

INSPECTION REPORT

COMBE C OF E (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Witney

LEA area: Oxford

Unique reference number: 123116

Headteacher: Mrs B Jones

Lead inspector: Mr J Palk

Dates of inspection: 13th – 15th September 2004

Inspection number: 266656

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils: 4-11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 112

School address: Church Walk
Combe
Witney
Oxfordshire
Postcode: OX29 8NQ

Telephone number: 01993 891644
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Dr R Stockwell

Date of previous inspection: 26th April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Combe is a small village primary school. The socio-economic profile is broad but favourable when compared to most schools. Very few pupils are receiving free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well below average; most have moderate learning difficulties. No pupils have statements of special educational needs. The majority of pupils are of white British origin with a few pupils of Asian or mixed white Asian backgrounds. No pupils are learning English as an additional language. The movements of pupils leaving or joining the school other than at the usual times are typical of most schools. Children join the mixed reception and Year 1 class in the year that they are five. Their attainment in literacy and social skills is above average, and average in other areas of their learning. There are four classes, and pupils are taught in mixed ages.

The school was a Beacon school between 2002 and 2004 and received additional funding to manage curriculum development in a cluster of nearby village primary schools. Combe Primary gained a DfES (Department for Education and Skills) school achievement award for the last four consecutive years.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23630	J Palk	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage, English, history, geography, music, physical education and personal, social, health and citizenship education.
9770	J Baker	Lay inspector	
31029	P Thrussell	Team inspector	The provision for pupils with special educational needs, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology and religious education.

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This is a **very good** school. It achieves high standards and provides well for the needs of all its pupils. The leadership and management are very effective, ensuring that the school continues to improve. Pupils are interested in their work and are very well motivated to give their best. The teaching is very good and relationships in the school are excellent. Results in National Curriculum tests are very high and the school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes of the pupils.
- The high expectations of all pupils and very good support from teaching assistants to meet pupils' individual needs.
- The very good teaching of English, mathematics and science and very high standards in these subjects by the end of Year 6.
- The very strong emphasis given to speaking and listening, practical and problem solving skills and enrichment of the curriculum to provide a range of opportunities for pupils to learn together.
- The excellent leadership shown by the headteacher and very effective management of resources.
- The commitment of governors to sustain and raise high standards for all pupils.
- The lack of a school hall limits what pupils can achieve in gymnastics and dance.
- There are insufficient toilets and the access to these for reception children is unsatisfactory.

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. Standards are higher in all subjects. Teaching is better, and of consistent quality through the school. Improved lesson planning is based on manageable assessment information and the curriculum is well matched to the needs of all pupils. Pupils have more opportunities to develop their independence and use their very good literacy and numeracy skills in a wide range of subjects. Leadership and management are much stronger. School improvement is now based on a thorough monitoring and evaluation of teaching and standards.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	A*	A*	A*	A*
mathematics	A*	A*	A*	A*
science	A*	A*	A*	A*

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

Achievement is **very good** overall. Test results are in the top 5 per cent of similar schools nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving higher levels in National Curriculum tests in Years 2 and 6 has improved year on year culminating in 2003, with all pupils attaining the higher level

(Level 5) in Year 6 tests. The results in 2004 are similarly very high with the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in writing improving on previous years.

The inspection found that all pupils make good progress through the reception class. Attainment on entry is above average. The majority attains above average standards in relation to the goals children are expected to reach by the end of the reception class in the areas of learning. By the end of Year 2 all pupils achieve very well and standards are well above average with a good proportion of pupils reaching higher levels. In Year 6 pupils' achievement in English and mathematics is excellent and the current pupils are reaching standards that are very high indeed. Pupils attain very high standards in science because of an excellent knowledge and understanding but there is scope to achieve more in investigative science skills. Pupils' excellent literacy and numeracy skills make a very good contribution to standards in other subjects. The lack of indoor provision limits physical education achievement overall. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in English and mathematics because of the very good support they receive and this allows them to achieve well in other subjects. Those pupils from other ethnic backgrounds make the same progress as other pupils.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. All pupils have very good attitudes to their work and attendance is excellent.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good**. Lessons are exciting and encourage plenty of valuable discussion. Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent and teachers' questions are penetrating and perceptive. They demand the right amount of intellectual challenge and give the pupils confidence to share their thinking. Demanding work is set and teachers' expectations are high. There is some very good marking and the teachers' response to pupils' work gives them a clear idea of how to improve. Teaching assistants give very good support.

The curriculum is good. There is very good enrichment through visits to support topics. Art and design and music as well as sporting opportunities contribute very well to pupils' personal development. Expertise both within and outside the school is used very well to enrich the curriculum. However the lack of a school hall means that a full physical education programme cannot be taught. The only toilets for the reception and Years 1 and 2 pupils are situated in the main building and valuable time is lost when using these during lessons.

Pupils' support and guidance are very good. Staff have a very good knowledge of pupils' needs and there is good provision for those with special educational needs. There is a very strong partnership with parents, the community and other schools that motivates pupils and encourages them to stretch and challenge themselves.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. The headteacher is an excellent leader. She is systematic in evaluating the effectiveness of provision and very good at implementing strategies to raise standards in all subjects. She has built a very good team of staff through sensitive but determined monitoring of performance. Subject leadership and management is

very effective. The work of the governors is very good. They are active, questioning and contribute substantially to the effectiveness of the school. Statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are extremely satisfied. They get plenty of information about the curriculum their child's progress and the ways in which they can help at home. Their commitment to the school is substantial, particularly in their support for homework and contribution towards equipping the school. Pupils really like their school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the accommodation for pupils to develop the full range of physical education skills.
- Provide sufficient and easily accessible toilet facilities for the youngest children.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is very good overall and pupils achieve very high standards in English, mathematics and science by Year 6. There are no differences in the achievements of boys and girls or pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their individual education targets.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test results compare very well with similar schools.
- Children achieve well in the reception year.
- Pupils are achieving extremely well in English, mathematics and science.
- There is some very good achievement in physical education (PE) despite unsatisfactory accommodation.
- Standards in geography and history are well above average and pupils achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	19.5 (18.0)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	17.1 (15.7)	14.6 (14.4)

mathematics	19.6 (18.3)	16.3 (16.5)
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There were 17 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. The 2003 results were very high in reading and mathematics in comparison with all schools and similar schools. They were well above average in writing. The results for 2004 show continued good improvement in test and task performance. The proportions reaching the upper level are now higher than previous years with the most improvement in writing. Inspectors found current Year 2 pupils are on course to achieve standards that reflect the latest test results. This is due to the successful use of assessment information gathered from the reception and Year 1 class to match work precisely to ensure even development of English and mathematics skills. The many opportunities for pupils to write in a range of subjects and the very good teaching of sounds, spelling and grammar have made a significant contribution to improved standards in writing. There is no marked difference in the performances of boys and girls.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.0 (31.0)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	33.0 (30.7)	26.8 (26.7)
science	33.0 (32.3)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 12 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. In the Year 6 English, mathematics and science tests in 2003 and 2004, results were in the top 5 per cent of all schools, and those with a similar free school meal entitlement. These performances speak for themselves. National Curriculum test results have improved faster than national trends in spite of fluctuations in the attainment on entry of different year groups. When compared to pupils' prior attainment in the Year 2 tests the 2003 results are also very high. The proportion reaching Level 5 in the 2004 writing test has improved on previous years' results, reflecting the emphasis given to this. Inspectors found that standards of the current Year 6 are very high in all elements of English.
3. The attainment on entry is above average but not particularly high. There is an average spread of ability but more children than usual have good attainment in communication, language and literacy. Personal and social skills are also above average. The teaching in the mixed reception and Year 1 class capitalises on this feature. With some strong teaching, very good organisation and good opportunities all children achieve well. The lower attaining children learn well because of the strong emphasis on developing their vocabulary. Most children are on course to meet all the goals that they are expected to meet in their knowledge and understanding and exceed those in literacy, numeracy and personal, social and emotional skills.
4. Achievement in English is excellent overall. It is very good in Years 1 and 2. Pupils listen extremely well to each other and learn a great deal from working together. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 enjoy reading and demonstrate a very good understanding of plot and character development that helps them in their own writing. There is a strong emphasis on developing vocabulary in all subjects and this has boosted the achievement of all pupils through the school. The development of speaking skills and the precise use of language is the cornerstone of some outstanding achievement by pupils in Years 3 to 6. The teachers

employ a range of techniques, including drama, which encourage pupils to share ideas together and provide exciting lessons that stimulate discussion. The high expectations teachers have of writing in Years 3 to 6 result in well crafted stories, accounts and scripts that are a delight to read.

5. Achievement in mathematics is excellent overall. It is very good in Years 1 and 2 and excellent in Years 3 to 6. In particular the lower attaining pupils benefit from the emphasis on problem solving and encouragement to explain how they calculate answers. Mental arithmetic is given a high priority and by the end of Year 2 lower attaining pupils work with large numbers confidently. The strong practical and investigative approach to learning taken by teachers boosts the achievement of all pupils in Years 3 to 6. Consequently, many are working beyond Level 5 (the higher level) by the time they start in Year 6 with all pupils on course to exceed average standards.
6. Achievement is very good in science. Pupils have very good knowledge of scientific ideas and principles by Year 6 and are accurate in their recording of science investigations. Their skills in handling data, interpreting results and writing conclusions are high and result from their very good writing and mathematics skills. There is very good emphasis given to practical work but due to the cramped nature of classrooms and the organisation of the timetable there is not enough opportunity for pupils to follow their own lines of research.
7. Standards in games skills and swimming, as evidenced in lessons and from the numerous individual and team awards gathered by the school, are well above average through the school. However, it is evident from discussions with pupils that opportunities for developing gymnastic and dance skills are very limited. The school has done all it reasonably can to provide for a full PE programme but the lack of a suitable hall means that gymnastic and dance programmes, taught outside for Years 3 to 6 and in a classroom for Years 1 and 2, are regularly disrupted. The current arrangements of the timetable, whereby teachers are deployed to teach to their areas of expertise, mean that PE lessons cannot be moved to accommodate the vagaries of the weather.
8. The strong emphasis given to research, practical experiences and writing has lifted the standards in history and geography. They are well above average in pupils' fieldwork skills in geography and interpreting evidence in history. Pupils are achieving well in ICT. There has been well targeted investment in updating resources and training staff, including their use of the interactive whiteboards in classes. Pupils now have greater access to challenging software and informed teaching. With the very positive attitudes to learning and the proven ability of pupils to learn quickly it is only a matter of time before standards in this subject are as high as they are in English, mathematics and science. There was not enough evidence to judge standards and achievement in religious education (RE). In part this was due to the fact that there is little recorded work from the previous year. In discussion, pupils showed they have a firm grasp of the main elements of faith and in a lesson demonstrated their ability to discuss matters of a spiritual nature at the expected level.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are very good and their behaviour is excellent throughout the school. Attendance and punctuality are excellent. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very good attitudes to learning and excellent behaviour in the classroom help them to achieve very well.
- Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are excellent.
- Pupils are very confident and very keen to take responsibility because they are given opportunities from the moment they join the school.
- A wide range of experiences outside the school significantly enriches the very good pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Parents are extremely conscientious about ensuring that their children attend regularly and on time, which results in excellent attendance and punctuality.

Commentary

9. All pupils listen attentively, are keen to answer questions and work enthusiastically. This is the result of very good teaching where teachers maintain a high level of interest and set appropriately challenging tasks which ensure that all abilities have the opportunity to achieve their potential.
10. Standards of behaviour are excellent in the classroom, in assembly and around the school. All pupils are fully aware of the high standards expected and insisted upon by all staff. The very caring ethos of the school results in pupils knowing right from wrong and showing consideration for others. Pupils play harmoniously together in the playground and there were no signs of aggressive behaviour. Both pupils and parents confirm that bullying very rarely occurs. There have been no exclusions during the past year.
11. Pupils are encouraged to become independent and willingly take on a range of responsibilities appropriate to their age. These range from finding their own name and self-registering in the reception and Year 1 class to carrying out whole school duties in Year 6 such as looking after the library and helping younger pupils. Older pupils are also taking their responsibilities very seriously on the recently formed school council. Children's personal and social development is very good in the reception class; they play very well together and learn well how to share and take turns.
12. The excellent relationships result from the caring ethos of the school, the partnership with parents and the very good example set by the staff. Pupils work very well together and in groups during lessons and in other activities. For example, in the ecology club pupils willingly shared activities and equipment when planting up tubs. Relationships between pupils and staff are also excellent and are the result of staff giving a very positive lead in engendering good relationships, for example, by giving praise and encouragement at every opportunity as well as acting as very good role models.
13. Spiritual and moral development is promoted very strongly through assemblies, "thought for the day"¹ sessions and through special occasions such as participation in the village's Remembrance Day service and attending Ascension Day ceremonies at Lincoln College. Social development is enhanced through Beacon school activities when pupils join with others from local schools. Cultural development is enriched through participation in May Day activities, visits to museums, art gallery and theatre, school productions and through visiting musicians including those from other cultures.

¹ For example, a minute's silence was held for Russian children who died recently.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	2.9
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

14. The excellent attendance is because pupils really enjoy school and want to be there every day even when they're not feeling too well. In addition, parents know the value of regular attendance and are extremely diligent about notifying the school regarding any absence.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very good education. The good curriculum is broad, balanced and offers challenging experiences. There is very good teaching through the school. Pupils are well cared for and there are very good links with the community, parents and other schools.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall, enabling very high standards to be reached by a significant majority of pupils. Assessment of pupils' work is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good organisation and management in the reception class ensure children make a good start to their learning.
- Teachers have high yet realistic expectations of pupils and this results in demanding work appropriate to the abilities of pupils.
- Good use is made of the regular assessment information to provide exciting work and direct support staff to where they can help best.
- Teaching assistants and support staff make a very good contribution to the high standards.
- Relationships are excellent, consequently pupils work very well both independently and together.
- Precise and accurate marking alongside very good use of homework contributes to the very good teaching of English and mathematics.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 26 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	10	12	2	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.

15. Teaching and learning in the reception and Year 1 class are good. Adults have a clear grasp of the requirements of the Foundation Stage; they are well organised and prepare interesting and exciting activities for children. There is good emphasis on speaking and listening through practical activities and games, which makes a valuable contribution to the success of children's learning.
16. The high proportion of very good teaching is one key to the school's success. Teachers develop and sustain very productive relationships with pupils; they encourage them, praise them and give them confidence in their abilities. Teachers are very skilful at making learning enjoyable, whilst at the same time making sure it is purposeful and rigorous. In one outstanding literacy lesson the teacher used drama to capture the fluid nature of relationships and show how dialogue alters as relationships shift. The resulting writing was inspired. The lessons are always well balanced, incorporating very successful approaches to teaching skills. In part this is because teachers teach to their strengths, but also because they share with each other strategies that will take learning forward. They are always seeking ways in which they can improve their effectiveness.
17. Teaching assistants and support teachers make a big contribution in all lessons; they work closely with individuals and groups of pupils and have a sharp grasp of what pupils need to learn. The headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants have a very good knowledge of pupils' academic and personal needs and this ensures that they match work and support appropriately. Pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils are given suitably demanding targets and support is deployed sensitively to ensure they learn well and gain in self-confidence.
18. Teachers manage the lessons very well and there are high expectations that pupils will work independently but also productively in groups. Classrooms are cramped, but teachers make very good use of displays and the computer suite to extend the learning. Some of the results of pupils working together in mathematics lessons led to some excellent learning at levels already well above expectations. Pupils organise themselves quickly and just the right balance is struck between what is expected and collaborative working. Those with special educational needs are sensitively integrated, ensuring they gain as much as others from the chance to share and present ideas to the class.
19. Pupils are clear about what they have to do to improve in mathematics and English and are very focused on reaching the realistic goals set for them. The marking of written work, both in English and other subjects, is consistently directed at the individual targets and this has contributed to the very good improvement made in recent years to standards of writing. Regular testing in mathematics and end-of-unit evaluations in science and ICT by the teachers are of a good quality and give the teachers and pupils the information they need when the topics are revisited.

20. Homework is well managed throughout the school. For example it is often used as a starting point for topics or written work. The close relationship between homework and work that is undertaken in class means that it is flexible and is sometimes set ahead of time if pupils have made better than expected progress in lessons. Teachers value the work pupils do at home and it serves as a very good link with parents. The teachers make sure there is support for pupils who have difficulty with their homework, so that they are not left behind.

The curriculum

Overall the curriculum is good, with a wide variety of opportunities provided to support pupils' learning and to ensure their very good achievement. Both the range and quality of extra-curricular activities, together with the contributions made through visits and visitors, greatly enhance pupils' learning. Resources are good and the school makes the fullest use of its inadequate facilities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school takes a strong lead in curriculum development.
- Very good enrichment is provided in sports and the arts.
- The toilet facilities are inadequate, particularly for younger children.
- The school has done all it can to provide a well organised and challenging PE curriculum but the lack of a hall limits the overall quality.
- Staff are well deployed to meet the needs of the curriculum and to ensure some very good provision in English and mathematics lessons for pupils with special educational needs.

Commentary

21. The school keeps the effectiveness of its curricular provision under review so that very high standards are consistently achieved. A developing cross-curricular approach provides relevant and purposeful learning opportunities for all pupils in mixed age and ability classes, which encourage high standards across the curriculum, drawing especially on the skills taught in literacy and numeracy. This approach includes the use of ICT. Although not much in evidence during the inspection, pupils' computer files of past work show that the use of ICT to support learning is nevertheless developing well.
22. A very good example of this cross-curricular approach is the topic based on 'The Beach Scene' by Degas. A visit to the National Gallery to see this and other pictures was extremely well recorded and word-processed, showing a strong awareness of different artists and their styles. Pupils wrote very detailed playscripts about a visit to the beach. Seaside pictures and designs were produced using a range of techniques, and beach buggies were designed and made with regard to careful measurement. The school's Beacon school status has also enabled it to take a strong lead in curriculum development, providing in particular writing and multi-cultural workshop opportunities for both staff and pupils within a cluster of schools.
23. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities to support pupils' learning, in which the majority of pupils take some part. For example, the ecology club supports work in science. The clubs contribute to the very good opportunities to participate in sport and the arts. Pupils take part in different sports and have been

particularly successful in competitive events. Educational visits, for example to the National Gallery and the British Museum, regular visiting theatre groups and recognised authors also make a very strong contribution to the arts. These activities enhance the good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. Twice yearly performances by pupils involve music and drama and further help pupils' personal and social development as well as having a significant impact on individual achievements. The school has no space to host regular instrumental tuition, but organises regular visits to listen to youth orchestras.

24. There is good provision for the few pupils with special educational needs that enables them to achieve well and to access the full curriculum. There is a very good support for those with special educational needs in Years 3 to 6 from the skilled teaching assistant in English and mathematics lessons. The pupils do not have this level of support in other lessons and consequently overall provision is good. Work is appropriately modified in other lessons to meet their needs and they achieve well. Good assessment procedures lead to challenging work being planned across the curriculum for pupils of all abilities. The school's accommodation, however, limits some curricular opportunities, particularly in physical education in the areas of dance and gymnastics. Although occasional use is made of secondary school facilities for physical education, achievement in these areas is nevertheless restricted.
25. There are inadequate toilet facilities for the size of school. They are located in the school building and do not provide immediate and convenient access for younger pupils. Fifty of the youngest pupils are taught in mobile classrooms. There are no toilets easily accessible to them and their journey to the main school building where the toilets are located involves them crossing a roadway used by the public. Consequently, teaching assistants are required to accompany any young children requiring the toilets at times other than break times and this disrupts learning for other pupils.
26. Staff are well qualified to meet the demands of the full curriculum. Good use is made of some specialist teaching, for example in science, ICT, art and design and design technology and humanities, providing some planning and preparation time for teachers and in the case of ICT allowing year groups to be taught separately and more effectively. The role of teaching assistants is developing very well. Competent and confident support is given to both individual pupils and groups within mixed age classes, enabling teachers to more readily focus their own teaching and support to pupils.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes satisfactory provision for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. It provides pupils with very good support and guidance. The school effectively seeks and acts on the views of pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A number of health and safety issues inherent in the layout of the buildings are not being addressed.
- There is an inadequate number of toilets and their location disrupts pupils' lessons.
- Pupils achieve very well because their progress is carefully monitored and they receive very good support advice and guidance.
- Pupils have an excellent and trusting relationship with one or more members of staff.

- The child protection procedures are very good.
- The very good induction arrangements for children entering the Foundation Stage ensure that they settle in well.

Commentary

27. The health and safety issues noted at the time of the last inspection have all been resolved but issues related to the limitation of the buildings and their layout still remain. The governing body have been informed of the inspection team's concerns.
28. It is the judgement of inspectors that there are fewer toilets than can be reasonably expected for the size of school.
29. Good assessment procedures and informative marking give pupils good support and advice on their academic achievement. Teachers and support staff know the pupils and their families very well, are sensitive to their needs and are thus able to provide very good support and guidance. Targets for pupils with special educational needs are shared with them; they are able to contribute to reviews and the setting of future targets. This very good support results in pupils being very confident and self-assured by the time they leave the school. The excellent relationships between pupils and staff encourage pupils to raise any concerns they may have, knowing that they will be dealt with sympathetically. In the pupils' questionnaire for this inspection, pupils were very supportive of all aspect of school life. The recently elected school council has done a great deal to strengthen the many informal opportunities pupils have to help the school improve.
30. All staff have received child protection training and are fully aware of the procedures and their importance. Health and safety inspections of the premises are carried out termly and any issues reported to the governing body for appropriate action. Pupils' healthy and safe living is well promoted through the personal, social and health education programme, which is enhanced by talks by the school nurse, the John Radcliffe Hospital's training course and the Junior Citizens course organised by the police.
31. Taster sessions in the summer term before starting school help children to adjust to full-time education. The strength of the partnership with parents is maintained at the start of the year through open days and regular information sharing between home and school. Consequently, children feel secure and valued. There are good links with the numerous pre-school settings which ensure that records are transferred promptly for tracking purposes, so ensuring an effective start to children's learning in school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with the parents, the community and other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very well informed.
- Parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning.
- The very good links with the community help to enrich the curriculum.
- The very good links with other schools contribute positively to pupils' personal development and enhance the curriculum.

Commentary

32. Parents are very well informed about the school through the prospectus, regular newsletters and frequent other correspondence. They are well informed about their children's progress through consultation evenings, "Open Days" and good annual reports. This helps them give their children the support they need to achieve their potential.
33. Parents receive excellent information about the curriculum through the prospectus, newsletters that detail the work to be covered each half-term and through "Open Days" which give a very good insight into the curriculum. In addition, curriculum evenings are held regularly in mathematics, which are extremely valuable since they enable parents to support their children with the methods that are being taught in the school.
34. Parents raise considerable funds for the school through the Friends of Combe School Association and also make generous donations to the school. In addition, parents contribute very positively to the quality of education in many other ways, for example, providing regular help in the reception and Year 1 classroom and on trips, helping with cycling proficiency training, teaching Spanish and with maintenance work on the buildings and grounds. Parents provide very good support to their children through homework and through their very good attendance at all school activities and functions. This makes a very significant contribution to pupils' achievement.
35. Pupils take part in a range of local events and many volunteers from within the community come and support the teaching. The additional teaching expertise in Spanish adds further challenge to all pupils' curriculum. The strong connections with secondary schools are utilised to provide additional teaching expertise in all aspects of PE, as well as science and drama. Very good use is made of local facilities such as Blenheim Palace, the arboretum, local museums, the football stadium and the botanical gardens to support learning. There are well-established links with the local primary schools. By clustering together the school benefits in financing a range of activities for pupils, and teachers have benefited from the shared staff development training programmes.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good, as is governance. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. The leadership and management by other staff are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school that is central to whole-school effectiveness and improvement.
- The monitoring of teaching and standards is rigorous and leads to continued improvement.
- Governors are fully involved in the school's development and the budget is expertly managed.
- The very positive partnership with other schools and parents is very well managed.
- Strong teamwork contributes very positively to the high standards attained.

Commentary

36. The excellent leadership by the headteacher is ensuring the school moves from strength to strength. The headteacher inspires her staff through her commitment to innovate and her dedication to meeting the needs of all pupils. There is an ethos of care for the pupils linked with a commitment to high standards that is sustained through her willingness to test out new ideas and enlist the support of scientists, authors, poets and specialist support teachers. This has brought the anticipated rewards. Her monitoring of teaching is very thorough and her open collegiate style of management ensures that teachers are keen to improve together.
37. The good leadership and management identified in the previous inspection have been improved through effective evaluation of the school's strategy for raising attainment. The headteacher has retained her teaching commitment but balanced this workload with time to monitor the effectiveness of strategies and support the staff. The management of the support team is particularly effective in ensuring that pupils receive high quality teaching and teachers teach to their strengths. Curriculum development is impressive, successfully identifying the experiences that will challenge and motivate pupils and driving this forward through careful evaluation of planning. Her knowledge of individual pupils' academic needs is exemplary and supported by regular and detailed evaluation of their work in lessons. The partnership with parents has been strengthened through the well-organised staff approach to sharing information about pupils' attainment and informing them about reasons for curriculum development.
38. The headteacher takes a strong strategic approach to bringing about change. For example, in taking on board LEA initiatives with interactive technology she has challenged herself and colleagues to move towards ICT based teaching programmes. Staff feel justified in their high praise of the training opportunities they are provided with. Monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and senior staff are regular and all staff have good access to professional development training; in particular developing teaching and co-ordinators' management skills. Subject leaders all play a valuable role in supporting new initiatives to raise standards. The special educational needs co-ordinator is rigorous in maintaining individual education plans and ensuring teaching assistants are well briefed. The development of the Foundation Stage curriculum to meet the needs of a particularly young year group is very well managed by the co-ordinator. As part of its programme of curriculum development the school has linked with other schools to provide staff with many valuable additional experiences. As a former Beacon school the headteacher successfully managed additional funding to enrich opportunities for pupils and staff in local primary schools.
39. Governors are fully involved in checking on the progress the school is making towards its improvement and performance targets. They share in the strategic development planning and its evaluation, managing the budget extremely efficiently to maximise the most of limited financial resources. The high spending on staff is assessed and evaluated through very good performance management strategies and demonstrated through very successful results. Administrative procedures in the school are excellent, ensuring that the headteacher and staff have support where they need it most to maintain the high levels of expectations of pupils' learning.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	Balances (£)
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Total income	360,811
Total expenditure	322,800
Expenditure per pupil	2,882

Balance from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to the next	38,011

40. The school has a significant proportion of its funds carried forward into next year. This is because items already purchased and being used by children in the reception class had not been paid for when they year's accounts were closed. There is also an amount to cover essential repairs to the Year 1 and 2 mobile classroom.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

41. The provision is good overall and similar to that at the last inspection. All children continue to achieve well because of overall good teaching and children reach the expected goals in all areas of learning with a significant number exceeding these. Tracking of children's progress is well established and good planning takes into account the small steps children make towards the early learning goals. The support staff are knowledgeable in early years education and are managed very well to give the best support to children. The attainment of children on entry is generally above average in personal and social skills and in communication, language and literacy.
42. The staff have high expectations of what the children can achieve. The co-ordinator leads and manages the development of the Foundation Stage well. She is systematic in planning for continued improvement, in particular the adjustment to a single entry point for children. She is very thorough in her appraisal of the overall effectiveness of provision and training programmes are very well linked to improvement planning. She is skilful at managing the partnership with parents, who are very pleased with how well they are kept informed about their children. This helps children settle into school quickly. Overall improvement is satisfactory. Whilst there are now daily opportunities for children to work outdoors, with a good range of resources, there is still no covered area or hall and therefore the learning is often disrupted.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well because of the very good support and established routines that encourage their initiative.
- Children work well independently.
- There are very strong links with parents.

Commentary

43. Children's social skills are generally above average on entry. The teaching is very good and within a few weeks children share equipment, take turns and chat to each other when working although they come from a number of pre-school settings. Children are confident and willing to take part in activities and all make some choices about their work. The teacher promotes this well through regularly gathering the children and encouraging them to share their ideas and experiences. Those less forthcoming are asked to help the adults who sit with them and this provides every encouragement for children to talk to each other. All adults work hard to help the children feel secure and value each other by praising them at every opportunity. Simple rules and routines are quickly established, such as putting up hands to answer questions or planning what independent activities they are going to do. Older pupils who help at break times and lunch times ensure children quickly gain

confidence in their surroundings and with social routines. The adults are skilful at helping them play with other children. For example, at the water tray, through judicious prompting, the teacher helped two boys amicably resolve who was going to demonstrate how water could be moved around with a hosepipe. The classroom and outside area are well organised so children have space to work and play without disturbing others. Social development through playing is well managed and children attain well above expected goals in this area of learning.

44. Children have learnt to work independently. Many have the ability to organise their own games and help each other; for example taking turns in mathematical activities. Numerous examples were seen during inspection where children worked very well unsupervised. Very good induction procedures help children settle quickly. Parents have regular meetings with staff to discuss children's progress and development and this partnership has a good impact in raising children's self-esteem and confidence.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good attention is paid to speaking and listening skills.
- The strategies to develop children's literary skills are taught very well.

Commentary

45. Children are achieving very well and on course to exceed the early learning goals in this area of their learning because the teaching and learning are very good. Speaking skills and listening skills are at the core of the programme to develop literacy skills. Books and resources are carefully chosen to promote discussion and staff provide very good models for children. For example, at the start of one lesson the teacher and teaching assistant held a conversation about what they liked about a picture on the easel. After a few minutes a number of the children were inspired to join in with their contributions. Answers in full sentences were encouraged and the precise use of language praised. In another lesson a stimulating selection of objects were passed around and the children encouraged to talk with their partners. The teacher's well focused questions and the exciting variety of objects captured the children's interest and imagination and encouraged them all to extend their vocabulary.
46. The development of reading and writing has high priority. Careful records are kept of each child's development in both areas so that appropriate help can be given to move children forward. Even after a week in school it was evident how successfully the teacher and teaching assistant had grouped children for early reading and writing activities. Children are taught sounds systematically and these are linked to letter formation. Whilst a significant number of children enter being able to recognise the letters of their name, they quickly extend their knowledge of the alphabet and use recognisable letters when 'having a go' at writing. Handwriting and correct pencil grip are well promoted. By the end of reception most children write the letters and many make good attempts at writing words and short phrases independently. There are many opportunities to listen to stories and enjoy books. There are collections of puppets and games for children to tell stories

themselves and share with their parents. The computers are used well for this purpose but the library is also an inviting area.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Practical games act as a base for learning about numbers and how they work.
- Independent maths activities are well matched to children's needs.

Commentary

47. Children achieve well and are on course to exceed expectations because they are taught well. A good quality range of games forms the basis of much of the teaching at this point in the term and this encourages children to enjoy mathematics. The games extend the children's reasoning and patterning skills as well as introducing them to early ideas of what missing numbers could be. About two thirds of the class already recognise numbers to ten. Lessons are well planned and adults use questions well to develop understanding and match tasks to children's abilities based on their good understanding of children's needs. Most children are on course to exceed the expected goals by the end of the reception class in this area.
48. The independent practical games that followed the lesson were linked well to what was already learnt and as a base for extending learning about numbers and how they work. The children were thoroughly involved and consequently learnt well from the activities.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The taught part of the lessons is very well resourced.
- Independent activities do not provide enough of a focus for skills to develop.

Commentary

49. Staff plan well to provide activities that stimulate children's curiosity and interest and they are on course to exceed the expected goals in this area of learning. The teaching is good and consequently children achieve well. In one good lesson the children examined a fascinating collection of objects and learnt the words that helped to classify them. The teacher's questions about the jelly encouraged children to recall what they had seen happen when at home. The language was precise, but also balanced with children's own ideas for descriptions of what the objects felt like. Higher attaining children made good attempts at comparing similar objects by their characteristics. There are a good range of opportunities to extend and develop observational skills and an appreciation of the wider world. For example, when children compared the contents of two suitcases. Some very effective questioning developed children's ideas about how the objects compared with what they might take on holiday and why. However, the independent activities did not

provide enough direction and focus for children to develop their explorative skills. Not enough use of ICT was seen during the inspection days so it is not possible to make a judgement on this aspect of their learning.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching encourages enjoyment.
- There are two safe and secure play areas, but there is no covered or indoor area.

Commentary

50. This area of provision has received a great deal of input since the last inspection, with the creation of an inviting play area. Achievement is satisfactory overall. There are two limitations to the children's achievements in this area and they do not achieve as well as they could. The play area is a good size, inviting and well resourced. However, it is a short walk away from the classroom and this requires supervision; this limits opportunities for children to have incidental play activity. Because of the lack of a hall there are no indoor PE lessons where children can dance and develop co-ordination through movement lessons. The PE co-ordinator, who teaches physical development lessons, uses her classroom but this is cramped and issues of safety limit what is possible. Games skills such as throwing, running and catching are taught well. Lessons are well balanced, providing a time for children to practise new skills in small groups with adult support. Overall, standards are in line with the expected goals. However the weather restricts systematic development of these early games skills, and there is no easy solution to the lack of a hall.
51. The teaching of fine motor skills such as cutting and pasting, weaving and holding pencils and paint brushes is good. All children develop their manipulative skills by handling dough, scissors and small toys. The guidance and support for these activities was very good. Eye hand co-ordination developed well, particularly for those with below average skills on entry, because of the opportunities and also the patience adults showed.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

52. Provision in creative development was sampled. Observations indicate that there is a good balance of taught activity alongside children exploring for themselves. The indoor play area is rather uninviting and not adequately resourced to encourage imaginative play or develop early reading and writing skills. Despite some good concentration the children run out of ideas as to how to extend their play. A very good structure is provided for artwork and children are given good opportunities to show creativity and make choices in the making area.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall teaching is very good and pupils achieve high standards by the end of Year 2 and very high standards at the end of Year 6.
- Speaking and listening are promoted very well through discussion and group work.
- Pupils really enjoy reading and writing and are given many opportunities to use their skills.
- Provision has significantly improved since the last inspection.
- The subject is very well led and managed; pupils' achievement is carefully monitored and teaching assistants are well deployed.

Commentary

53. The school has raised standards since the last inspection. It has narrowed the gap between pupils of different prior attainments through very good teaching and careful monitoring of pupils' achievements. All groups now achieve very well and many lower attaining pupils exceed standards expected for their age. The proportion of pupils with above average standards is very high and represents outstanding achievement in Years 3 to 6.
54. A particular strength in teaching is the way the teachers use discussion and talk to encourage pupils to develop ideas. For example, Year 6 pupils dramatised in small groups how they might resolve conflicts in domestic settings. By getting into role, something they did easily, they explored how characters developed as conflicts unfolded. With skilful teaching the pupils learnt how to turn the dialogue into a story using direct speech. Lessons offer many opportunities for speaking and listening. The pupils with special educational needs are very sensitively supported at these times and this contributes to their very good learning. Pupils in all lessons readily volunteer to answer questions and teachers use group and paired talk very well to refine and extend pupils' ideas and explore new ones. Consequently standards in these activities are high through Years 3 to 6.
55. Teachers really enjoy teaching English and communicate their enthusiasm to the pupils, to stimulate them. In consequence they work hard for their teachers. Pupils acquire a love of books, and this is supported by a very well maintained collection of books for pupils to choose from, and the use of whole class and group reading sessions. Pupils in Year 2 read fluently and with very good understanding. They express ideas and show good skills in predicting what may happen next. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have very good comprehension skills and all pupils are well able to draw on implied meanings and conclusions from their reading of a variety of texts. Pupils enjoy writing because the purposes for writing are relevant to the work they are doing.
56. Pupils' achievement in writing has improved considerably and has contributed to the continuing upward improvement in attainment. There are more opportunities to write for a range of purposes and targets help pupils understand what they have to do to improve. Teaching assistants provide very good support in lessons with small groups of pupils and individuals, helping them edit their writing or discussing how they can phrase their writing more effectively. They are very knowledgeable about the language needs of those with special educational needs, challenging when appropriate and insisting on high standards in their spelling and grammar. Teaching is very often imaginative and stimulating. The result is that learning is very good through the school; pupils move on quickly in writing

with creativity and expression. The impact has been significant with the proportions of pupils reaching higher levels in writing outstripping those in reading.

57. Assessment information is used very well to teach small groups reading and writing skills. The teaching assistants are used very well for this purpose, offering skilled support based on regular updated training. Some very effective marking draws pupils' attention to how they can improve. The use of drafts and redrafts to get at precisely the meaning required by the writer commences when pupils are in Years 1 and 2 and this a powerful tool that pupils use in much of their writing. Pupils talk at length about their targets and how they are making progress.
58. Very effective leadership displays both vision and an innovative approach to developing and improving the subject. Beacon activities have been used to promote a more able writers group. All pupils benefit from the stimulation provided by regularly meeting authors and poets and visits to the theatre. Monitoring of teaching and learning has developed well since the last inspection and the consistency in teaching has ensured the school maintains very high standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Excellent. In particular the development of speaking and listening skills. Links with art and design and the humanities as well as opportunities to evaluate and discuss work in physical education are strong elements of all lessons. The teachers build very well on the enthusiasm of pupils to work together and consistently seek to challenge each other. There is ample evidence of teachers using lessons to develop reading and writing skills.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching brings about very effective learning, so that pupils' achievements are excellent.
- There are particular strengths in pupils' ability to reason and explain how answers are reached.
- Good assessment procedures enable all pupils to be set appropriate yet challenging work.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to use their skills in other subjects.

Commentary

60. National testing has shown that by Year 2 standards have been consistently well above average, and by Year 6 very high. This is borne out by the work seen in the school. From above average attainment on entry to the school, pupils, by Year 2, achieve well. Pupils by Year 6 have consistently maintained their very high levels of attainment, therefore showing some outstanding achievement. Effective support enables the few pupils with special educational needs to achieve very well. These levels of achievement result from good assessment procedures and the very good quality of teaching and learning.
61. The progress that pupils make year on year is thoroughly assessed and enables challenging targets to be set for teachers to plan for and pupils to work towards. This monitoring of progress shows that the school is not only very challenging but also realistic in its expectations, particularly when weaker year groups become apparent. The school recognises the importance of pupils becoming more involved in their own learning and understanding of how well they are doing. To this end short term targets for improvement have just started to be set and are shared effectively with pupils. These targets, along with lesson objectives, are referred to well in teachers' marking when writing comments for improvement.
62. From past work and lessons seen, the overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. All teachers now emphasise reasoning and develop pupils' strategies for solving mathematical problems. This is a notable improvement since the last inspection. Older pupils especially are expected to think for themselves, and, in response to careful questioning, give reasoned answers. As a result, they show a very high level of mental agility, drawing on different strategies to calculating that have been taught, giving them a secure basis on which to approach their written work and move forward in their learning. The very positive encouragement of all pupils results in excellent relationships and behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. As a result, pupils apply themselves very well to their tasks, working independently when required and consulting and helping each other as a matter of course. Even the younger pupils have the confidence to ask if they are unsure. For example one Year 2 pupil asked others in his group to explain total, which they did in a helpful and accurate way. The lessons seen were carefully planned and demonstrated very good subject knowledge by the teachers. They addressed the needs of pupils in mixed age and ability classes well so that near the start of the school year all were starting to be equally and appropriately challenged. The effective use of teaching assistants in some lessons enables teachers to more readily focus their teaching and support. This was very evident in the Year 4/5/6 class where the teacher expected older pupils to show younger ones how to give reasoned answers to questions. Younger pupils were then questioned well by the teaching assistant, and set work on halving and doubling as the teacher worked with the older ones. Very good provision is made for homework that builds on learning in lessons and encourages independent learning. Parents are encouraged to support their children through workshops held in school that explain and demonstrate current methods in mathematics.
63. Leadership and management of the subject, with careful monitoring, have resulted in very good improvements in teaching and learning, and with this, overall achievement, since the last inspection. The high level of attainment has been very well maintained. Steps have also been taken to provide more relevant opportunities to use numeracy skills in other curriculum areas.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. Pupils have very good opportunities to use their numeracy skills within other subjects. In science the results of investigations are measured, recorded and compared; in design and technology pupils plan and construct using careful measurements; in geography pupils compare statistics on climate and use six-figure co-ordinates in map work; in history detailed time lines are prepared and numerical data considered. For example, older pupils considered the relative costs of employing workers in Victorian factories. Pupils use their skills in ICT well when working on data handling programs and preparing spreadsheets that involve equations.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and consistently attain and maintain very high standards.
- Very good teaching and learning contribute to the standards achieved.
- Pupils learn very well through investigation but are not always encouraged to develop their own lines of thought.
- Good leadership and management contribute to the subject's improvement and success.

Commentary

65. Teacher assessments in Year 2 show that pupils consistently attain overall above average standards. In recent years standards by Year 6 have been very high with the majority of pupils, and at times all pupils, achieving the higher level in national testing. Pupils' overall achievement by Year 6 is very good and inspection found standards to be well above average in Year 2 and very high in Year 6. The high standards achieved by Year 2 are consistently maintained throughout the school. The quality of teaching and learning and subject co-ordination contribute to this achievement.
66. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Planning is good and demonstrates very good subject knowledge. Good assessment procedures are in place to check pupils' knowledge and understanding and to help teachers plan future work. Targets, based on lesson objectives and National Curriculum levels, are starting to be set for pupils to work towards. These are helping strengthen pupils' own knowledge about how well they are learning. Teachers plan investigations that pupils discuss and carry out for themselves, so encouraging learning from first hand experience. However, there are few opportunities for pupils, having drawn clear and valid conclusions from their work, to consider for themselves how further investigations could be developed in response to their initial findings. There are reasons for this lack of opportunity, and the school is looking to find ways around them.
67. Classes are managed very well and consequently pupils display excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected in the recorded work seen in Year 6, which is very well presented and shows a full understanding of the topics covered. Care is taken to ensure pupils with special educational needs have appropriate help with language from the teacher that enables them to be fully included in lessons. Subject vocabulary is introduced appropriately and pupils are keen to use it. This was very evident in a Year 1 and 2 lesson where pupils quickly grasped the terms opaque, transparent and

translucent when comparing materials, moving them forward well in their scientific understanding. Questioning in lessons is thorough with reasoned responses expected that help to further pupils' understanding.

68. The co-ordinator, working closely with other staff, has ensured that through careful monitoring and staff training, teaching and learning have improved, resulting in consistently higher standards and better achievement than at the last inspection. This shows good improvement. The curriculum takes account of mixed age classes and is further enhanced, for example by a visiting theatre group that looked at forces, visits to places of scientific interest, an ecology club and the use of the school's practical garden and other local environmental areas.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in ICT have improved since the last inspection and are now above average.
- Good teaching and learning enable pupils to achieve well.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- The use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum is developing well.

Commentary

69. Assessment records and the one Year 2 lesson seen, show that by Year 2 standards overall are above average. Pupils' individual computer files, displayed work and discussion with pupils in Years 3 to 6 show that all aspects of ICT are being taught, and that by Year 6 standards overall are above average. The quality of teaching and learning, good co-ordination and pupils' very positive attitudes to learning result in good achievement by all pupils, including those with special educational needs. This shows good improvement since the last inspection when standards overall were average and achievement only satisfactory. The school has installed a small computer suite and provides sufficient computers to enable small group teaching to be a regular feature. Extra opportunity to develop computer skills comes from use of the recently introduced interactive whiteboards. However, the improved facilities for ICT have meant that the Year 3 and 4 classroom can no longer be used for indoor movement lessons.
70. No lessons were seen in Years 3 to 6, but other inspection evidence clearly indicates good teaching and learning, with teachers having high expectations and setting challenging tasks. For example, some younger pupils are already preparing 'PowerPoint' presentations and a wealth of displayed work that has been word-processed is presented very well and of high quality. The one lesson seen, in Year 2, was very well planned and prepared. Keyboard and editing skills were well taught before being practised by pupils and showed effective learning. Interactive whiteboards are starting to be used for more effective lesson introductions and demonstrations.
71. The subject is being well developed by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable leader. In discussions with pupils they express how positively the subject has improved. She provides good leadership and is helping colleagues gain confidence with new equipment

such as the interactive whiteboards. Her ICT skills are also used to provide some specialist teaching, enabling all year groups to be taught separately and more effectively.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

72. Although during the inspection little use was seen of ICT to support learning in different subjects, computer files and planning show that this aspect is developing well. Computer skills are used to communicate information through an extensive use of word processing and carefully planned 'PowerPoint' presentations. Data handling programs are used to record and compare results in science. Pupils frequently use the Internet for research, cutting and pasting relevant information into their own documents.

HUMANITIES

Pupils' work was sampled in geography, history and religious education.

73. Evidence from inspection indicates that all units of **geography** are taught as required. Teaching is enthusiastic and stimulates pupils' learning. Work is very well matched to the needs of pupils and standards are well above average by Year 6. Pupils have excellent knowledge and understanding of map work. Their general knowledge of the world and natural phenomena is extensive for their age. They have very good research skills, particularly in studying the local area. Assessment is appropriate without being burdensome. The two teachers sharing responsibility for geography teaching through the school liaise very well, ensuring plans are adapted to the mixed age and ability classes. Very good use is made of the annual residential visit that incorporates geography fieldwork linked to adventurous pursuits such as caving and orienteering. Trips and visits are used well to extend the curriculum during each term. The written work following a study of local rivers was of a very high standard, indicating a very secure knowledge of how the river systems are interdependent.
74. Standards in **history** are well above average by Year 6. Pupils are very clear about where they can find information, using a wide range of sources including the Internet. The written work of pupils from Year 2, 4 and 6 indicates very good use of English to support learning and visits and visitors used well to support research skills. Work produced in the only history lesson seen demonstrated how quickly Year 3 and 4 pupils could link cause and effect. Displays are of a very high standard. There is very good use of art and design as evidenced in a study of paintings to extract information about the Edwardian period and the plays written by pupils captured the period eloquently.
75. There was insufficient evidence available in **religious education** to make a judgement on standards and achievement or the quality of teaching and learning. Planning shows that the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are being met. School governors have taken the decision that little recording should take place in religious education lessons. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Assessment of pupils' progress against the agreed syllabus is carried out at the end of units with the result that some time has passed since pupils' responses were noted. This limits tracking of pupils' progress in mixed age and ability classes. In the one full lesson seen discussion took place on the significance of God telling Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. The teacher involved most pupils in the mixed age class although progress was limited by having to manage and promote both the more mature responses expected of older pupils in discussion and the less developed ones of younger pupils at the same time. Discussions with Year 6 pupils

showed that they know the importance of the subject in helping them to understand and respect different faiths and their followers. However, their knowledge and understanding of the religions they have studied showed a rather incomplete picture on which to base any comparisons.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Pupils' work was sampled in art and design, design and technology (DT), music and physical education.

76. Planning for **art and design** shows that a full curriculum is in place. Pupils consider that the opportunities in art are much better than at the last inspection. The sample of work indicates strengths in the opportunities for pupils to interpret ideas using a range of media. Two lessons were seen that were judged good. They were well planned and prepared and skills were well taught, although in one lesson more could have been done to match learning to the needs of the younger pupils in the mixed age class. Displays in classrooms show some high quality work that introduces a range of media and styles such as collage and weaving. Art is well used to support learning in other subjects and to help create a more relevant and purposeful curriculum. For example, replica plaques are being made linked to work on ancient Egypt. Pupils' understanding of the work and styles of famous artists is well developed. Reports on a visit to the National Gallery show that older pupils made very astute observations and assessments of some artists and their work and carefully reported these in considerable detail.
77. Planning for **design and technology** shows that a full curriculum is in place. No lessons were seen but some evidence of high standards was gained from pupils' designs, models and evaluations. Year 1 and 2 work on structures carefully investigated the strength of rolled paper; Year 5 and 6 pupils produced very detailed plans for their controllable vehicles giving the precise dimensions. Their evaluations, following careful construction, indicated the difficulties met and how improvements could be made.
78. There is a strong tradition of **music** in the school. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 sing in harmony and with confidence. During the only lesson seen groups of pupils accurately played two ostinatos, whilst accompanied by the rest of the class. The accuracy and timing were excellent for pupils of this age. Evidence of some very good achievement came from further listening to Year 2 pupils discussing the various strengths of different orchestral instruments. By Year 3 many have already a very good knowledge of sound and how it can be altered. Pupils are interested in music. They recall visits made to hear Oxford Youth Music and the performances by groups from Africa and South America. They remember fondly the two musical presentations they take part in each year. Pupils are taught to play a range of instruments including keyboard. Whilst parents would welcome additional musical tuition the school lacks any suitable accommodation for this to take place during the school day. A number of parents arrange for private tuition.
79. The lack of **physical education** facilities at the school limits achievement of all pupils in dance and gymnastics – skills cannot be systematically developed. The school has no hall and no regular access to a suitable space to develop these skills and to provide wet weather alternatives to outdoor lessons. This was an issue for the school at the last inspection that has not been resolved. The outdoor facilities consist of a large playing field and hard surface area. Teachers avoid cancelling outdoor sessions whenever possible but the weather does frequently disrupt the PE programme.

80. The co-ordinator seizes every opportunity to extend pupils' experiences, and leadership of the subject is effective. There is very good provision for pupils to learn to swim for pleasure and competitively. In swimming, pupils in Year 6 attain standards well above the national expectations of their age. There is a good programme of residential visits that includes adventurous activities. There are very strong links forged with a local secondary school that ensure older pupils in Years 5 and 6 have the equivalent of half an hour a week each term to use high quality facilities. They also have access to coaches who extend their already large repertoire of games skills. Dance skills are also extended with access to specialist coaches in aerobics and dance. This is a measure of the school's determination not to allow a weakness in accommodation to impact on pupils' attainment before they transfer to secondary school. The opportunities cannot be extended to younger pupils because the apparatus is not suitable and for financial reasons.
81. Pupils in Year 6 are achieving very well in games and here standards are well above average. The teaching is very good. The three lessons observed in school were characterised by energetic warm-ups followed by very good demonstration of the technical skills. As well as giving time to individual practice the lower attaining pupils were given specific coaching that ensured they kept up with skills attained by others. In this way they gained the most from the small-sided games. Expectations of performance were high and regular opportunity was given for pupils to evaluate their own performances and those of others. The school achieves very well in comparison with larger schools at local and national competitions.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The provision for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) was sampled.

82. PSHCE is covered within identified areas of the curriculum, for example in RE and science, and in well planned 'thought for the day' class assemblies. A weekly celebration assembly, with opportunities for older pupils to work with younger ones in the same class and visits, including an annual residential one for Years 5 and 6, further enhance the provision. Specialist input supports the programme, particularly visits. Aspects such as drugs misuse and sex education are included in a series of talks delivered by the school nurse. Year 6 pupils take part in a Junior Citizenship Course run by the police and by a course covering accidents and basic first aid run by the John Radcliffe Hospital. The high quality skills gained by younger children extend through the school. Adults listen very carefully to what the pupils have to say, and are interested in them and in any problems they have. The programme makes a very good contribution to the systematic development of speaking and listening skills.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	1
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
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	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
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).

