisfactorily and most will exceed the goals for learning by the end of the reception class. Some children use computer programs independently to support their learning. They have good mouse control and find their way around programs, using the mouse to click on animation to take them to the next area. Several of the children have computers at home and their skills are well developed. In general, there is a limited range of resources for building and construction and few opportunities for children to select appropriate resources independently. Children play happily with the resources that are available and were observed constructing a simple bridge for cars to go over. They enjoy playing in the role-play area, which was an underwater cave during the inspection. Children were excited by the opportunity to be pirates and mermaids. Children talk about past and present events in their lives and enjoy talking about people they know and their families. During an art activity, children discussed appropriate materials to wear in the rain. Children are beginning to understand that people have different needs, views, cultures and beliefs and understand that all people should be treated with respect. They spoke about Eid and Diwali and reflected on feelings as they began preparations for Christmas. The children knew that Christmas was coming and that Santa would bring presents, but few knew that the birth of Jesus would be celebrated.

Physical development

Provision in physical development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are effectively planned activities to develop children's control and co-ordination in lessons
- Outdoor climbing, jumping and balancing equipment is limited and the outdoor area is uninspiring

Commentary

35. Children's achievements are satisfactory from good starting levels and most will exceed the goals for early learning by the end of the reception class. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. As there is no climbing equipment in the outdoor area, the only opportunity that children have to climb and jump is in timetabled physical education lessons in the school hall. Most children change for the lesson without help and fold their clothes neatly. One boy checked that he was putting his plimsolls on the right feet, by putting them next to his shoes. Most children run, skip and jump well and many make good use of the hall space available to them. The teaching assistant provided good support for two children who found movements such as skipping difficult. Opportunities are provided for children to move freely between indoor and outdoor activities, but the range of equipment and activities in the outside area is limited. The class teacher is aware of this and has appropriate ideas for developments in the future.

Creative development

Provision for creative development is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of the role-play area
- Children have limited opportunities to develop their creative skills

Commentary

36. Although the majority of children will meet the expected goal for learning in this aspect, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in this aspect and many do not achieve well enough from their good starting levels. Work displayed showed that children made good use of paint to produce bold colourful work. However, there was no opportunity for the children to use creative areas spontaneously. During the inspection, children made sea animals from play dough, but there were very few opportunities to work with different types of malleable materials. Children's drawings show observational detail. For instance, one child drew a detailed picture of her house with her sister and herself playing schools. The children were involved in creating a collage of Mr Wolf, but the task lacked challenge, as the materials were prepared in advance, leaving the children the simple task of sticking on fabric. Children enjoy playing musical instruments, but the range of instruments is limited and the noise impacted on other activities in other areas of the room. In imaginative play the children are increasingly able to sustain a character or role, such as a pirate or mermaid. However, there is no clear indication in teachers' planning to suggest a specific purpose behind these imaginative and creative activities. Children play happily for good lengths of time, but they are too infrequently guided in their learning through these games.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is good.

Main strengths

- Standards in reading are high and pupils read particularly well aloud to an audience
- Teaching and learning are consistently good, with effective emphasis placed on the development of speaking and listening skills
- Good cross curricular links have been developed, particularly with history and the use of ICT

Commentary

37. Pupils achieve well in English to reach standards that are above nationally expected levels by the end of Year 2 and in Year 6. In the national tests in 2004, results for Year 2 pupils were well above the national average in reading and in the top 5 per cent of all schools for writing. Results have been consistently good over time and particularly good for the 2004 cohort. In the current Year 2, higher attaining pupils write with accurate sentence construction, using correct punctuation, including exclamation marks. They re-read their work and spot mistakes, enjoying the challenge of doing this. The average attaining pupils enjoy opportunities to write at length, helping each other with spellings. All pupils have the potential to reach and exceed the expected level by the end of the year. Standards of reading are high with pupils developing skimming and scanning techniques that support reading across the curriculum. Pupils are enthusiastic readers and enjoy taking class readers and library books home to read on a regular basis. Parents comment in their children's reading diaries, supporting reading at home.
38. Standards of work in Year 6 are above expected levels. Pupils enjoy reading aloud, and demonstrated this using a scene from Macbeth. They read with good expression, changing tone and voice according to whether they were narrating the scene or in character. Higher attaining pupils' writing shows good use of paragraphs, accurate punctuation and wide vocabulary. Average attaining pupils compare and convert a novel into script using good stage directions. Lower attaining pupils have a good understanding of the characteristics of play scripts. They made a good transcript of Macbeth's words into modern-day language. During the inspection, pupils acted a scene from Macbeth that was recorded on video. In a later lesson, they adeptly used an ICT programme to edit this, adding visual and sound effects. This work was of great interest to the pupils and encouraged very good progress for all, including those with special educational needs.
39. Overall the quality of teaching is good with some very good and excellent teaching in Years 5 and 6. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is evident in their planning. Plans consistently have clear objectives, suitable expected outcomes and include questions for assessment. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are accurately identified, well supported and their achievements are good. Staff have attended courses on the development of language and drama to support the school's current focus on the development of speaking and listening skills. All staff have high expectations for pupil behaviour and this ensures positive attitudes towards learning. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their work and feel a sense of achievement during lessons. Pupils in Year 6 feel that their teachers are preparing them well for secondary school. Homework is used well throughout the school to consolidate pupils' learning and in preparation for lessons. In Year 6 pupils had prepared tea-stained paper to add an antique effect to their letter writing. Marking is consistently good throughout the school and contains useful comments to take pupils work forward. In Year 6, marking is particularly

good with clear targets for improvement and an expectation that pupils will respond to suggestions on how to improve their work. Presentation in pupils' books is good.

40. Currently, leadership and the management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of the subject's strengths and areas for development. She is working in partnership with one of the teachers of the Year 5 and 6 pupils to ensure continuity and challenge for the older pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been good with a consistent rise in standards and the use of ICT to draft and edit pupils' work. The monitoring role of the co-ordinator is developing satisfactorily and she now has responsibility for monitoring a budget.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

41. Work in English is well supported through good links with ICT. Pupils' writing in many other subjects clearly demonstrates their good skills and literacy skills are used very effectively to enhance learning in all subjects. During the inspection clear evidence of this was seen in history and science work.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do very well in national tests at the end of Year 2
- Teaching is lively and interesting so pupils enjoy their work
- Some of the highest attaining pupils do not make enough progress from their starting levels in some lessons

Commentary

42. Pupils achieve well in mathematics to reach standards that are above expected levels at the end of Year 2 and in Year 6. Basic numeracy skills are well developed and this means that most pupils calculate swiftly and accurately. Pupils work hard to learn times tables and are proud to show off their skills. There is healthy competition that encourages good consolidation of numbers, which serves pupils well in their learning. In the most recent national tests at the end of Year 2, pupils' results were very high in comparison with schools nationally and when compared with similar schools. Results over the last four years have been consistently better than the national average, but were even better in 2004 because 45 per cent of the pupils scored the higher Level 3 in this testing year. Current standards of Year 6 pupils are above expected levels and indications are positive for the school's first Year 6 national tests in 2005. Older pupils generally achieve well, but there is scope for improvement in the achievement of the most able pupils.
43. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons effectively, are accurate and clear in explaining new learning and encourage pupils to be confident with their work. Pupils from the mixed Year 5/6 classes are effectively taught in single age groups and other year groups are taught in ability sets to ensure a good match of work to prior attainment levels. Teachers are very good at supporting pupils and this was often demonstrated during the inspection. In introductory plenaries, teachers quickly spotted pupils with concerns and reorganised groups for independent tasks to enable one-to-one or small group tuition as and when it was needed. This ensured that all pupils made good progress during the lesson and pupils were delighted that they could accomplish what they had first thought was too much of a challenge. Teachers are highly evaluative of their own work and accept that the challenge for the school's highest attaining mathematicians needs to move up a gear. A few pupils are coasting at lower Level 5, when they could move easily to learning that would

ensure absolute attainment of all aspects of Level 5. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and provide good pointers for future improvement.

44. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is confident and capable and has a good handle on standards and achievement in the lower part of the school. She is aware that knowledge of standards and expectations for the older pupils is not quite as strong. This is a developing aspect of the co-ordinator's role and indicative of the movement from lower to primary age range. The school has compensated well, by ensuring that teachers with good skills and knowledge teach the older pupils. As a result, standards have been maintained and improvements have been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

45. Pupils use their number skills and mathematical thinking well in other subjects. Times tables are well rehearsed and pupils calculate swiftly and accurately to find averages for science tests, for example. Good mathematical presentation skills are well employed in other subjects to add information in tables and charts. Pupils' numeracy skills effectively aid and enhance their learning in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is good.

Main strengths

- Standards in all classes are better than expected levels and pupils achieve well
- Practical lessons make learning interesting for pupils and help them develop important investigational skills
- Good teaching ensures that pupils acquire a wide range of knowledge and skills

Commentary

46. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2004 indicated that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level and above was much better than the national average and the average for similar schools. Performance in science tasks has improved rapidly. All pupils achieve well and a large proportion of pupils reach the higher Level 3 (60 per cent in 2004). These high standards are the result of well-planned opportunities for pupils to explore all aspects of science. In Year 6, teaching is sharply focused on key scientific knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils' work is of a good standard and the majority achieve very well.
47. The teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good scientific knowledge and this ensures that pupils learn the correct skills and vocabulary. As a result, pupils' recording is clear and accurate. Lessons are very well planned and take into account pupils' different abilities. Assessment is used to group the older pupils into suitable classes so the most able are well challenged and work is of a high standard. In recalling work from a previous lesson, pupils spontaneously referred to gases such as oxygen in reference to the changing state of the properties of materials and gave scientific explanations of the movement of molecules. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to think for themselves and teachers' astute questioning allows them to do so. Activities are well planned so pupils experience different procedures that reinforce the same principle. Year 4 pupils tested their predictions about magnetism and made observations about how various magnets worked under different conditions through a series of experiments and observations. Lessons such as this, and a Year 1 lesson about light, are successful because of the number of adults who support pupils in their different activities. Literacy and numeracy skills are promoted well in science so that accounts are accurately written and results of experiments are recorded in a variety of formats. This results in work that is usually neatly presented. Marking is good and tells pupils what they can do to improve their work. The results of half-termly assessments are used effectively to plan further work.
48. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject co-ordinator has worked effectively to ensure that rising standards at the end of Year 2 are continued in Years 3 to 6. The extra focus on stretching the more able pupils has produced good results and emphasis on experimental and investigative science continues to be a strength. Pupils are now thinking as scientists and becoming more confident when talking about their work. The good provision of science for the younger pupils has been maintained since the last inspection, with the weakness still being the cramped conditions in some classes. However, the good provision for Years 5 and 6 has resulted in high standards and overall good improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is good.

Main strengths

- There are good links made between ICT and other subjects

- Teaching and learning are good throughout the school
- Good use is made of available technical support to organise ICT work in class

Commentary

49. Work in ICT has improved well since the last inspection. Pupils now achieve well to reach standards that are better than national expectations at the end of Year 2 and in Year 6. This is demonstrated in a comprehensive collection of work displayed throughout the school and in portfolios. In Year 2, pupils created a computerised picture showing something they had learnt about the Fire of London. They confidently used the paintbrush, pencil, shapes, spray-can and flood-filling icons from the toolbar to create their pictures. They showed good knowledge of the program and were able to edit their work. Pupils evaluated their work and considered what they could do to improve it. Older pupils use a range of ICT applications including word processing and digital editing techniques. In Year 6, pupils import images from digital cameras and videos, apply design templates, create text boxes and add animation and hyperlinks. They skilfully use email and multimedia programs. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and display real pleasure in sharing their work. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make good progress.
50. The teaching of ICT is good, with strong support from the ICT co-ordinator to support planning and delivery of the subject. Teachers' planning makes clear what new skills and knowledge are to be taught. Lessons start with a review of the previous work, the objectives for the lesson and the expected outcomes. During the whole-class sessions, pupils offer ideas and solutions to problems and teachers build upon pupils' contributions as teaching points to correct misunderstandings and to reinforce ICT vocabulary. This ensures good learning. Pupils' work is well matched to their starting levels and targeted pupils receive support from the ICT administrator. The administrator provides good support for teachers by organising and preparing ICT programs for use in classrooms. This enables pupils to use ICT frequently and eases the strain on the ICT suite, which is much in demand and a tight-fit for a whole class. Useful half-termly assessments are in place and work samples are effectively collated as hard copies or saved in files, providing an ongoing record of pupil progress.
51. The leadership of the subject is very good and management good. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of standards throughout the school and provides good support to colleagues to support their knowledge of the subject. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and leads with enthusiasm and expertise. Resources are good with plans already in place to develop these further.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

52. The use of ICT in other subjects is good. During a Year 5/6 lesson good cross-curricular links were made with history in a Tudor 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire' game. Pupils added hyperlinks to link pages together. ICT is used very effectively in English to video and edit pupils' performances. Pupils are excited by this work and give good suggestions about adding sound and visual effects to their performances.

HUMANITIES

53. No geography lessons were seen during the inspection and only two lessons in each of history and religious education. Samples of work were scrutinised in all subjects, teachers' planning was seen and discussions held with subject co-ordinators and pupils. In all subjects, statutory requirements are fully met and pupils have suitable opportunities to learn across the full range of study. From lessons and work samples seen in **religious education**, indications are that pupils' achievements are satisfactory and standards are in line with levels expected by the locally agreed syllabus. The co-ordinator, who works part-time in the school, leads and manages the provision satisfactorily, but has only recently begun teaching the subject herself. This is enabling a better understanding of standards and progress across the school, and highlighting resource needs. There are currently limited artefacts to make lessons more practical and meaningful. Work, discussions with

pupils and lessons seen in **history** indicate that standards are better than expected levels by the end of Year 2 and in Year 6. The main reason for this is the use of very good links between subjects that make learning interesting, relevant and accessible. During the inspection, work in English very well supported learning in history, and pupils' understanding of the Fire of London and the Tudors was expertly developed through speaking and listening activities, visiting actors, video recording of performances and opportunities to read and write at length about the topics being studied. Leadership and management of history are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is also responsible for work in **geography**. Planning and work samples show appropriate coverage of the curriculum and standards are as would be expected.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

54. Two lessons were seen in art and design and only one full session in each of physical education and design and technology. In **art and design**, portfolios were seen and inspectors held discussions with pupils. Examples of good work are attractively displayed around the school and pupils speak enthusiastically about the work they do in lessons. Work displayed showed that a good range of media is used and pupils are encouraged to look at artists' work. Work was of the expected standard for pupils' ages. Year 1 pupils studied the work of John Eardley before painting self-portraits. Year 2's art gallery demonstrated the good use of different media from pastels, collage and paint computer programs to draw and fill patterns. Art is used effectively to support learning in other subjects. Symmetrical patterns linked mathematics to designing patterns and pupils in Years 5 and 6 used oil pastels to draw portraits of the Tudors. In **design and technology**, satisfactory improvements have been made since the last inspection. Pupils' achievements are now satisfactory and standards are in line with expected levels. Pupils have opportunities to work with a range of materials including recycled resources, clay and a range of construction equipment. Winning models from a design and technology challenge were displayed in the school foyer. Photographs of Year 2 work showed examples of gardens created by the pupils with swings, football goal posts and ponds. Other photographs gave evidence that pupils are involved in the full range of making activities, including food technology, where chapatti bread was made. Work in design and technology is effectively used to support other subjects, for example the construction of 'brains' to support science and 'musical instruments' to support music. Pupils in Year 6 talk about their designs and products and their use of tools and equipment and they evaluate the purpose of their designs, for example, they evaluated the use of materials to design a musical instrument to soothe a baby. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There is a clearly developed action plan to build on the work that has already taken place.
55. In the **physical education** lesson seen, teaching was very good and standards were above those expected for the age of the pupils. Basic skills were taught well and pupils were given useful time to practise them. The subject is well led and managed by two co-ordinators. They are developing good links with other primary and secondary schools through a range of sports from athletics to netball, football, rugby and basketball. A large majority of pupils participate in these sports activities out of school time. The school takes part, and is successful in, local competitions. This means that pupils are involved in physical education, not just at school, but also in sporting activities in the local area and in other schools. Almost all pupils are likely to achieve the expected standard of swimming at least 25 metres by the end of Year 6, as they have had swimming lessons in both Years 4 and 5. Years 2, 4 and 6 go away on residential visits where their skills in outdoor activities are developed. Considering that the accommodation restricts physical education lessons both indoors and outside, pupils achieve well. Through the development of the curriculum to include Years 5 and 6, physical education has improved well since the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is good.

Main strengths

- Teaching is good overall and teachers use a variety of musical activities to stimulate an interest in, and understanding of, music
- There are good opportunities for pupils to learn to play a variety of musical instruments
- Pupils enjoy music lessons and participate enthusiastically
- Music makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development

Commentary

56. Standards in singing are above national expectations and have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils sing tunefully, with awareness of breathing, diction and dynamics.

They obviously enjoy singing. Pupils achieve very well because they respond to the high standards expected of them. They make very good progress in music as they move through the school because they are given the opportunity to play a variety of musical instruments and many of them do so. Pupils experience a good range of activities that are designed to develop their musical skills in other areas, such as listening to music and describing the changing mood it conveys. Pupils in Year 4 combine music, movement and narration in their description of an animal they have invented. By Year 6, pupils are learning to use a computer program to compose their own music.

57. Three lessons were observed during the inspection and pupils were heard singing in assembly. As at the time of the last inspection, teaching remains consistently good.
58. The pupils benefit from the very good subject knowledge and dedication of the teachers. Teachers make good use of the introduction of the lessons to assess and consolidate what pupils learnt previously. They build on this by extending both musical understanding and vocabulary. Year 1 pupils learn that sound carries on when an instrument 'wobbles' and are introduced to the word 'vibrates'. Pupils are all keen to participate, work well together and listen to each other. They respond to the high expectations and challenge. For example, in one lesson, their response to being told how they were going to use the computer to make their own compositions was "Wicked!"
59. The subject is well led and managed and pupils are given a wide range of experiences. A large number of pupils sing in the choirs and pupils have the opportunity to join lunchtime recorder clubs. Well-organised musical tuition allows individual pupils to learn the recorder, violin, flute, clarinet and a variety of brass instruments. Music makes a considerable contribution to the spiritual, cultural and social development of the pupils.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

60. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection. Other evidence indicates good provision, as indicated in other sections of this report. The initial activities of the school council are positive and giving pupils a greater sense of ownership and belonging. Pupils are ready to take on responsibilities and they promote themselves and their school positively. Pupils are also gaining a greater sense of citizenship and confidence in the 'running of the school'. A good range of enrichment activities provides opportunities for pupils to work and play together and extends their experiences. Sporting activities give pupils' frequent opportunities to be members of a team and represent the school.

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	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	1
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
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	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
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	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
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).