

INSPECTION REPORT

CHURCH ASTON INFANT SCHOOL

Newport

LEA area: Telford and Wrekin

Unique reference number: 123358

Headteacher: Mrs A Garner

Lead inspector: Mrs J E Platt

Dates of inspection: 29th and 30th November 2004

Inspection number: 266620

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 4 to 7
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 36

School address: Church Aston
Newport
Shropshire
Postcode: TF10 9JN

Telephone number: 01952 811798
Fax number: -

Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of Dr E Marsh
governors:

Date of previous 17 May 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Church Aston Infant School is much smaller than other infant schools with 36 pupils on roll. Pupils are taught in two mixed age classes. Attainment on entry varies because of the small numbers involved but is generally average. The school serves the village of Church Aston and surrounding areas which are generally socially and economically advantaged. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. A very small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and no pupils currently need help because English is not their first spoken language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average and no pupils have a formal Statement of Special Educational Need. Difficulties include specific learning and social and emotional difficulties. The school is involved in the network learning community and benefits from sharing experiences with the local cluster of schools. The school has achieved Investors in People Status and is a designated healthy school. In 2002, the school received a nationally recognised Achievement Award for improvement in national tests. The school had Beacon Status from 2000 to 2004 which recognises the school excels at one or more activities.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11565	Mrs J E Platt	Lead inspector	English Science Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education Special educational needs English as an additional language
31713	Mr S Roberts	Lay inspector	
22740	Mrs M Leah	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography History Religious education Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a welcoming and **highly effective** school and worthy of the Beacon Status¹ it successfully maintained until the scheme finished. Very effective teaching generates an enthusiasm for learning and pupils work hard and are very eager to gain new knowledge and skills. Achievement is very good and standards in Year 2 are well above average. Leadership and management are very good and all involved with the school work as a team to keep the school at the cutting edge of changes in education. The school has a considerable budget and **overall value for money is good**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils reach well above average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- The overall provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is excellent. Achievement is very good with many pupils using technology confidently as a natural part of their learning.
- Teaching is very good and when combined with the rich and exciting curriculum ensures achievement is very good. Assessment is effective and used well to set pupils' individual targets although these are not referred to sufficiently to ensure pupils make use of them.
- Leadership from the headteacher is very purposeful and she sets very clear direction for the school. The school has a good plan to implement changes but it is overlong and this clouds the school's major priorities.
- Support staff provide excellent help in all aspects of school life. This is especially helpful for pupils with special educational needs who play a full part in school life.
- The partnership with parents is excellent and they are very supportive of the school. Procedures to introduce parents and pupils to school are outstanding.

The previous inspection judged the school to be very good and identified no areas for improvement. This has not led the school to be complacent and progress since then has been very good. Very high standards have been sustained and in 2002 the school received a nationally recognised Achievement Award for improvement in national test results. The school has kept abreast of many national changes. This can be seen especially in resources for ICT which enable technology to be a useful tool for staff and pupils. Refurbishment has improved the accommodation especially the outdoor facilities.

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	A	A	A
Writing	B	A	A*	A*
Mathematics	A	A	A*	A*

Key: A - very high; A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

¹ A Beacon School excels at one or more activities and has applied to and been accepted by the DfEE for Beacon School status. The scheme is designed to raise standards in schools through the sharing and spreading of good practice.

Overall achievement is **very good**.

Achievement is very good in the Foundation Stage² and children will exceed the goals they are expected to achieve by the end of the reception class in their mathematical, language and literacy skills, their knowledge and understanding of the world and their personal and social development.

With small numbers involved the results of national tests at the end of Year 2 vary from year to year but have consistently been above the national average and the average for similar schools. The school's overall trend in results has been broadly in line with the national trend. In 2004, results were impressive and in reading were well above average and in writing and mathematics were very high and were within the range of the top 5 per cent of schools across the country. A significant number of pupils exceed the level expected for their age. In response to challenging teaching this continues to be the case and current standards are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. From an average starting point as pupils enter school these standards reflect very good achievement. This very good achievement is seen not only in subjects which are assessed by national tests but across the curriculum. Standards in science and ICT are also well above average. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress with many closing the gap with their peers and reaching the level expected for their age. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties thrive in this supportive atmosphere and settle happily.

Pupils' personal development is **very good** and is greatly enhanced by the **very good** provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Relationships are very good and pupils treat adults and each other very considerately. Attendance is very good. Pupils enjoy school and behaviour is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good**. Throughout the school teaching is consistently good and often better. Outstanding features of the best teaching include very high expectations of academic performance and behaviour, encouragement and praise which leads to all pupils trying hard to please their teachers. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm shines through in many lessons and inspires pupils to improve. This is especially the case in literacy, numeracy and science lessons which are very practical and lead to a busy learning atmosphere and much is achieved. An excellent feature in many lessons is the involvement of support staff who play a leading role in enabling all pupils to play a full part in lessons and to achieve their very best. Assessment procedures are good. As part of the school's focus on including pupils in their learning pupils have been set individual targets in literacy and numeracy. These are very clear targets and are most helpful when teachers refer to them in lessons otherwise pupils are not making full use of them. The curriculum is very good and is enhanced by a very good range of enrichment activities. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Staffing and resources are very good especially for ICT which is much better than usually seen in infant schools.

The attention given to pupils' welfare and safety is very good. Pupils are a delight to be with because they feel secure and know they can turn to staff for help if needed. Staff share and extend their skills through very good links with other schools. The school is very much at the heart of the village and has very good links with the community. Parents' support for the school is excellent and has a significant impact on pupils' learning.

² The Foundation Stage starts when children reach the age of three and ends at the end of the reception class.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is **very good**. The headteacher is a very good leader with a great enthusiasm which she shares with all to keep the school moving forward. Subject leaders manage their subjects very effectively. Managers carefully evaluate what is

happening in school and promptly identify any perceived weakness. The plan to show how the school intends to tackle these issues is good but the school's main priorities are overshadowed by the large number of objectives. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive and ensure all statutory duties are fulfilled. The effectiveness of management is very good and the school has Investors in People status.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are highly satisfied with the education their children receive and the school is held in high esteem in the community. Pupils have a very good opinion of their school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

This is a very effective school with no substantial areas for improvement. The school should consider the following points:

- reduce the length of the school development plan so that the correctly identified priorities become more obvious;
- remind pupils more regularly of their individual targets so they are clearer about how to improve.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall achievement is **very good** and standards in Year 2 are **well above average**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a very good start to their education.
- Standards in Year 2 are well above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- Pupils with special educational needs are welcomed in the school and make very good progress towards the targets set for them.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are very high because of the excellent resources and very effective teaching.
- The stimulating curriculum enables pupils to make very good overall achievement not just in the subjects assessed by national tests.

Commentary

1. Children in the Foundation Stage make very good progress and many well exceed the early learning goals³ in their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world. Children in the reception class are taught alongside pupils in Year 1 and a focus for the inspection was achievement for pupils in the mixed age classes. This is managed very well by staff and teachers plan carefully to match the needs of this age group. For example, in literacy the very effective use of the teaching assistant enables the children in the reception class to be taught their letters and sounds in a small group. Children benefit from this support because it is practical and imaginative and many apply the skills taught in these sessions in their early attempts at reading and writing. Similarly, mathematics is taught through games and the use of practical activities and consolidated throughout the day. As a result, children grow in confidence to solve simple problems. The rich curriculum and effective teaching of ICT enables pupils to use computers confidently and this supports achievement in other areas of learning.⁴ Children reach the early learning goal in their physical development and exceed it in their creative development. The significant attention given to the children's personal, social and emotional development means children are very well prepared to move on to Year 1.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores⁵ in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	18.3 (17.4)	15.8 (15.7)

³ Early learning goals are the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage.

⁴ Areas of learning include communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

⁵ The average point score provides schools with a single statistic to compare the overall grades by all of their pupils with the grades attained by all pupils in another similar school as well as an average for all schools nationally. The score is obtained from the National Curriculum level attained by pupils in the national assessments. For example, in mathematics pupils are awarded 9 points for a level 1, 15 points for a level 2 and 21 points for a level 3. The average score is calculated by adding up all of the points and then dividing by the number of pupils who were tested.

Writing	17.9 (16.4)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	19.3 (18.5)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 16 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The test results shown in the grid are typical of the school and are well above both the national average and the average for similar schools. In writing and mathematics results were very high and were in the top five per cent in the country. Overall test results have consistently been above the national average although there was a slight dip in 2002 and this affected the overall trend in results which is in line with the national trend. Fluctuations in results are to be expected in a small school where one pupil can carry a high percentage of points. The school is not complacent about its high standards and monitors results meticulously to check for any underachievement. It was noted that boys were not doing as well as girls in writing and this was a focus for the inspection. Action was prompt and imaginative and a project on writing about characters relevant to their experiences - the Bionicles - was stimulating and successfully raised boys' enthusiasm for writing and drama. Analysis of test results suggested that higher attaining boys might not be doing as well as they should and this was followed up by the inspection team. This is not apparent in current standards with equal numbers of boys and girls identified as higher attaining pupils. During the inspection there was no evidence of any difference in achievement related to gender. Very effective teaching is challenging pupils of all levels of attainment and the school has a very high proportion of boys and girls exceeding the level expected for their age. As a result, current standards in Year 2 are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. From an average starting point as pupils enter school this represents very good achievement. This achievement is also seen in other subjects and reflects pupils' positive response to a very stimulating curriculum. The focus on investigation in science leads to well above average standards and an enthusiasm for exploration and following through of ideas. As at the time of the previous inspection, provision for ICT is outstanding and pupils achieve very well and standards are high.
3. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress comparative to their earlier attainment. This is because staff are well informed about their needs and plan accordingly. Support staff play a significant part in ensuring these pupils play a full part in lessons and monitor their progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans. When one target is reached another is set to enable pupils to make very good progress. Pupils identified as academically gifted as well as those with physical and creative talents fully extend their skills because of the experiences provided to match their individual needs.
4. Progress in religious education is very good and pupils exceed the requirements set out in the locally agreed syllabus.
5. It was not possible to gain enough evidence during the two days of the inspection to make informed judgments about standards in other subjects. However, it is very clear from the pupils' work in books and on display that they achieve very well across the curriculum. A most stimulating and imaginative range of experiences leads to some high quality work especially in art and design, design and technology, history and geography.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is **well above average** and punctuality is **good**. Pupils' attitudes to learning and to school are **very good**. In lessons and around school behaviour is **good**. The wide range of experiences planned for pupils promotes **very good** spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school very successfully develops its pupils' moral awareness and social skills.
- Very good relationships are the key to the friendliness of the school and its family atmosphere.
- Pupils are generally attentive, confident and highly motivated learners.
- Attendance is consistently above the national average with minimal unauthorised absence.
- Pupils like coming to school and enjoy school life including the extra-curriculum activities it provides.

Commentary

6. Pupils demonstrate very good attitudes to school, their work and one another. At the start of the day pupils select an activity and settle happily to a game or a book with their friends. This sets the pattern for the rest of the day. They are eager to take advantage of all the school offers and all extra activities are very well supported.
7. Most pupils respond very well in lessons and are generally attentive, confident and motivated learners. The pupils' positive attitude towards their work is evident from an early age with many in the Foundation Stage displaying an eagerness to proceed independently with their tasks. Staff help them to feel secure, proud of themselves and aware of others. Their willingness and enthusiasm for learning are developing well and they become increasingly self-supportive as they move through the school, responding positively to the challenges encountered and showing respect for the materials and resources made available to them.
8. The standard of behaviour throughout the school is good. The school has a clear code of conduct that has been successfully implemented to incorporate all aspects of school life and which receives the full support of all parents. During lessons and especially during assembly some impeccable behaviour was observed. This positively assists learning and contributes highly to the standards achieved. Meals are taken in a calm and pleasant atmosphere, pupils being conscious of the good manners expected of them by the lunchtime supervisors and catering staff. The very effective use of praise and encouragement and a system of awards that is applied consistently, promote good behaviour. Playtimes are often noisy and boisterous occasions. However, a range of pre-prepared games, ensure that pupils are involved in activities which limit any misbehaviour.
9. Relationships within the school are very good. Pupils respect their teachers and learn from them to be kind, polite and courteous to each other. Their self-esteem grows from the knowledge that their work will be valued in school. Pupils benefit from the teamwork of the stable and well-organised teaching and support staff, which is such a strong feature in the school. They learn from them to be helpful to others and respect other viewpoints, providing them with the security of being able to express views or make mistakes without fear of ridicule.
10. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils' spiritual awareness is developed very effectively in assemblies which provide time for pupils to pause and consider the message being delivered. In the best assembly seen a spiritual atmosphere was developed through the use of large visual display and music. This was less evident in another assembly observed but the occasion nevertheless

promoted an appreciation of the talents of others. The focus was effectively on raising pupils' self-esteem as a small group performed a drama in front of the other pupils who were a very appreciative audience. Moral issues are addressed through the school's daily life and, from an early age, pupils develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. Equal opportunities and personal rights are respected. Pupils treat each other as they would wish to be treated and are given the opportunity to raise money for charities to support those less fortunate than themselves. The pupils' awareness of social issues is well promoted and as a result strong relationships exist between teachers and pupils. The carefully planned Circle Times⁶ provide opportunities for pupils to talk about their feelings and beliefs and those of others and pupils develop an awareness of the less tangible things in life such as friendship and families. In lessons, pupils are encouraged to work together co-operatively and collaborate in their learning. Pupils have a very good knowledge of their own and other cultures. They are familiar with a diverse range of religious beliefs with regular reference through stories of Sikh, Muslim, Hindu, Christian and Jewish cultures. The focus on practical activities such as making cards and tasting foods ensures learning about other faiths and traditions is a worthwhile experience. Good use of the school toy bear stimulates the pupils' interest in other countries as they learn about the bear's experiences. Displays show how many famous works of art have stimulated pupils' awareness of their own culture. Topics celebrate the history of the village and children play a full part in local celebrations.

11. Attendance is very good and unauthorised absence is minimal, reflecting the rigorous approach the school takes to ensuring high levels of attendance. Punctuality is good with several parents taking up the offer for their children to be escorted by parents from the village hall on the *walking bus*.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.2	School data	0.0
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.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is **very good**. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are **very good**. **Very good** attention is given to pupils' safety and welfare. The school has **excellent** links with parents and **very good** links with other schools and the community.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching is **very good**. Assessment procedures and the use of assessment information are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

⁶ During Circle Time pupils discuss a wide range of personal and general issues. It is agreed by all pupils that no interruptions should occur and only one person at a time will speak. Respect for other pupils' views will occur at all times and therefore pupils feel confident that they can talk free from any interruption by other pupils.

- Teachers have very high expectations both of behaviour and academic performance and so lessons run smoothly and pupils work hard.
- The use of teaching assistants is excellent and they play a major role in lessons and are very successful in enabling pupils with special educational needs to play a full part in lessons.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Lessons are exciting because of the very effective use of resources and variety of approaches and so pupils enjoy learning.
- Relationships are very good and all staff encourage pupils and pay close attention to raising pupils' self-esteem.
- Assessment procedures are good overall and effective use is made of assessment information.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 16 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	11	4	1	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.

12. As at the time of the last inspection teaching is a strength of the school. As there are only two classes comments have been combined to include both the Foundation Stage and the infants. In both classes most of the teaching seen was very good and this enables pupils to achieve very well across the curriculum.
13. Teachers throughout the school are enthusiastic and inspire the pupils who are eager to please. Lessons are brisk and teachers challenge pupils to work hard and to think for themselves. In the Foundation Stage staff are alert to the needs of the youngest children and provide help when necessary but are skilled at standing back and encouraging independence. As a result, children settle well and gain in confidence to try out new ideas for themselves. This can be seen in all classes especially in science where teachers set the scene but allow pupils to hypothesise and test their ideas. Teachers have very high expectations in literacy lessons. Careful planning ensures letters and sounds are taught in a practical way through the use of puppets and games. Imaginative tasks set extend these skills to writing simple phrases in the reception class and short stories in Year 2. Introductions to numeracy lessons are brisk and challenging with pupils having to explain their methods of calculations so that they have a variety of problem solving techniques.
14. Joint planning between teachers and support staff ensures all are aware of their role in lessons. Teaching assistants play a very important part in promoting learning by leading as well as supporting the teaching of small groups of pupils. This is most beneficial for children in the reception class when more practical approaches are used to suit their age. For example, in a literacy lesson the teaching assistant used drama most effectively to develop the sequence of the story of *The Three Little Pigs*. This very well organised session most effectively enhanced pupils' self-esteem as well as their speaking and listening skills. Teaching assistants show considerable patience and perseverance and by effective questioning and encouragement lead pupils to the correct response. This very effectively raises pupils' self-esteem and is most beneficial for pupils with special educational needs. Teaching for these pupils is very good because staff are guided by detailed individual education plans and work is matched to their identified needs.
15. Staff training is given very good attention and consequently staff have very good subject knowledge. This includes ICT which is taught very effectively in all lessons. Teachers grasp every opportunity as it arises in lessons to point out a new computer skill and so pupils pick these skills up as a natural part of learning. Whenever possible lessons include the use of ICT and this enables pupils to consolidate their new skills in a worthwhile activity. Questioning is very effective because teachers are confident about what they want pupils to learn and so are able to build effectively on pupils' responses and extend their learning. Staff plan carefully to promote basic skills in all lessons and this very successfully increases achievement in numeracy and literacy.

16. The attractive classrooms alert visitors to the variety of teaching methods used and the stimulating activities planned for pupils. The atmosphere is always buzzing with discussion and enjoyment and an industrious learning atmosphere is evident throughout the day. Lessons include whole class discussions, group and partner work and a focus on learning through practical involvement. For example, in the reception class the use of role play with the teacher and support staff in costume enacting the story of the *Three Little Pigs* was most enjoyable and enthralled pupils and effective learning was ensured. Again ICT plays a significant role in learning as the use of interactive white boards, video and digital cameras capture pupils' imagination and sustains the pace of learning in lessons.
17. Relationships between pupils are warm and encouraging and staff always value pupils' opinions so they are eager to contribute and there is always a good show of hands to answer questions. Lessons often include humour and pupils obviously feel secure and confident that staff are on hand to help when a need arises.
18. Assessment procedures in English, mathematics, science and ICT are good and in other subjects are satisfactory. In English, mathematics and science assessment information is used effectively to track the progress of pupils and in predicting the expected National Curriculum level for a pupil at the end of Year 2. Assessment information is also used effectively to offer additional support if it is considered a pupil is not on target to achieve their potential. Teachers make good use of assessment in planning tasks to match attainment although occasionally tasks were overambitious for the lower attaining pupils and this restricted their learning. This was generally overcome by additional advice during the lesson. In literacy and numeracy pupils are given individual targets as the school is endeavouring to increase pupils' involvement in their progress and learning. These targets are very sharp and clear and recorded on cards which pupils keep in their drawers. The drawback to this system as it stands is that, unless the teacher constantly reminds pupils about their targets, they are forgetting them and so they are not being as effective as they could be. During the inspection reference to targets was made in the Year 1 and 2 literacy lesson but this was less evident in other lessons and targets are not always referred to in the marking of pupils' work.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **very good**. Provision for extra-curricular activities is **very good**. The accommodation is **satisfactory**. The curriculum is supported by a **very good** range of high quality resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a rich and lively curriculum which meets the needs of all its pupils very well.
- The development of the ICT curriculum is outstanding as are ICT resources.
- The provision for personal, social and health education is very good.
- Enrichment through clubs, visits and visitors is very good.
- The match of teachers and of support staff to the curriculum is a particular strength.
- The school makes best use of cramped accommodation.

Commentary

19. Overall, the school has maintained the very good provision noted in the previous inspection. Continuous monitoring of the school's performance, however, has led to further improvement in extra-curricular activities and in provision for pupils with special educational needs.

20. The curriculum is very carefully planned around interesting topics with particular attention rightly given to literacy, numeracy and ICT. Planning is detailed so that the needs of pupils of different year groups and attainment in the same class are effectively met. The staff's strong commitment to equal opportunities is reflected in the school's work. The particular emphasis on learning through lively practical activities is very successful in motivating pupils and promoting enthusiastic attitudes to learning. As a result, all are achieving very well.

21. The National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies have been fully implemented and adapted sensitively to meet the school's needs. The teaching of letters and their sounds in short sessions outside literacy lessons is very successful in enabling teachers to provide work which meets different levels of ability successfully. Brisk, exciting mental mathematics sessions are fun and pupils try hard and make very good progress. Interactive teaching programs provide very good consolidation of skills in mathematics. The use of ICT in all subjects is a very special strength of the school. Teachers plan effectively to teach ICT skills through other subjects and in lessons use ICT skills to support learning. The very high quality and exceptional quantity of ICT resources are used imaginatively as an integral part of the curriculum.
22. The curriculum for children under five in the Reception/Year 1 class is planned very well to meet the early learning goals appropriate for this age group. The balance between teacher directed activities and carefully planned play is good, but the cramped accommodation sometimes presents difficulties in promoting independent learning. The recently improved outdoor play facilities provide an interesting learning environment for small groups in good weather.
23. The whole school planning guidelines for personal, social and health education are effective in promoting personal skills in clearly focused weekly sessions. Well planned assemblies and whole school projects, like the Health School Initiative promote learning very well. Statutory regulations regarding sex education are fully met and the school deals sensitively with drugs education.
24. Pupils benefit from more opportunities to join after school clubs than in most infant schools. Very good arrangements are made for extra-curricular sport in football coaching and multi sport activities. Computer and art clubs promote independence and co-operative skills. French lessons extend the curriculum effectively in Years 1 and 2. Recorder lessons are available at a charge. The curriculum is particularly enhanced by a very good range of visits and visitors which are well planned to support work in topics.
25. As a result of the job-share of teachers in each of the classes, the school benefits from the expertise of four teachers instead of two. The school uses this very well to extend the breadth and depth of the curriculum. Specialist teachers and coaches in music, games and swimming add a further dimension. The very good number of exceptionally skilled teaching assistants provides excellent support and makes a considerable contribution to the effectiveness of the curriculum.
26. The accommodation is used very well by the school, not least to promote historical research. However, space is at a premium. The tiny hall is used effectively for small group work and assemblies. Good use is made of the village hall for physical education lessons. The library is a small space in the corner of the small hall and is not really inviting to pupils. Nevertheless, staff regularly change the books to sustain pupils' enthusiasm for reading.

Care, guidance and support

Overall provision for pupils' care, welfare and safety is **very good**. The school provides **good** academic and pastoral guidance and support. Systems for seeking, valuing and acting on pupils' views are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn in a happy and secure atmosphere and are confident help is available when needed.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of the pupils' specific needs through close liaison with their families which also helps children settle well into school.
- Health and safety procedures are effective although the policy does not define risk assessment arrangements.
- The arrangements as pupils start school are excellent.
- Pupils have clear targets to involve them in their own learning but these could be more effective.
- Pupils' views are valued and acted upon.

Commentary

27. The school provides a secure and happy environment in which pupils are protected and their individual well being is effectively promoted. Staff work together as a team and have successfully created a supportive atmosphere in which pupils thrive. Parents are pleased with the quality of care extended to their children from their earliest days in school. Teachers know pupils and many of the families and respond well to their pastoral needs. Each pupil knows and trusts staff members who are concerned about them. The trusting relationships, which the pupils enjoy, gives them confidence to share any concern and helps them cope with the problems that arise in everyday life.
28. The senior management team and governors have taken a responsible attitude to health and safety and during the inspection the security of the building was of a high standard. A risk assessment programme has been completed for the building and grounds and also for the out of school activities in which the school participates. In each case the level of risk has been evaluated and prioritised and appropriate corrective action taken. The health and safety policy does not define clearly the school's procedures for risk evaluation. Fire drills are scheduled and carried out on the agreed dates. Pupils using the Internet are protected from receiving inappropriate communication.
29. Child protection procedures are well known to staff who have been trained and have good written guidance to aid them in if they have any concerns. Arrangements for emergencies and first aid are good and are underpinned by clear procedures.
30. The school has put together a very imaginative package to ensure parents and children are well prepared when their children start school. An initial meeting is very meticulously organised with a video *A day in the life of our school*, which presents a very detailed picture to parents about daily life in school. Teachers talk to parents about the subjects they lead and other professionals connected with the school also tell parents about their role in school. The school's web-site provides a detailed insight into how parents can help their children including ideas for games so that children are confident that school is going to be enjoyable.
31. There are good systems for monitoring pupils' personal and academic development. Assessment information is used effectively to provide well targeted support for groups and individuals. For example, when a group of boys were identified as underachieving in writing the school organised a topic specifically for them. By focusing on the activities of a favourite character this group soon became motivated to write and

standards improved. Pupils are set individual literacy and numeracy targets. These are very easy to follow and relevant to pupils' needs and are most effective when teachers refer to them as pupils learn. However, this is not always the case and so pupils have to go to check on their target card to recall them.

32. The school provides sensitive help for pupils with special educational needs. Parents and staff regularly review the progress pupils are making in meeting their targets. The school seeks and acts upon expert advice when necessary so that it can best target support for these pupils.
33. The school gives very good attention to pupils' views and has a range of activities to include pupils in decision making in the school. The effective School Council actively represents the views and suggestions of all pupils through a well-organised format of meetings, which does much to raise self-esteem of those concerned and enhance personal development of delegating skills. The school encourages pupils to take responsibility for daily duties to develop their independent learning skills. For example, pupils collect their new reading books to take home and every morning quickly organise an activity so the teacher has uninterrupted time to deal with registration.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Overall the school has **excellent** links with parents in which they encourage all concerned to have a positive attitude towards their child's education. Links with the community and with other schools are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very comprehensive information is made available about children's progress and about the curriculum being taught so that parents can help at home.
- Consultation with parents is excellent and the school regularly seeks and surveys parents' views.
- Parents make an excellent contribution to their children's learning both in school and at home.
- Many links have been established with the wider community, taking every opportunity to enrich pupils' learning.
- Links with other schools are very good and staff benefit from the exchange of ideas.

Commentary

34. The school has excellent links with parents who in turn support their children's learning very well at home and reinforce the values that are being taught.
35. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. From the outset, parents of the children in the Foundation Stage are fully informed about all aspects of school life. In other year groups, curriculum newsletters are issued at the start of each term to parents and provide an overview of the topics to be studied. Other regular newsletters detail school activities and progress reports from the school's action plans for development. The school's web-site provides very useful information to parents about policies, contact points and also includes interactive games for parents to play with their children.
36. Parents are kept fully informed about their children's progress. Two formal meetings are arranged for parents during the year to enable them to discuss their child's progress. The response to this invitation is exceptionally good. Additionally any parent with a concern or query after receipt of the very informative annual report can arrange a meeting to discuss the issue with the headteacher. Staff are readily available to meet parents at the start and end of the school day.

37. Parents are involved in school life through an active Friends of Church Aston Infants. Money raised has been used to enhance the computer suite, purchase equipment for multi-sports and fund educational trips. Procedures to seek parents' views are excellent and the school conducts regular surveys and acts upon the findings where feasible and feeds back the results.

38. Parents' contribution to children's learning at home and in school is excellent. Many parents help in school and teachers welcome their expertise in supporting arts and crafts, ICT and hearing readers. Parents organise and lead the school's *Book Bag Scheme* by ensuring every week pupils have a new book, toy and possibly an audio tape in their bag which encourages parents to read with children at home. At home parents support pupils by using the interactive games provided by the school and hearing their children read and this contributes greatly to pupils' interest and enthusiasm for school.
39. Very good links with the community and other schools enhance and enliven pupils' learning. The school promotes community learning in partnership with local schools, The Burton Borough Secondary School and Lilleshall Primary School providing an opportunity for parents and children to work together on different topics. The special weekend event includes presentations on sports, businesses, community and the environment. Close links with the local church are effective in teaching children about religion and the meaning of the different clothes worn by the clergy and the history of the stained glass windows. The local Parish Councils use the school for meetings and the local Business Link organisation supports the school in arranging educational visits.
40. Links with other schools are very effective. All staff are very enthusiastic about their meetings with other small schools which provide opportunities to share ideas and extend their skills and knowledge. Joint training is often organised and this is most beneficial because of the small number of staff at Church Aston School. As a Beacon School very close links have been established with other schools as staff exchange visits and learn from others. Established links with the feeder junior schools ensure that the transition to the next key stage is smooth and effective. The school has effective links with local universities and provides placements for students training to be teachers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is **very good**. The headteacher is a **very good** leader. Governance is **good** and governors are supportive of the school. The effectiveness of the management of the school is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is very enthusiastic and has a great determination to keep the school at the cutting edge of education.
- Subject co-ordinators lead their subjects very effectively.
- Governors have close links with the school and ensure all statutory requirements are met.
- The management of the needs of pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The school is effective at evaluating its own strengths and weaknesses and identifying future priorities. The plan to identify how the school is to tackle priorities is overlong and not sufficiently focused on the main areas identified for attention.
- Financial management is effective.

Commentary

41. The headteacher is enthusiastic and very hardworking in both maintaining a teaching commitment as well as leading the school. She very much leads by example and promotes high standards of personal and academic achievement. The previous inspection identified the school as having no areas for development but the headteacher has been most determined that the school will not stagnate and she immerses the school in every new initiative which keeps the school right up to date with education thinking. This is very evident in the exciting curriculum and focus on the needs of the individual which are both following the government's advice in the documents *Excellence and Enjoyment* and *Every Child Matters*.

42. All staff carry out most effectively a range of management responsibilities. This includes support staff who play a full part in all aspects of school and organise very effectively such aspects as the healthy schools' initiative and school travel plans including the *walking bus* which daily escorts pupils from the car park. The deployment of staff and development of their personal skills is another strength in the management of the school and has been recognised by the Investors in People Award.
43. Subject leaders of English, mathematics, science and ICT are very effective leaders. Their enthusiasm inspires other staff and the sharing of skills plays a significant part in the high standards achieved in school. Co-ordinators analyse test results and review pupils' work so they are well informed about standards in the subjects they lead. Informal monitoring of what is happening in lessons takes place continually because of the small size of the school and the openness of staff to share their experiences. As a result of this effective team work, all work together with a very clear vision for the school.
44. The co-ordination of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is shared between the headteacher and a support assistant. This role is being carried out very effectively and the requirements of the Code of Practice⁷ are fully met. Individual education plans are drawn up when required and these are very pertinent to pupils' needs and enable staff to match work closely to their needs. When required staff attend special training so that they can provide the best support for these pupils. Pupils who are immature or struggle with concentration thrive in this friendly school and play a full part in all activities.
45. Governors are closely linked to subject co-ordinators and are well informed about the school's strength and weaknesses. All responsibilities are carried out effectively and all statutory duties are fulfilled through a rigorous committee system. Although the governors regularly review the school's development plan they are not fully involved in the initial target setting process. They challenge decisions which involve considerable spending and check on the effect of spending on standards in school. For example, governors are confident that the spending on support staff and ICT is having a significant impact on standards. They also recognise the value of this spending on ensuring equality of opportunity especially for pupils with special educational needs.
46. Management has been most effective in moving the school forward since the previous inspection. The school capitalizes on its size in its procedures to evaluate its work. Through informal and formal staff discussions the school has an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. Very good use is made of performance management to ensure training needs are linked to both personal and school needs. Performance in national tests and teachers' assessments are used most effectively to identify priorities for the school. This information is used in the compilation of the school's development plan. This document is clearly set out but is overlong because as the headteacher says it is an *aide memoir to all that happens in the school*. However, this means major priorities get lost alongside less important areas for development. The headteacher is well aware of this and is reviewing more structured approaches to both self-evaluation and its links to the school's development plan.

⁷ Special Educational Needs Code of Practice- this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities, duties and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive most appropriate support to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the Special Needs and disability Act 2001.

47. Financial management is good. Currently, the school has a healthy budget because of additional funding provided by the government for Beacon School status. The school uses funding from this status to raise standards and disseminate good practice with other partner schools. This has made the allocation of money easier in the past but governors are aware of the need to make school priorities clearer in the future to aid the decision making process when the budget is being set. The day-to-day finances of the school are closely managed and the school makes effective use of the financial advice of the local authority. Recommendations from the most recent financial audit were easily and promptly remedied.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	232,307
Total expenditure	235,584
Expenditure per pupil	4,808

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	2,260
Balance carried forward to the next	3,278

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

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

Leadership and management are very good and have successfully built on the many strengths identified at the time of the previous inspection. The recent perceptive review of the curriculum has led to heightened emphasis on independent learning. Teaching and learning are **very good** overall and children achieve **very well**. Overall, they are on course to well exceed the early learning goals in most areas of learning by the time they start in Year 1. The role of the teaching assistant is particularly well developed. She provides excellent support for the teacher and the children across all areas of the curriculum. Information and communication technology is used very effectively to enhance and consolidate learning throughout the curriculum.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff establish a secure yet challenging environment where children develop positive attitudes to learning.
- Staff have very high expectations of children's behaviour and provide frequent opportunities for children to learn to co-operate and relate to each other in a positive way.

Commentary

48. Teaching and learning are very good and children achieve very well. They are on target to well exceed the early learning goals by the end of the reception year.
49. Staff consistently establish clear procedures so that children quickly settle into daily routines and the classroom provides a purposeful working environment. All adults listen with respect to children and value their ideas. As a result, children join confidently in discussion and select and explore activities with growing independence. They persevere with challenging tasks because they know that their efforts will be well received. Adults and Year 1 pupils in the class model high standards of behaviour and consideration so that the reception children quickly realise what is acceptable and what is not. Staff use praise sensitively and provide frequent opportunities for children to get on together in small groups and in pairs. Consequently, children happily share equipment and take turns, for instance, in a mathematical game, as well as successfully collaborating and exchanging ideas with a partner. They respond enthusiastically to well planned opportunities to take responsibility as monitors, and carry out small administrative tasks with enthusiasm.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make particularly good progress in speaking and listening and reading.
- Practical role-play activities and ICT are well focused to support learning successfully.

Commentary

50. Teaching and learning are very good. Children achieve very well. They are on course to well exceed the early learning goals by the end of the year. Speaking and listening skills are especially well developed across the curriculum and in lively dynamic role-play activities. Staff ask questions skillfully to help children extend their own ideas. Children are articulate, and most stick to the point when reporting back to class. Ably led by the teaching assistant, children take great enjoyment in acting out parts of *The Three Little Pigs* story. They speak expressively and show good recall of the dialogue as the wolf confronts each little pig. The teaching of letters and their sounds is very good. Teachers provide a wealth of interesting opportunities which are clearly structured to help children develop skills step-by-step. Good use, for instance, is made of a programmable toy to pick out particular letters. Children are confident in using their knowledge of letter sounds, together with their well-developed word recognition skills in reading, enthusiastically, from the first readers. They are eager to read. Good, regular support is enlisted from parents, which complements work in school. Writing skills, whilst still above average, are less well developed than those in reading. Very good use is made of the interactive whiteboard to bring stories to life. Children are eager to join in writing simple captions for pictures on the board. Children use letter shapes in their early attempts at writing, especially in role-play areas when writing messages to each other. They are becoming confident in getting the initial sound in a word correct.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good balance between teacher directed tasks and clearly focused play activities supports learning very well.
- Particularly good attention is given to the promotion of mathematical language.

Commentary

51. Teaching and learning are very good. Children achieve very well. They are on target to well exceed the learning goals by the end of the reception year.

52. Teachers use their very good knowledge and understanding of the needs of young children to provide a variety of interesting practical activities which motivate children and promote sound understanding of concepts. Direct teaching in class is followed up purposefully in attractively resourced play situations. For instance, children in the home play area are encouraged to sort and match cutlery and crockery when laying the table for seven people. Careful questioning by the teaching assistant helps them to count accurately and to understand the concept of one more or more less. Children are learning to compare length accurately, using language like *short*, *shorter*, and *shortest* when measuring objects with their hands, feet, or felt pens.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are skilled in using ICT, and gain a sense of excitement and appreciation of the world through imaginative topics in science.
- Particularly good use is made of visits to extend learning about the past.

Commentary

53. Teaching and learning are very good. Children are on target to well exceed the early learning goals by the end of the reception year.
54. Teachers have high expectations of children learning independently and provide a wealth of practical activities for children to explore. Scientific topics, such as light and electricity, are carefully adapted to interest and suitably challenge young children. The children are very aware of the dangers of electricity. They observe carefully and ask questions when investigating how a simple circuit works and show great enthusiasm and a sense of wonder when the bulb actually lights up. Children are particularly competent in using the computer and the programmable toy with some independence, because adults teach ICT skills clearly and provide frequent opportunities for children to practise and consolidate their new knowledge.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers give clear instructions and manage children well.
- Sometimes physical education lessons do not place enough emphasis on the teaching of skills.

Commentary

55. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Overall achievement is satisfactory and children are in line to reach the early learning goals by the time they start Year 1.
56. Teachers make good use of a village hall to provide opportunities for moving in a large space and for climbing and balancing on benches and stools. They give clear instructions and organise groups of children efficiently so that children use space well. Children explore different ways of moving around and on apparatus with coordination and control. Expectations of what the children can do are not always high enough and some pupils would benefit from further challenge. Use of the school's small outdoor play area was not seen during the inspection. In class, children use tools like pencils and scissors adeptly to their own purpose.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources including art and craft materials and imaginative role-play areas are well prepared and accessible.
- Adults use praise effectively to raise self-esteem, but occasionally work is over directed by staff.

Commentary

57. Teaching and learning are good. Children achieve well and are in line to exceed the early learning goals by the time they start in Year 1.
58. Staff ensure a good range of resources are accessible. Consequently, children are becoming thoughtful in making choices and selecting suitable materials or colours for their purpose. Particular techniques, such as press printing, are taught carefully, step-by-step. Occasionally, over emphasis on the acquisition of skills leads children to follow instructions rather than developing their own ideas. Good use is made of digital photographs, for instance, on a visit to the church, to inspire children in pattern making. Adults give positive feedback which raises confidence. Imaginative role-play is especially well developed. Adults intervene effectively to raise the quality of play and help children focus their ideas. With adult help, pupils are beginning to work together with some imagination to act out parts of simple familiar stories.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 1

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good** and standards are very high across all aspects of the subject.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in Year 2.
- Achievement of pupils of all levels of attainment is very good.
- Teachers have a very good knowledge of teaching all aspects of literacy and make very effective use of ICT to make lessons exciting.
- Leadership and management are very effective in analysing pupils' performance and bringing about change when a potential weakness is identified.
- Parents make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning.
- Assessment procedures are good and the use of individual targets is developing.

Commentary

59. The results of national tests have been consistently high over the last four years. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good and the school has successfully sustained very high standards. Although test results are high the school is far from complacent and analyses assessment information in great detail to spot any patterns of achievement. In 2002, test results, although remaining above average, dipped slightly and this was linked to a high number of pupils only just reaching the level expected for their age in writing. Consequently, achievement in writing was a focus for the inspection as was the achievement of higher attaining boys in reading.
60. To raise the achievement of boys in writing the school identified the group of pupils who were less motivated to write and ran a half-termly project. Sessions were part of the literacy lesson with a focus on increasing the boys' enthusiasm for writing. This was led very successfully by a teaching assistant and is well documented. By using a popular children's character- Bionicles - drama and ICT the pupils' enthusiasm was captured and the resulting work shows improvement not only in writing but in raising pupils' interest in literacy and raising their self-esteem. An off-shoot of this project is other pupils' eagerness to take part in projects linked to their favourite characters. As

a result, standards are now well above average and overall achievement of pupils of all levels of attainment is very good. All pupils confidently express their ideas in writing and show an understanding of the use of capital letters and full stops. Higher attaining pupils organise their writing well and include imaginative vocabulary. In response to a rich range of experiences pupils understand the different styles of writing and write poems, instructions and cartoon strips.

61. Every Monday a small group of parents meet in school and prepare a book bag for every child. These bags include a popular children's reading book, possibly an audio tape and always a toy to make the story more exciting. Pupils look forward to taking these books home and so *homework* is not seen to be a chore. This activity has a significant effect on pupils' enthusiasm for reading and current standards are well above average and achievement is very good. An analysis of current standards shows no difference in the attainment of boys and girls with similar numbers of boys expected to exceed the level expected for their age. In a small school data can be affected by the small number of pupils involved. Pupils enjoy reading and eagerly locate information in reference books and show a good knowledge of the alphabet.
62. Speaking and listening skills are well above average and achievement is very good. These standards are linked closely to teachers' use of role play and planned opportunities for pupils to share their ideas in a group or with a partner. As a result, pupils listen attentively to the teacher and each other and confidently ask questions to clarify their thinking and this effectively extends their learning across the curriculum.
63. Teaching and learning are very good. This is evident not only in the teaching seen but in the imaginative classrooms and the impressive range of writing in pupils' books. The strongest feature in teaching is teachers' understanding of how to make learning fun. In the mixed reception and Year 1 class the teacher and support assistant acted part of the story of *The Three Little Pigs*. Pupils were enthralled and very cleverly the idea of what is needed in a newspaper article was developed. Resources are used imaginatively and in both classes the creative role play corners are an integrated part of learning and greatly enhance pupils' conversation skills. Pupils enjoy lessons because the pace is brisk and the variety of different approaches sustains their interest and they are eager to complete their tasks. All staff confidently use ICT both in teaching and in supporting pupils as they work on computers. Information and communication skills are taught as a natural part of literacy lessons and pupils quickly learn new skills because these are effectively demonstrated to the whole class and then followed up as pupils work on the computers. Assessment is good and teachers have set pupils' individual targets. In the Year 1 and 2 lesson seen the teacher reminded pupils of their targets as they worked but this aspect of the use of assessment is not fully developed and pupils struggled to recall them. Most tasks are closely matched to pupils' level of attainment but occasionally teachers are over ambitious. This was seen in the Reception Year 1 lesson when the introduction of a planning sheet confused some pupils as they did not fully appreciate its purpose and this slowed up the completion of their writing task.
64. The school requested the inspection to follow up planning for the mixed age classes. This is done most effectively in literacy lessons. At the start of the lesson pupils are divided by age and taught letters and sounds linked to their age and this ensures these essential skills are taught in the correct sequence. The use of support staff is excellent and they play a significant part in literacy lessons ensuring all pupils have full

access to the lessons. This is especially beneficial for pupils with special educational needs who make very good progress towards the targets set for them.

65. Leadership and management are very good. Close liaison between classes means the co-ordinator has a clear picture of what is happening in the school and the school has a clear focus on sustaining very high standards. The school has a small library area and staff change the books regularly to maintain pupils' interest in reading.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. Language and literacy are very effectively promoted across the curriculum. The amazing history project in Year 1 and 2 has led to pupils writing in the character of one of the past pupils of the school. This has led to some very imaginative writing and because it has been set in a real situation has purpose for the pupils. Across the curriculum pupils write in a range of styles and much of this work is of a high standard. For example, in art and design, pupils had to record what they think the characters in a picture might be saying and also how to improve their own painting.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and standards in Year 2 are well above average.
- Teachers plan very successfully to meet the wide range of age and ability in each class.
- The use of ICT to support learning in mathematics is exceptionally good.
- Leadership and management are very good especially in developing the curriculum to promote high standards.
- Assessment is used effectively to set pupils' individual targets but pupils find it hard to recall them.

Commentary

67. The school has maintained high standards in national tests since the previous inspection. Results in 2004 were impressive and were in the top five per cent in the country. Standards in the current Year 2 class continue to be well above average with all pupils working at least at the expected level. A good proportion is in line to reach the higher level. During the inspection pupils demonstrated their good knowledge and understanding of time in reading analogue and digital clocks correctly. Pupils of higher attainment rose to the challenge of solving problems about duration of time.
68. Pupils of all levels of attainment and ages in the mixed-age classes achieve very well. This is due to the high quality teaching and well-planned curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very effectively and make very good progress. Similarly, the curriculum is adapted to challenge pupils of higher attainment who also do very well.
69. Teaching and learning are very good. All staff promote high expectations and encourage pupils to be independent in their learning. They ask challenging questions skilfully so that children learn to explain their methods and to see mathematical patterns for themselves. Correct mathematical language is used carefully. As a result, children become increasingly articulate and confident in discussing their work. They are eager learners because of the rich practical curriculum which engages them fully. Teachers give clear demonstrations which are well planned to build step-by-step on what pupils already know. Brisk and lively mental mathematics sessions at the beginning of lessons, and class mathematical games at the end are fun, and generate enthusiasm for the subject. Teaching assistants are very well briefed and provide exceptionally good support for groups and individuals. Very occasionally, a task is too challenging and learning slows when pupils cannot complete their work independently. Throughout the school, teachers make exceptionally good use of ICT in teaching and learning. In almost all lessons, suitable structured programs support individuals at the computer whilst the interactive white board is used very successfully to promote understanding and interest. Marking of work in books is helpful in showing pupils how to improve. Assessment procedures are used effectively to set individual targets for improvement although they are not sufficiently referred to in marking and in lessons to ensure pupils recall them as they work.

70. The curriculum co-ordinator provides very good leadership and manages the school's provision very well. The analysis of national test results has led to the school's current emphasis on the development of a problem-solving approach.

Mathematics across the curriculum

71. Opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in other subjects are good. In science and geography in particular, pupils handle data efficiently and record findings in block graphs and Venn diagrams. In history, pupils in Class 2 count in tens along a time line from Victorian times to the present day.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 2 are well above average and overall achievement is very good.
- The significant emphasis on investigation and discovery generates an enthusiasm for science.
- Teaching is very good and teachers' very high expectations lead to very good learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

72. Very effective leadership and management have ensured the high standards identified in the previous inspection have been sustained. The development in the use of ICT has moved the subject forward in the range of experiences offered to the pupils. As a result, teaching is stimulating and extends not only pupils' scientific knowledge but their research skills and confidence to question and suggest their own ideas. The most recent teacher assessments in Year 2 were very high and were in the top five per cent in the country. Every pupil reached the level expected for their age and a very high proportion exceeded this level. Current standards remain well above average and overall achievement is very good. Pupils with special educational needs also make very good progress because in lessons an adult is always at hand to guide their thinking and explain any technical terms.
73. A strength in the lessons seen is teachers' high expectations of the pupils and this leads to pupils confidently setting up investigations, selecting resources, discussing what they intend to do and then evaluating their findings. In the mixed age reception and Year 1 class pupils make suggestions about how to make an electrical circuit and collect and record their data accurately. When pupils in Year 2 investigate the effect of adding extra bulbs to their circuit they appreciate the need to ensure their investigation is fair by always using the same power source. Teachers use technical terminology correctly and pupils take this on board in their explanations about their investigations. Initially many pupils consider lights will be brighter because there are more bulbs and so are amazed at their findings. However, they very quickly recognise the reasons for this and test out their ideas by adding more bulbs to their circuits. These high standards are supported by the impressive amount of work already completed this term. Pupils show imagination in their responses to investigations and record their results in a variety of ways which extend both their literacy and numeracy skills.
74. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a real enthusiasm for science and this shines through and inspires pupils who are full of suggestions and eager to set to work to try them out. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and so questions very effectively extend learning. When working in small groups staff do not

take the easy option of telling pupils what to do. Quite the reverse, support staff are very clear about their roles and with great patience lead pupils on in their line of enquiry so that eventually they find out for themselves and effective learning is ensured. Lessons are very well organised and carried out at a brisk pace. The opening to the Year 1 and 2 lesson included a swift recap which involved pupils quickly drawing unaided an electrical circuit. Pupils quickly set to work and showed a real understanding, not only of an electrical circuit, but also how to draw and label a diagram.

The lesson progressed swiftly to the main part of the lessons and pupils quickly extended their learning. To some extent the end of the lesson was a little too challenging for some because of the limited time available to finish the lesson.

75. The subject is very well led and managed and the co-ordinator has most effectively shared her skills and experiences with other members of staff. The school benefits from belonging to the local cluster group of small schools and this has led to shared staff training with a focus on investigation. The impact of this can very clearly be seen in the teaching and standards in the school. A focus for the inspection was in planning for the mixed age classes. This is done very well in science with a two year rolling programme in place so no topics are missed or repeated. Assessment procedures are good and the school is reviewing how to involve pupils more by setting individual targets.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average. Pupils achieve particularly well.
- Leadership and management by the subject leaders are outstanding.
- Teachers use their very good knowledge and understanding of the subject to plan a rich curriculum.
- The quality and quantity of resources are excellent.
- The use of ICT skills is exceptionally well embedded across all aspects of the curriculum.

Commentary

76. Already above average standards have been further improved since the last inspection. In Year 2, all pupils are working at least at the expected level with many well on course to reach the higher level. All pupils achieve very well due to the school's exceptionally well-organised curriculum planned by knowledgeable and imaginative teachers.
77. The vision of the subject leaders has promoted the profile of ICT across the curriculum. Their expertise and enthusiasm has enabled the staff, through well-directed training, to provide clearly structured, exciting learning experiences which successfully meet pupils' needs. Pupils learn skills systematically as they need them to complete meaningful tasks in other subjects. The provision of an excellent range of resources including interactive whiteboards and computer banks in each class plus a multimedia suite and various digital cameras and recorders, enables ICT in all aspects to be taught very well.

78. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers plan effectively for the relevant use of ICT in all lessons. Computers in class are in constant use as pupils learn and practise skills purposefully. Teachers have very high expectations which are reflected in pupils' work. Good use is made of the interactive whiteboard to teach skills to the whole class. These are then practised individually on the computers. In Year 2, precise instructions and demonstrations enable pupils to recognise that the Internet is a useful tool for research. They are beginning to log on independently and find information for themselves, for example, in religious education. Word-processing skills are carefully taught so that Year 2 pupils can edit their own writing independently using capital letters and full-stops as well as deleting to correct spellings. Exciting topic work is well planned to encourage pupils to realise the full potential of ICT. With help, groups of Year 2 pupils make a digital video recording to promote road safety, or make a *PowerPoint* presentation to share their ideas. Teachers manage pupils effectively when commanding a programmable toy to follow precise instructions accurately, as well as when recording a particular route on screen. Teachers use technical language correctly so that pupils learn to discuss their work and articulately give instructions to others.

The work of skilled teaching assistants makes a very significant contribution to learning. Teachers effectively assess individual progress in gaining skills and this leads to planning the next steps of learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

79. Teachers make particularly good use of the interactive whiteboards to provide exciting learning experiences in subjects like art, geography, and history where the outside world is brought into the classroom. Much highly focused use is made of computers in class to explore ideas, for example, in art, and in design and technology, to consolidate concepts in mathematics and science, and to enhance skills in literacy. Digital cameras and recorders widen pupils' horizons across the curriculum as well as providing opportunities for pupils to assess their own work. Whole school projects involving the multimedia suite capture pupils' imagination very well.

HUMANITIES

80. No judgement is made on overall provision in **history and geography**, as no lessons were seen. Judgements are based on work displayed, a review of work in books and discussion with the subject leader.

81. Standards of work seen in books are well above average due to the rich well-planned curriculum and pupils achieve very well. Leadership and management of geography and history are good. In such a small school, information is passed effectively around the team. The subject leaders have a good grasp of standards through staff discussion and through sampling teachers' planning and pupils' work. Satisfactory assessment procedures record attainment at the end of a topic and provide information for the annual reports to parents.

82. Planning of a two-year cycle to topics meets the needs of children in the mixed age classes and avoids any repetition or omission of aspects of the National Curriculum. Very good use is made of educational visits to extend pupils' learning. For instance, a walk in the locality is well-focused to collect information on types of houses. A trip to Attingham Park greatly contributes to pupils' knowledge and understanding of life below stairs in Victorian times.

83. In **geography**, ICT is used particularly effectively, for example, to bring the world into the classroom through the interactive whiteboard as when studying the Mexican village of Tocuaro. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is further developed in a school themed Mexican Day involving authentic cookery, costume, masks and batik. Pupils are learning about locations near and far by following the wide-ranging travels of a toy bear.
84. In **history**, role-play areas have been imaginatively developed as the Squatters Cottage or a Victorian School Room to reinforce learning following a visit to Blists Hill. Particularly good use is made of the school building and linked artefacts. For instance, a very old photograph of the school and its pupils provides an excellent stimulus to extend pupils' interest in and knowledge of the past. This project has enthused all as staff have diligently researched the names of pupils in the photograph so that pupils can truly identify with the experiences of pupils who previously attended their school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 2 are above those found in most schools. Pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are very good especially in raising pupils' appreciation of religious diversity.
- The rich and lively curriculum meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.
- Very good use is made of ICT to support learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

85. High standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Pupils including those with special educational needs achieve very well and by the time they leave in Year 2, standards exceed the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.
86. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers build new knowledge carefully on what pupils already know. For instance, teachers use pupils' feeling of belonging to school and wearing uniform, to help them understand the significance of special clothes to Jews, Muslims and Sikhs. Well organised first-hand experiences, like visiting St Andrew's Church, give pupils good insights into Christian traditions such as baptism. Pupils relate this perceptively to the ways a Muslim family celebrates a new birth. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan an exciting curriculum. Very good use is made of artefacts, and lively practical activities, to bring the subject to life. For example, pupils have a good understanding of the flavour of Hanukkah by lighting Hanukkah candles and making Hanukkah cards as well as cooking special Hanukkah food. Very good use of the Internet enables pupils to research the significance of these traditions and ceremonies to Jews. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide very skilled support for teachers and children.
87. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader checks on standards through sampling work and through discussion with staff. Through joint planning, she ensures that the curriculum is adapted successfully to meet the needs of children of different ages and levels of attainment in each class. Assessment at the end of topics leads effectively to the refinement of future plans.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

88. During the two days of the inspection it was not possible to see any lessons in art and design, design and technology, music and only one lesson in the Foundation Stage in physical education was seen. Evidence from reviewing pupils' work and discussions with subject co-ordinators indicates pupils experience a rich curriculum which follows national guidelines. Leadership and management are good. Although little formal observation is carried out by subject leaders they are well informed about their subjects because with only two classes the informal exchange of ideas is good. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and check on progress as pupils complete a topic.
89. **Art and design** makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. They review work from a wide range of famous artists and experiment with a range of media. Their repeating patterns of foliage show a clear understanding of the work of William Morris. Good attention to detail is very evident in the pupils' observational drawings of musical instruments. Teachers have successfully captured

pupils' imagination by encouraging them to look at Salford buildings through the eyes of LS Lowry and then draw the buildings in the village in a similar style. Teachers push pupils on to work at levels higher than expected for their age. This is seen in their work based on the picture *The Blind Girl* John Everet-Millais when pupils are challenged to write what they think the characters may be saying and then critically analyse their own paintings and adapt their ideas.

90. Examples of work in **design and technology** in Year 2 are higher than that usually seen for this age. Good attention is given to the initial design of a house for the class teddy bear. Pupils have researched different types of home and so their models are very individual and show a variety of ideas. Some are windmills with sails that move and others are elaborate spaceships. The design sheets are a good example of the teacher's effective promotion of literacy skills and pupils have labelled diagrams and listed the required materials. Evaluation is planned shortly when all models are finished. A highly imaginative project revolving around William Hogarth's picture *The Graham Children*, led to pupils using a programmable embroidery machine to design and sew motifs for costumes to match the children in the picture. The very high quality of this work was recognised nationally and the pupils were invited to visit the Royal School of Embroidery.
91. Until recently **music** has been taught by a visiting specialist but teachers are now taking the lessons and the specialist is called in to help with special events and to teach the recorder groups. The curriculum is enriched by visits from professional musicians such as Key Strings who showed pupils old and modern musical instruments. Occasionally, the school sets aside days for a special topic and this adds to the excitement of learning. This was evident in the work linked to the story of Hansel and Gretel which integrated art, music and drama and led to a school production performed for parents.
92. During the inspection one **physical education** lesson was seen taught in the village hall because the school does not have a hall large enough for physical education. This lesson focused on children in the Foundation Stage but did show that resources were not easily accessible for the pupils. The school compensates for this weakness in accommodation by enriching the curriculum with swimming lessons and pupils say they enjoy these and are confident in the water. Photographs show pupils benefit from coaching by the Telford and Wrekin football team and lessons include a thorough warm up as well as skills coaching. Teachers plan imaginatively to combine subjects and dance seen on a school recording showed pupils moving in time to music as they creatively performed a series of stretched and curled shapes linked to their work on sunflowers after looking at Van Gogh's picture.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Every class has a lesson dedicated to personal development.
- The consistency of approaches in classes means pupils are very aware of what is expected of them.
- Teachers arrange their classrooms and lessons to encourage independence.
- Good attention is given to healthy eating.
- Pupils are encouraged to learn about their role in society.

Commentary

93. In Circle Time pupils have opportunities to talk about relationships and how they can help each other as well as how their actions can distress others. Through a practical approach, including puppets, these sessions are enjoyable so pupils feel happy to air

any concerns. Many lessons include collaboration and independent learning so pupils grow in an understanding that they are responsible for their own actions. The school follows national guidelines when planning topics to be covered and this ensures pupils do not focus too much on one aspect of personal development.

94. Other imaginative approaches ensure the provision for pupils' social and emotional development pervades the school. For example, every class has a Citizenship Board which highlights information related to their personal development. Both classes have raised funds to adopt a dolphin and their names and photographs are featured on the notice boards. This effectively raises the pupils' understanding about their role in conservation and helping endangered species. This is also evident in other fund raising activities, such as Comic Relief. Every class has a class book which celebrates achievement in a wide range of activities including out of school clubs such as gymnastics, kick boxing and swimming. This effectively raises pupils' self-esteem as they see their achievements are recorded and celebrated.
95. The school gives good attention to healthy eating and fruit is distributed daily and the school has achieved two aspects of the Healthy Schools Award.
96. The subject is effectively led and the involvement with other schools keeps the school up-to-date in changes in provision and new ideas.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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