

INSPECTION REPORT

Benson Church of England Junior School

Benson, Wallingford

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123125

Headteacher: Mrs L Neely (acting)

Lead inspector: Sandra Tweddell

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 24th November 2004

Inspection number: 266411

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Junior
School category: Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils: 7 – 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 107

School address: Oxford Road
Benson
Wallingford
Oxfordshire
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of governors: Mrs P Cooper

Date of previous inspection: November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a small Church of England junior school taking pupils mainly from the local village or neighbouring villages, all of which are relatively favoured. The pupils' attainment on entry is above average. Although a separate school, it is run jointly with a neighbouring infant school which is about 15 minutes walk from the junior school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are responsible for both schools and subject co-ordinators work across both schools. Almost all pupils are of white UK heritage and all are proficient in speaking English. The number of pupils with special educational needs is about the same as most schools as is the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need. The number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well below average. The two schools are about to be amalgamated and because of the building works, which were taking place during the inspection, one class was situated in the infant school. At the time of the inspection, the school was being led and managed by the deputy headteacher in the capacity of acting headteacher.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1709	Sandra Tweddell	Lead inspector	English, art and design, personal, social and health education, history and music,
8941	John Fletcher	Lay inspector	
23273	Ron Freeland	Team inspector	Mathematics, science, Information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, geography and physical education,

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Pupils receive a satisfactory education and the value for money provided by the school is sound. However, this is an underachieving school because, until recently, staff were focused on ensuring all pupils reached average standards and lost sight of the need to challenge the more able pupils. As a result the pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards are broadly average but too few pupils attain a high level. The leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher has set a clear agenda for improvement but the outcomes are not yet evident in terms of higher standards and improved achievement.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement is unsatisfactory but the acting headteacher is focusing on high achievement and the capacity to improve is good.
- Pupils have a trusting relationship with the staff.
- Parents hold the school in high regard and have respect for the acting headteacher.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall but there is an unacceptable variation of quality.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Provision for personal development is good; pupils behave very well and have positive attitudes.
- Although secure, financial management is unsatisfactory.

Two issues from the last inspection have been tackled satisfactorily. The school day has been lengthened and subject co-ordinators are managing their subjects better. Assessment has improved. However, there has been a decline in standards so improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Another area where improvement has been unsatisfactory is helping pupils to understand the richness and diversity of the cultures of the world.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	B	C	C	E
mathematics	D	C	C	E
science	D	B	C	E

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.

Achievement overall is unsatisfactory because the expectations of more able pupils have been too low. Their progress has been slow although it is now accelerating. Pupils of average ability achieve satisfactorily and pupils with special educational needs achieve well because the provision is targeted on their needs. Standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) are broadly average, but standards are improving in mathematics because of management action by the acting headteacher and the co-ordinator. In 2004, girls did better than boys, but for the past three years, boys have done better than girls.

Pupils' personal development including provision for moral and social development are good. Provision for cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory. Behaviour is very good and attitudes are positive, except when teaching lacks sparkle when many pupils react passively. Attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

This is satisfactory. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is satisfactory, although there is too great a variation between effective teaching and that which is dull. A small amount of teaching is unsatisfactory. The recent improvements in teaching in most, but not all of the classes, have not had time to improve the achievement of more able pupils. Strengths in teaching are the relationships between teachers and pupils which contributes to a positive learning environment and the support given by the teaching assistants. Unsatisfactory teaching is due to the poor match of task to the ability of more able pupils and teaching that does not motivate because the pace of the lesson is too slow so pupils, especially boys, lose interest. New systems for tracking the progress of pupils using assessment are used inconsistently.

Links with parents and the community are good and pupils are looked after well. The curriculum is satisfactory. It covers what is needed but is sometimes taught unimaginatively. The current accommodation is unsatisfactory because it is affected by the building of the new school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

These are satisfactory. The acting headteacher has analysed what needs to be done to raise the achievement of more able pupils and her actions have already improved the quality of education for all pupils. She has set a clear educational direction for all staff. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have managed plans for the amalgamation of the two schools and the new building well and they understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They do not ask key questions of senior management to assure themselves that the school is doing all it can for the pupils. They have handled the projected deficit in the budget prudently. The systems used for financial management do not enable the budget to be managed strategically by the headteacher. All statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are pleased with the ethos of the school and the values taught to their children. They agree that their children enjoy school, make good progress and children behave well. A few have concerns about bullying and the information they receive about their child. The inspection found their views are justified except for bullying as the school has good systems to deal with any that occurs. Reports are satisfactory and are currently under review. Pupils say they have to work hard, they receive help when stuck and they can confide in at least one adult in the school. A small number have concerns about behaviour and only half find lessons to be interesting and fun. The inspection team agree with most of these views although found progress to be unsatisfactory and behaviour very good.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards by ensuring that more able pupils achieve as they should,
- Ensure that teaching in each class is equally good,
- Improve financial management.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards in all subjects are average but achievement in years 3 to 6 is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are too low because more able pupils have not been achieving as they should.
- Pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils often achieve well.
- Standards in mathematics are rising because of determined action by senior management.

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.7 (26.7)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	27.7 (27.2)	27.0 (26.8)
science	28.8 (29.4)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 36 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. The above table shows that in 2004, standards in English, mathematics and science were broadly average. For the last three years, standards have been lower than they should because more able pupils have not been sufficiently challenged and so have not attained the high standards of which they are capable. The reason is that leadership and management was focused on ensuring that all pupils reached average standards and lost sight of the need to extend more able pupils.
2. Achievement is therefore unsatisfactory and recent actions to tackle the underachievement have not had time to be effective. However, the inspection found that achievement in most lessons for all groups of pupils is usually satisfactory and often good. This finding is supported by the work in pupils' books which shows a recent improvement in achievement in English, mathematics and science. The acting headteacher has strengthened the monitoring of teaching and from this, has targeted professional development of staff using the support of the local education authority. These actions have improved the quality of provision all round but particularly in mathematics. In many subjects now, more able pupils are given work that challenges them so that they are beginning to achieve as they should.
3. Another method brought in by the acting headteacher is the idea of tracking pupils to show whether they are progressing appropriately. Although some staff have more confidence than others in using the information, this is beginning to help raise standards of writing.
4. Boys have attained more highly than girls except for last year, when this was reversed. Boys lose interest more quickly when the teaching does not motivate them. Generally however, their attitudes are usually as positive as girls.
5. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. They make this good progress because the school organises support that includes them in all activities. Pupils are given clear targets based on their needs and these are monitored carefully. Support staff know their pupils well and work effectively so that pupils can engage with the lessons. This is also true of lower attaining pupils, who also achieve well. The support each pupil has varies according to his or her needs. These

needs have been agreed with each child's parents and are the basis of targets for improvement. The school co-ordinator monitors each pupil's progress and gives good support to all staff.

6. The focus of the inspection was English, mathematics, science and ICT. Other subjects were sampled and standards were found to be broadly average. The exception was singing where standards were lower than would be expected as pupils lack enthusiasm, have difficulty sustaining notes and sing with little expression. This was the only aspect of music that was observed, so an overall judgment on standards cannot be made. Some paintings are of a high quality, pupils show originality of expression and good techniques of colour mixing and brushwork.

7. Standards have fallen since the last inspection because of low expectations, but the action by the acting headteacher is starting to have an effect and the achievement of pupils is improving.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance and punctuality are good. Their attitudes to work and learning are good and behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. The provision for pupils' personal development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships between pupils and very good behaviour ensure an orderly environment and contribute positively to pupils' achievement and development.
- Pupils' good attitudes to work and learning are exemplified by good attendance but in some classes their natural enthusiasm for learning is not effectively encouraged.
- The school's ethos of care helps pupils to develop their personal and social skills but the opportunities to develop awareness and understanding of other cultures are limited.

Commentary

8. Pupils' behaviour and their relationships with one another and adults are very good and have improved since the last inspection. The pupils are polite, articulate, friendly and understanding. At breaks pupils organise themselves into groups and become very involved in their chosen activities. Whether pupils are skipping or playing football they encourage one another and are happy to celebrate their own and others' achievements. Pupils know and understand the expectations of behaviour and follow routines in a quiet and accepting manner. All pupils were coping extremely well with the upheaval caused by the building of the new school. Movement around the school is always orderly and pupils naturally observe common courtesies of holding open doors and acknowledging greetings. In lessons pupils follow instructions without fuss, share equipment harmoniously, take turns unselfishly and generally work in a calm and positive manner. Records show, and both pupils and parents confirm, that rare instances of unacceptable behaviour are quickly and effectively dealt with. The school is a safe and orderly environment.

9. Pupils have good attitudes to school and to their work. They say, and parents confirm, that they are happy and like attending the school. Attendance levels are good and above the national median for similar schools across the country. Unauthorised absence is low and the school has effective systems in place to follow up unexplained absence and to support any pupils or parents having problems. Whilst pupils like school and show a natural interest in the work they are expected to do, many are compliant and do not demonstrate real excitement and enthusiasm for their learning. In discussions they respond to questions politely and positively but there were very few examples of pupils initiating discussion and bursting to describe what they were doing. In some classes, particularly in the younger ones, pupils are not being given sufficient chances to explore topics independently or to develop their enthusiasm for learning.

10. The ethos of care is strong and as a result, pupils are secure and content with well developed social skills. The school encourages the qualities prevalent in an orderly society, such as trust and respect, and through lessons and assemblies, pupils are beginning to understand the

values, beliefs and feelings that have an impact on human lives. Spiritual development is patchy; there are good examples of provision but opportunities are lost to help pupils appreciate the wonder of the world in which they live. Pupils have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong and a growing awareness of values such as honesty. They are taught to respect the feelings of others and they are helped to think through the consequences of their actions. In most classes, pupils are given chances to discuss and reflect on society's values but as was the case at the last inspection the opportunities to learn about alternative faiths and cultures in preparation for life in the wider community are still unsatisfactory.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.0	School data	0.1
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
104	1	0
1	0	0
2	0	0

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

The exclusion was a rare occurrence and was a necessary action to safeguard staff, the pupil concerned and other pupils.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is sound. Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Links with parents and the community are good and pupils are cared for well.

Teaching and learning

Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Much of teaching and learning are now good, but there is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Pupils are passive when they are not motivated by the teaching.
- Relationships are strong and pupils are very well behaved which contributes to a pleasant learning environment.
- Assessment is starting to be used to raise the achievement of the more able, but its use is inconsistent.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 17 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	2	7	5	3	0	0

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

11. The above table shows that although a high proportion of lessons are good or better, there is an unacceptable range. The unsatisfactory teaching is due to a slow pace and over dominance by the teacher, so that pupils have little opportunity to learn by exploring their own ideas. In these lessons, many pupils, especially the boys, switch off. The acting headteacher has picked this up through her monitoring and is starting to tackle it.

12. The features of good teaching are high expectations so pupils, especially the more able, are challenged and are not allowed to be lazy. Alongside this, lessons move at a swift pace so pupils are kept on their toes. These features were observed in a very good art lesson. Pupils were designing patterns in the style of William Morris and Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The teacher began with examples of their work ensuring that she used specialist vocabulary, which she had written for them to see. She went on to demonstrate how they might design their own and followed this with a demonstration using an ICT program. Pupils sat entranced as the patterns took shape, and by now, they were on the edge of their seats, wanting to have a go for themselves. When they started work, their concentration was intense.. Another feature was that the teacher had planned the lesson so that there were different levels of challenge for different groups of pupils. Achievement in this lesson was very good.

13. Other strengths are questions that provoke thought so that pupils extend their understanding. In English, pupils are often invited to discuss a point in pairs. This helps them to work out their ideas and to learn from others. All teachers are skilled in managing the behaviour of pupils, so that all can listen and learn. The very good behaviour of pupils supports their learning well. Very good relationships create an atmosphere that encourages pupils to try, even if they know they may be wrong.

14. In some of the satisfactory lessons, the teaching was competent but lacked sparkle so pupils were unmotivated. This may be the reason for a large number of pupils indicating in the questionnaire that lessons were not fun or interesting. In these lessons, pupils were passive which adversely affected their achievement.

15. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. During most lessons special work is prepared that allows full access to the lesson and enables the pupils to participate and achieve well. This good teaching is often led by teaching assistants who work under the guidance of the teaching staff and who make a great impact on the quality of the work. Teaching assistants contribute effectively to all pupils' learning. They are well prepared and many have a good knowledge of the pupils and their individual needs. They are great assets in all classrooms.

16. Pupils are assessed regularly and the information from assessments is now plotted on a chart so that teachers can see if their classes are making the progress they should. Some, but not all, teachers are making very good use of this information. In a very good lesson, pupils were asked to write a section of a book as a film. The lesson began with pupils critically, but sensitively, analysing each other's writing. The comments were constructive, such as *do not repeat, say more, describe the issue*. From the discussion, objectives were set for the next step of the writing. These were driven by the pupils' individual targets for writing. Every pupil was involved and one described the lesson as *exciting*. Achievement for all groups of pupils was very good.

17. Although teaching is not as good as in the last inspection, the evidence indicates that management actions, coupled with the enthusiasm of most teachers, are raising the quality.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory as is the provision for the enrichment of the curriculum and the extra curriculum activities. Resources are satisfactory, but the accommodation is currently unsatisfactory as it is affected by the building of the new school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good
- The use of ICT to enrich the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- There is a team of good assistants to support the teaching staff.
- Provision for personal development is good.

Commentary

18. The curriculum of the school covers all the required areas of study and a strong emphasis is appropriately placed on mathematics, English and science. The curriculum ensures that average attaining and lower attaining pupils achieve as they should, but more able pupils underachieve as they are not challenged. The school development plan identifies enrichment of the curriculum as a priority; this is highly appropriate.

19. Since the last inspection satisfactory improvements have been made. The greatest improvement is in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. The school has now fully implemented national guidance for literacy and numeracy and improvements in ICT have been made. However, ICT is not used in all subjects to support learning and teaching.

20. The curriculum is enhanced by a number of activities that help make the school a more exciting place. Staff give generously of their time to lead residential trips that are arranged for both Years 5 and 6 pupils every year. These contribute well to their social and academic development. Physical activities after school include netball, football and rounders which support attainment in physical education. The arts are supported with visiting musicians, poets, and artists. A team of visiting music teachers teach the wind instruments, the violin and the keyboard benefiting those pupils who study these instruments.

21. Pupils are well prepared for the moves into the local secondary schools and the movement of pupils from the infant school into the junior school is made easy for each child.

22. The provision for personal, social and health education is good. A national scheme is used which covers all areas of the subject. It is taught as a separate subject and aspects such as citizenship, are beginning to be woven into other subjects. The provision contributes effectively to the good personal development of all pupils.

23. The resources and staffing for pupils with special educational needs are very well managed with a very well qualified co-ordinator leading a skilled team of teachers and teaching assistants. Adaptations have been made to the school to enable physically handicapped children to fully access the building and to receive the treatment that they may need.

24. The school is well staffed and satisfactorily resourced. The teaching staff are well deployed. They are effectively supported by a team of teaching assistants who contribute well towards the curriculum of the school. This partnership is a strength. The school is satisfactorily resourced for most subjects but in some areas, for example stop watches for science investigations, the lack of availability inhibits effective teaching. It is of credit to the school that the school building is used so well during this time of major upheaval. The school lacks play space, the hall is an entrance way and the noise from the builders is disruptive. However the school still offers a welcoming and safe environment.

Care, guidance and support

Procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. Good quality support and advice help pupils to make progress. Pupils' views and opinions are valued and are increasingly being sought.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school looks after pupils effectively.
- Pupils enjoy very good and trusting relationships with staff.
- Good and increasing opportunities are being made available to ensure pupils' involvement in their own development and in the work and development of the school.

Commentary

25. Good and improved arrangements for child protection are in place and the school is both vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities. All staff show high levels of care for pupils and good procedures ensure that the school is a safe and orderly environment conducive to learning and development. In lessons and at breaks appropriate supervision is always provided. Good systems ensure that identified hazards and safety concerns are quickly eliminated. Appropriate rules relating to internet access are in place and closely followed.

26. Pupils arrive at the school with well developed social awareness and skills. They readily accept the routines and show respect for all adults in the school. As pupils gain confidence they show few inhibitions and are happy to follow instructions and to seek clarification or help if they do not understand or if they have any concerns. In the pupil questionnaire, the vast majority of pupils say they know who to approach with problems and observation and discussions around the school indicate that pupils enjoy trusting and open relationships with staff.

27. Good and increasing numbers of opportunities are being created for pupils to express their views and to become involved in their own development and in the day-to-day work of the school. In some lessons pupils are regularly asked to give an opinion on their own work and performance. All pupils are involved in negotiating, agreeing and reviewing their own personal and social development target. This new system is highly valued by pupils who talk enthusiastically about their achievement. Whenever necessary the school organises individually tailored support packages to minimise any disruption to learning and personal development. Another relatively new initiative, the school council, is taken very seriously by pupils and provides a good forum for pupils to make suggestions on how to improve school routines and facilities. The introduction of water dispensers, improvements to the playground and incorporation of a "chill room" (where pupils can go if upset) in the new buildings are direct outcomes of requests from the school council.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school enjoys a good and supportive partnership with parents. There are good, productive links with the wider community. Links with other schools are satisfactory and developing.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The partnership with parents and carers is enhanced by the frequency and level of contact and by the good quality information made available on pupils' progress and development.
- The school draws effectively from the local community to broaden and enhance children's development.
- Transfer arrangements are good and ensure a smooth transition for pupils when they enter the school and when they move on to secondary school.

Commentary

28. A strong partnership exists between the school and parents. Views expressed by parents indicate high levels of satisfaction with the school and widespread pleasure at the progress they see their children making. An overwhelming majority say their children like attending and agree that behaviour is good, that children are expected to work hard and that leadership and management are good. Parents comment favourably on the consistently high level of care shown towards pupils and there is broad agreement that the school is effective in encouraging maturity and preparing children for the next stage of education.

29. A few concerns were expressed about the impersonal style of annual reports and about bullying. On entry to the school parents are fully involved in the settling in process and the school works hard to establish the link with home. Effective communication is maintained through the homework book, telephone calls, newsletters, parents' evenings, social events and the formal annual report. Reports provide a good overview of what pupils know, understand and can do together with good summaries of social and personal development. The acting headteacher is aware of and shares parental concern over the impersonal nature of the annual report and is currently reviewing the format.

30. Records show that there are isolated incidents of name calling and mild bullying but there is clear evidence, confirmed by pupils, that these are effectively and sensitively dealt with. Formal evenings and social events are very well attended and an active Friends Association raises significant funds for the school that are used to support the curriculum. Parents are quickly involved if problems occur and the school is always available if parents have any concerns. The school welcomes and values parental opinions and always takes note of suggestions for improvement. Some special evenings designed to help parents support children's education at home have been arranged but attendance has been disappointing.

31. The school is increasingly outward looking and enjoys good links with the wider community. Various community groups use the school regularly and the resources and skills in the local community are well used to enhance pupils' learning and understanding of the wider world. Pupils visit local museums, parks, theatres and libraries. There are regular opportunities for older pupils to go on residential visits and frequent visitors to the school include the police, theatre groups and community members with particular skills and experience. For example local veterans of World War 2 have been in to talk to share memories and experiences with pupils. There are few opportunities to learn about other faiths and cultures

32. The very close working relationship with the infant school ensures that when they transfer, pupils and their parents receive very good support and help over the transition period. Similarly there are good links with secondary schools which ensure comprehensive information exchange and a smooth transfer for pupils. The school is at an early stage in developing links with other schools, but there has already been some collaboration between staff over curriculum development and training.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory and the clear agenda for improvement is raising standards.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting headteacher has set a clear direction for improvement, backed by an appropriate action plan.
- Financial management is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory in English.
- Induction of new staff is good .
- Professional development is starting to be used to improve the provision.

- The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good.

Commentary

33. The acting headteacher was appointed to the position in January 2004. Her role as deputy carried the responsibility for leadership and management of the infant school, technically a separate institution. Both schools are being amalgamated in September 2005 and the past two years have been spent in preparation for the amalgamation. The acting headteacher has many commitments at the infant school, including teaching, so has not had the time to manage the junior school as she would wish.

34. Despite this, she has acted with determination to raise the attainment of more able pupils. She is tightening the management systems to support her aim of high achievement. Weak teaching has been identified through monitoring and staff deployment has been used effectively to compensate for the weaknesses. As a result, teaching in most of the classes is now good and the underachievement of the more able pupils is improving. She has drawn up an action plan, based on her monitoring. The priorities are highly appropriate. The effect of this could not be gauged fully as it is too new, but one improvement is in mathematics, where a combination of support from the local education authority, professional development for all staff and the attendance by the subject co-ordinator at a management course has improved the provision.

35. The governing body is made up of experienced and new governors. Governors have been proactive in decisions about the building. They have ideas about a strategic plan for the future school, but have been waiting for the return of the headteacher before committing their thoughts to paper. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, although, apart from the governor for special educational needs, they have not carried out many visits because of the impending amalgamation. The report issued by the governor who visited provided good information for the governing body. Governors are aware that they need to extend their skills of asking strategic questions to satisfy themselves that the school is doing all it can for pupils.

36. Subject co-ordinators have responsibilities across both schools. The last two inspections have judged the monitoring of the curriculum by co-ordinators as unsatisfactory. This has improved over the past two years and is now satisfactory. All co-ordinators have time to review provision in their subjects, which includes some observation of lessons. All have drawn up a sound development plan for their subject. The curriculum is therefore secure. Co-ordinators also understand the strengths and weaknesses within their subjects. The leadership and management of English are unsatisfactory. Although an extensive analysis of test results has been done and a development plan produced, there has been little action to ensure that the more able pupils achieve as they should. Individual teachers are using their own expertise to ensure this happens.

37. New staff are supported well when they join the school. The procedures for their supervision are of a high quality.

38. The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. The co-ordinator has very good records of each child. She has identified clearly their needs and has worked with each child's parents and with the teaching staff to see that progress is monitored and targets are achieved. She manages a very good team that includes visiting teachers, teaching assistants, and staff from the local education authority. Special arrangements have been made so that physically handicapped pupils, are able to fully access the school curriculum.

Financial information

39. Usually, a table is here showing financial information for the last year. The finances of both schools are handled as one, so the information could not be obtained.

40. The last audit in 1999 judged that financial procedures were good, but made recommendations. Some of these have not been carried out with the result that it is difficult to

retrieve information either for use on a day-to-day basis, or for the headteacher to plan strategically. An appropriate priority on the school development plan is improved financial management.

41. The school went into deficit as reserves had been used and an application for capital funding was not made in 2002. Governors acted quickly once they realised there was a deficit and sought advice. New systems have been planned, although they are still not effective because the school is having problems with the software. This has caused difficulties with forward planning and with setting the budget for the current financial year. Savings have been made through prudent financial management by the acting headteacher and chair of finance committee. The acting headteacher has also put in controls, such as asking staff to submit all requests for orders to her so she can screen them in the interest of efficiency. The deficit is beginning to reduce because of these actions. The local education authority has agreed to the deficit..

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs often achieve well.
- There is an unacceptable range of teaching quality from unsatisfactory to very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory,
- The information from tracking is not used consistently by all teachers to ensure all groups of pupils achieve as they should.

Commentary

42. Standards have dropped since the last inspection because the school has focused on ensuring that all pupils reach average standards and staff have not been enabling higher attaining pupils to reach the standards of which they are capable. Standards have been broadly average for the past two years but in comparison with similar schools have been well below average. The acting headteacher has recognised this and has brought in support from outside to help subject co-ordinators improve their practice. She has also introduced a method of tracking the progress of all pupils against what they should be achieving. This has been effective and much teaching now takes good account of the needs of different groups of pupils. One example from Year 6 is quoted in the paragraph on teaching. Although the bulk of the provision in most classrooms is now satisfactory or good, it has not had time to impact on standards. However, the progress of pupils in Year 6 is accelerating and at this stage of the school year, standards are above average. Taking this into account along with most of the teaching being at least satisfactory, overall provision is judged to be satisfactory.

43. The co-ordinator has spent much time in analysing what needs to be done and the development plan from this identifies appropriate priorities. The analysis and resulting plan are too recent to have had an effect on the consistency of provision across the school. The recent information from tracking the progress of pupils is used inconsistently across the school.

44. Despite significant time given to teaching spelling, pupils do not transfer this learning into their writing. Spelling lists are appropriately different for the range of abilities, and the groups of words have similar patterns of letters which is good practice. However, the words are taught in isolation from pupils' own writing, so have little relevance. Similarly the teaching of grammar is often remote from the needs of pupils. A great deal of time is devoted to teaching handwriting, even in Year 6. This is unnecessary for the many pupils whose handwriting is impeccable. Time is given to all these activities rather than to build on the pupils' many skills with language that they bring from home and the infant school. Monitoring of the provision has not picked up these weaknesses.

45. The achievement of average pupils is broadly satisfactory and that of below average pupils and those with special educational needs is often good. This is because the expectations of teachers of these pupils is appropriate. In some year groups however, these pupils, especially boys, underachieve. This is because the teaching is dull and plods along, so pupils become bored. The boys switch off quickly, although they do not misbehave as most pupils in the school are compliant. In one example of unsatisfactory practice, the full lesson was spent on teaching adverbs to the whole class. There was a limited opportunity for the pupils to extend their learning through discussion as most of the time, the teacher talked and gave pupils little opportunity to develop their ideas.

46. Teaching overall is satisfactory because of the range in quality. Much is lively and engages pupils. In some lessons, pupils are eager to write and enjoy the lessons, be it re-writing a piece of prose as a play or trying to write complex instructions from their notes. A teacher in Year 3 made the teaching of verbs exciting through her enthusiasm and skilled adaptation of the national strategy for literacy. In this lesson, pupils eagerly discussed a wide range of verbs and then used them to make their writing come alive. In another lesson, a teacher courageously tried out a new idea in a literacy lesson. The aim was to teach pupils how to make notes then use them to write instructions. The teacher began by demonstrating how to make a complex shape to hold sweets for Christmas. Pupils watched eagerly, then made notes with great concentration. Pupils of average ability, including many boys, folded paper before writing their instructions whilst more able pupils wrote without recourse to practical support. These two groups of pupils learned well because of their interest and the achievement of both groups was good.

47. Most pupils have a wide vocabulary that they use well both in discussion, when they are given the opportunity, and in their writing. Many are prepared to put forward a point of view and in Year 6, to argue their case with maturity. Time used for teaching reading is used well. Many pupils are avid readers and read appropriately challenging books. For example, one girl is reading Tolkien's trilogy. She said that she found the first volume difficult, but persevered and is enjoying the second. She was also making comparisons between the film and the book and thought that the film had missed out some features that she found interesting from her reading. Some younger pupils say that they enjoy reading, but are put off by having to write a review of every book they read. Although reviewing books is good practice, these pupils lose interest if asked to write a review each time they read a book.. There are some highly skilled writers in the school, including boys. Their writing is lively and manipulates language well. The improved focus on more able pupils in most classes is ensuring that their writing develops as it should.

48. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory as standards have fallen.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. Most pupils use their skills of language and literacy satisfactorily in all subjects. They know how to use information books and understand how to find books in the library for their research. The library has not been available as the area had to be used for storage during the rebuilding which has adversely affected the confidence of some lower attaining pupils. Most pupils present their work well using a range of methods such as charts or lists and in science, they explain their findings from experiments with care.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- While pupils achieve standards close to those expected nationally they do not achieve well in comparison to schools in similar contexts
- The quality of the teaching is not consistent. The more able pupils are not always challenged
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported
- The use of ICT to further develop mathematical understanding is unsatisfactory.
- Areas for improvement are well identified by the acting headteacher and the subject leader and action has already been taken to improve the subject.

Commentary

50. At present standards in Year 6 are in line with those expected nationally with indications that those standards are improving. Pupils enter the school with standards that are above average but the achievement of pupils throughout the whole school is unsatisfactory. In the 2004 national tests, standards were similar to those in most schools, but in comparison with similar schools, were well

below average. An examination of the work of the Years 3 and 4 pupils, in particular, shows a lack of challenge. This represents a decline since the last inspection.

51. Standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall though vary across year groups. In the good teaching in Year 5 the pupils were excited when they had to plan a journey for a visitor to England. They worked within given criteria and while planning the journey, exercised their mathematical skills to calculate number problems using methods they had been taught earlier in the lesson. All the pupils were involved, the less gifted were well supported and the gifted were challenged. After a good lesson in Year 6, the pupils explained how important it was to use percentages and demonstrated that they could translate decimal and vulgar fractions into percentages in their heads and using, when appropriate, a calculator. In the two lessons seen in Years 3 and 4 the pupils were not fully involved. The less able pupils were well supported but the more able were not challenged and lacked interest. In these lessons the volume of work was not high and in an unsatisfactory lesson the pace was far too slow and resulted in very little work being completed and the pupils becoming restless.

52. The school has problems with using ICT because of access to the suite made worse by the building work. However, ICT is not used sufficiently to support pupils' learning of mathematics..

53. The subject is well led by a co-ordinator who has risen to the challenge of improving standards. She has created, with the staff and governors, an action plan that identifies the need to improve mathematics and has outlined how this is going to be done. She has built on the good procedures introduced by the acting headteacher to enable her to track the progress of pupils through the school. This information is used to create targets to challenge both the teachers and the pupils. She has visited classrooms to watch classes in action and has recommended courses of action for different teachers. The school has the support of the local education authority and teachers within the school have received guidance and additional training. There is evidence that the good management is having an effect and the standards of work are improving.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. Pupils make satisfactory use of their number skills in other subjects. They use measuring and recording skills in their scientific experiments. They used a computer program to enter data and create a graphical representation of shoe sizes.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of the more able pupils is not good enough
- The use of ICT to extend the depth of challenge in science work is unsatisfactory
- The temporary subject leaders are aware of the strengths and weaknesses within the subject and are analysing performance
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported

Commentary

55. Standards in Year 6 have been in line with or above national expectations for all schools nationally in the last two years but in comparison with similar schools in 2004 were well below average. Pupils enter the school with standards above those to be expected nationally and more able pupils leave with standards below what can be expected. Examination of the current work suggests that this is still the case but the school recognises this weakness and is tackling the problem. Standards have declined since the last inspection because more able pupils have not been challenged to attain highly.

56. Pupils enjoy science and in Year 3 during a good lesson the pupils were excited as they planned to test the strength of large and small magnets. They were preparing for an investigation by planning an experiment. They could explain what the requirements for a fair test would be. Good teaching was motivating the pupils well and they were achieving good results. Pupils in another class had grown seeds and had studied how plants grow and what they need to grow well but in general these pupils were not challenged and they were not being given the opportunities to develop an understanding of good scientific investigation. In another class, pupils investigated the effect of air resistance on spinners that had been weighted with paper clips. In this lesson the pupils were very enthusiastic and took a keen interest in the outcomes of the investigation. Pupils supported by a teaching assistant achieved very good results and could explain the outcomes. The rest of the class were somewhat hampered by a lack of stopwatches but had laid the foundations for good scientific enquiry and could see why some tests were fair and others were not.

57. The teaching is not consistent and work seen varies in content and quality. Able pupils are not always challenged. There was no evidence to show how teachers use ICT to further motivate and challenge scientific learning and understanding.

58. The subject is led by two temporary co-ordinators. They are using good procedures to help them to track pupils' progress through the school. This information has informed the development plan for the subject and is a good basis to launch improvement. Subject guidance helps to provide a consistent approach and the co-ordinators monitor the planning to ensure that the subject is taught. Resources for science are unsatisfactory and as a result investigative work is hindered.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are making good progress in developing their keyboard skills in ICT
- The new curriculum leader is giving a good lead.
- ICT is not used to develop independent learning and challenge the more able pupils

Commentary

59. Pupils in Year 6 attain standards in keyboard skills that are better than national expectations. They confidently use tool bars within a word processing programme to alter text, insert pictures, modify pictures, move text and pictures into boxes and insert boxes within boxes. They can log on to the computer and choose appropriate programmes. They quickly and efficiently draw pictures and are competent in searching the internet to research topics. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when ICT was described as needing development. This improvement has been assisted by the development of computers in every classroom as well as a group of 11 stations at the rear of the Year 6. At present, this means that this class has to exchange rooms with any class requiring access to the suite which is sometimes difficult to arrange as the room is needed by the class.

60. Achievement in ICT when it is taught as a separate subject is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are also satisfactory. Pupils in Year 3 have secure skills and manage text and pictures well enough to create effective displays of their English work. Pupils in Year 4 used the suite of computers to follow logical instructions that directed the pupils to draw geometric shapes. They enjoyed this work and were enhancing their keyboard skills alongside their mathematical understanding. Pupils in Year 5 enthusiastically entered data into tables and converted the information onto graphs. Good teaching had taught these pupils the importance of accurate fields and given the pupils the confidence to experiment. These pupils were enthusiastic and achieving well.

61. The school is adequately resourced with computers in each classroom and the temporary suite. ICT is led and managed by a newly appointed co-ordinator. She has a firm vision for the future of the curriculum.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

62. The use of ICT in many subjects is unsatisfactory, but is not helped by the poor facilities due to the building works. The school's two interactive white boards were used to good effect to enhance the teaching and learning in a literacy lesson. ICT was used to present the pupils written work, for example to design a leaflet on a publishing program to advertise a holiday venue. The pupils in Year 5 could account for how much more effective a CD Rom could be instead of the usual encyclopaedia. However, in mathematics and science, computers are not used well across the school as an aid to enrich the curriculum

HUMANITIES

63. History and geography were sampled during the inspection. Religious education will be inspected by the diocese at a later date. The school is led by a co-ordinator who supervises both history and geography. The leadership and management of humanities have improved since the last inspection as the co-ordinator has time to manage the subject and is working to a development plan.

64. One lesson was observed in **history** and the teaching and learning were good so all groups of pupils achieved well. Discussion with pupils about history showed that many enjoy the subject. They use their skills of research effectively, including some use of the internet, despite the difficult accommodation at the time of the inspection because of the building works. Pupils in Year 6 understand about cause and effect and many have a good knowledge of the history of Benson village, partly because they are taken to look at historical features of the village. Pupils in Year 6 were extremely interested in post war Britain because of the exciting way the teacher had prepared them for research. This contributed well to their skills of independence.

65. No teaching was seen in **geography** and so a firm judgment can not be given. Evidence was collected from an examination of pupils' work and interviews with Year 6 pupils. This was the situation at the time of the last inspection. The school follows a cycle of topics so that the pupils gain an all round balanced geographical understanding of their position within the world. Pupils in Year 3 have this understanding and are able to understand and show where they are along the Thames valley, within the British Isles and on a world map. Pupils in Year 4 have developed their understanding of map work and have drawn maps to illustrate their route to school. These carefully drawn maps include keys to the symbols. In Year 5, pupils have compared their own way of living with the way in which children grow up in Benares. The Year 6 pupils remembered this past work with pleasure and were looking forward to future studies next term.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

66. Art and design, music, design and technology and physical education were sampled. A new co-ordinator took up responsibility for the leadership and management of **music** in November so has had little opportunity to lead and manage the subject. No lessons were observed as they took place at the end of the week, although instrumental tuition was observed. Pupils have the opportunity to learn to play the clarinet, keyboard and violin. Those who take up the opportunity enjoy learning these instruments and achieve well because of the individual tuition. Singing in assembly and hymn practice is unsatisfactory. Pupils sing with little expression and enthusiasm; they do not sustain the notes and the volume is muted.

67. Some of the **art and design** on display is of a high quality, particularly paintings in the style of Van Gogh and self portraits based on the work of Picasso. Some of the latter were produced using ICT and showed good skills in manipulating the program. An example of a very good lesson is described in the paragraph on teaching. Leadership and management of the subject have improved

since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. The co-ordinator makes good use of the time that is given to manage the subject. All pupils have a sketch book, but in most classes, these are not used as drafts to develop their ideas which would support high standards.

68. During the inspection no lessons were seen in **physical education**. This was the same during the last inspection. Games activities were severely limited due to the adverse effects of the building work on the life of the school. National guidelines are followed and the pupils regularly experience physical activities including games and dance. Pupils have the opportunity of attending clubs after school to pursue football, rounders and netball. Pupils in Year 6 enjoyed their dance with the class teacher leading them into improvisations to represent jungle animals. Once the school takes possession of its new field and playground and the school hall ceases to be used as a main entrance, the full curriculum for physical education can be re-instated.

69. During the inspection evidence for **design and technology** was collected from looking at pupils' past work and the two lessons that were seen, one in Year 4 and one in Year 5. Year 3 pupils had used design skills to make and decorate a coffin for an ancient Egyptian. They had used collage and stitched patterns carefully and had enhanced their understanding of the ancient Egyptians. During the Year 4 lesson the pupils had designed a frame for a Chinese birthday card. This lesson was one of a series linked to the class studies of the China. The pupils enjoyed working carefully in a very quiet and peaceful atmosphere. They developed their construction skills, took great pains to use calligraphy to label the cards and used ribbon, card, pasta and paint to decorate their frames. In the Year 5 class the pupils had developed a detailed plan to show how a cam can be used to alter motion. They were now constructing and decorating the machine. The co-ordinator monitors progress of the subject, which is an improvement since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

70. Planning for the subject is good and the subject is led well. Time given to manage the subject, introduced by the acting headteacher, has enabled the co-ordinator to produce a development plan and to meet with people with expertise from outside the school in order to develop the subject. The school is a member of the Healthy Schools Initiative and also has links with agencies such as the emergency services. Each class has time for the subject, through time set aside for discussion or through direct teaching about subjects such as personal safety. Pupils in Year 6, for example, have considered what it feels like to be afraid and from this, gone on to learn about how to avoid accidents and to keep healthy. A lesson with pupils in Year 5 on healthy lifestyles was well planned and the use of ICT maintained the pupils' interest. The lesson was lively and the pupils' enthusiasm harnessed well into a discussion. The teacher used questions effectively to challenge the learning of each group of pupils. More able pupils faced probing questions. The results of the good provision can be seen in the good personal development of pupils and their care for one another.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	5

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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