

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **ST NICHOLAS C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL**

East Challow, Wantage

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123147

Headteacher: Mrs Margaret Kelly

Lead inspector: Mr Paul Baxter

Dates of inspection: 20 - 22 June 2005

Inspection number: 267907

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

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## 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: 77

School address: Sarajac Avenue  
East Challow  
Wantage  
Oxon  
Postcode: OX12 9RY

Telephone number: 01235 763858  
Fax number: 01235 763858

Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of Mrs Sue Worth  
governors:

Date of previous May 1999  
inspection:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Nicholas C of E VC Primary School is smaller than other schools and serves a broadly average socio-economic community. Approximately 16% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals and this is an average percentage. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is less than 2%, and none of these pupils need specialist support in English. An average number of pupils join or leave the school during the course of the school year. Some 21% of the pupils have special educational needs, a broadly average proportion; these include moderate learning, social, emotional and behavioural and speech and communication needs. One pupil has a Statement of Special Educational Needs and this is about average. Attainment on entry is below average, but it can vary within the small year groups. The school gained the 'School Achievement Award' in 2000 and the 'Basic Skills Quality Mark' in 2001. Since this time there has been significant instability in staffing.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25217	Paul Baxter	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage Special educational needs Mathematics Science
9756	Ken Parsons	Lay inspector	
30457	David Evans	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Religious education

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA  
Herringston Barn  
Herringston  
Dorchester  
Dorset  
DT2 9PU

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>9</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>12</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>30</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

St. Nicholas C of E Primary School provides a **satisfactory level of effectiveness**. The current leadership and management are addressing previous weaknesses, such as inconsistent teaching and learning, with increasing success. Relatively recent improvements to planning, teaching and leadership of the curriculum have re-established the pupils' satisfactory achievement. The headteacher is successfully promoting teamwork and a shared commitment to improvement. The school now gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children achieve very well in Reception (Year R) in response to very good provision.
- Teaching and learning in Years 5 and 6 are also very good; as a result, standards are above average in English and mathematics by Year 6.
- The rate of pupils' attendance is well below the national average.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT), and standards in Year 6 are below average.
- The pupils' good spiritual development is supported by effective strategies to sustain the pupils' health, welfare and inclusion. As a consequence, pupils show good attitudes to learning.
- Newly developed curricular responsibilities have yet to impact fully on pupils' achievement.

Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. The school has addressed some of the key issues of the last inspection effectively; for example, provision for children in Year R is now a strength. Following that inspection, ongoing instability in leadership and staffing led to a decline in effectiveness. Under the leadership of the current headteacher improvement is being made, for example, in the standards achieved.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average*

*Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Due to the pupils' differing prior attainments and inconsistencies in provision, comparisons with other schools based on test results and with the pupils' performance during the inspection must be treated with caution. Inspection shows that most pupils, from a range of backgrounds and learning needs, **achieve satisfactorily** overall. Children currently in Year R entered school with below average skills, but attainment on entry can vary from year to

year. In response to very good provision, children achieve very well in Year R, and are meeting expected early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development, in communication, language and literacy, and in mathematics. Pupils achieve satisfactorily to reach average standards in Year 2 in reading, speaking and listening and writing, and in mathematics, science, ICT and religious education. By Year 6 pupils achieve satisfactorily and standards are above average in English and mathematics and average in science and religious education. Standards are below average in ICT.

**Pupils' personal qualities**, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their behaviour, are **satisfactory** overall. Attitudes to learning are good. Attendance is well below the average found nationally and this is having an adverse effect on achievement for the pupils involved.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching** and learning are **satisfactory** overall. Teaching is very good in the Year R class and it is also very good in Years 5 and 6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 1 to 4. Teaching and learning across the range of subjects follow the same pattern. Observations show improving effectiveness that is raising pupils' achievement. An increased emphasis on learning through practical activity is lifting standards in mathematics and science. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, the challenge and interest offered to the pupils slip. As a result pupils lose concentration, pace drops and the teachers' management of behaviour is less effective. Pupils' ICT skills are not used enough to support learning across the range of subjects, as could the opportunities for extended writing. The curriculum is satisfactory but is enriched by a good range of other activities. The school nurtures good links with other schools and the community and has a satisfactory partnership with parents. Good provision for the pupils' care, health and welfare includes pupils equally.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management** are **satisfactory**. The headteacher provides sound leadership and is particularly effective in promoting the inclusive nature of the school. She is supported appropriately by the developing teamwork of senior managers and governors. Strategies have now been developed to improve the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour, subject co-ordination and links with parents, but many of these are recent initiatives that have been tackled earlier, and have not yet had time to impact on pupils' achievement. Governance is satisfactory, and all statutory requirements are met.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents' views of the school are unsatisfactory. Most are supportive and work well with the school. A significant proportion of parents have concerns about their relationship and communication with the school. Inspectors recognise the degree to which instability in staffing and leadership has weakened the partnership with parents, but agree that the school could communicate more effectively with parents. Pupils' views of the school are good. In particular they recognise the recent improvements and appreciate the increased opportunities to express their views. Inspectors endorse these views.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Increase the attendance of the pupils.
- Develop more planned opportunities to use ICT and extended writing across the curriculum.
- Strengthen the structures of leadership and management in order to identify, evaluate and rectify weaknesses more effectively and in a shorter time-scale.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects**

Standards are average in Year R and in Year 2, but above average in Year 6. These levels of attainment reflect satisfactory achievement overall, but very good achievement for children in Year R and good achievement for pupils in Years 5 and 6.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children in Year R achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 5 and 6 in response to strong teaching.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT in Years 3 to 6 because pupils do not have enough access to computers.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities for extended writing.

#### **Commentary**

1. Children enter the Year R class with below average skills, but this varies significantly from year to year and across the school as the number of pupils in each year group and their prior attainment differ. Children currently in Year R are doing very well in response to very good teaching. Most are reaching the expected early learning goals in their personal, social and emotional development, their communication, language and literacy, and their mathematical development. In Year 2, standards are broadly average overall and this represents satisfactory achievement. Pupils achieve satisfactorily and reach average standards in reading, speaking and listening and writing and in mathematics, science, ICT and religious education. From Year 2 to Year 6, pupils have insufficient opportunities to learn by using computers, consequently standards in Year 6 are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory. Improved stability in staffing and more consistent expectations have improved pupils' achievement in comparison with their performance in National Curriculum tests and teachers' assessments in recent years, especially for higher attainers. Pupils with special educational needs in Year 2 achieve as well as their peers, as do higher attainers. The average overall attainment in Year 2 is lower than that seen at the time of the last inspection.
2. Standards are above average in Year 6 in English and mathematics. This represents a good improvement in comparison with National Curriculum test results in recent years and matches those found at the time of the last inspection. Particularly effective teaching and the pupils' positive attitudes to learning in Years 5 and 6 have lifted pupils' attainment. In Year 6, standards in science and religious education are average but standards in ICT are below average. Underachievement previously evident in Years 3 and 4, stemming from several changes in teachers and from pupils' unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour, has been overcome. This is enabling pupils to achieve satisfactorily and has restored more continuity in learning across the school. Pupils with special educational needs receive additional support and achieve satisfactorily in relation to the learning targets outlined in their individual educational plans. Insufficient use of ICT, in particular, and the limited opportunities for pupils to reflect at length in writing across the range of subjects remain weaknesses that are limiting pupils' achievement.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.7 (15.2)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	13.7 (12.4)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.2 (13.9)	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 15 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.1 (25.3)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	27.4 (24.4)	27.0 (26.8)
science	27.0 (27.0)	28.6 (28.6)

*There were 17 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- Evaluations based on the pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests and teachers' assessments should be considered with care. This is because the number of the pupils in each year group and the nature of their learning needs vary substantially. In recent years, standards in the National Curriculum tests and teachers' assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 have either been well below or below average, reflecting issues related to pupils' behavioural needs and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. The current standards in Year 2 represent a significant improvement, especially in science, and show the positive impact of enabling pupils to learn more through practical work.
- Ongoing instability in leadership and staffing weakened pupils' learning in Years 3 to 6 and led to fluctuating standards by Year 6. National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 6 have not matched the trend found nationally. The satisfactory comparison between the pupils' performances in Year 2 and Year 6 tests need to be treated with caution due to the underachievement previously found in Year 2. Improved and now satisfactory learning in Years 3 and 4 and good learning in Years 5 and 6 have built upon the improvement seen in last year's tests. The school now needs a period of stability in leadership and staffing to address weaknesses and continue improvement.

**Pupils' attitudes and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes are good and behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Pupils' attendance is well below the national average although their punctuality is satisfactory.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The personal development of children in the Foundation Stage is very good.
- There are some pupils with poor attendance records and this adversely affects their attainment.
- Pupils have good attitudes to school and learning, especially in Years R, 5 and 6.
- Spiritual development is good, especially in assemblies and in investigative learning activities.

## Commentary

5. Most pupils like coming to school and want to be there. There are satisfactory procedures to improve attendance, encouraging parents to value their children's education and the importance of regular attendance. The school liaises as necessary with the educational social worker and the local Advisory Service for the Education of Travellers (ASET). The vast majority of pupils attend well, but the school's absence figures are affected disproportionately by a few pupils, mainly from traveller families, who have much lower levels of attendance than others. A very high proportion of these absences is unauthorised. The number of days lost through pupil exclusions is very much higher than normal for a primary school and also affects the figures adversely. There is a prompt start to the school day, although a few pupils travelling from a distance are sometimes late.

### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.9	School data	0.5
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.*

6. Although behaviour is very good in the Foundation Stage and in most classes, there is a group of pupils in Years 3 and 4 that have disrupted learning in the past. This accounts for the relatively large number of exclusions during the last twelve months. Several of these pupils have behavioural, emotional and special educational needs. The school now has appropriate policies and procedures in place for responding to unacceptable behaviour and in meeting the pupils' special educational needs and the rate of exclusions has dropped significantly as pupils have responded gradually to the new strategies. Good relationships between staff and pupils are helping pupils to learn how to behave and motivating them to please adults in school. Specialist staff appropriately promote pupils' behaviour and personal development in one class. The school has adopted a number of strategies to tackle unacceptable behaviour at break times and these include the purchase of playground games and equipment. Pupils respond well to these and make good use of what is provided, playing co-operatively together and taking responsibility for clearing away afterwards.

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

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

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
70	7	0
4	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0

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

7. The majority of pupils behave and act appropriately at work and play. They are mainly polite and friendly. They find circle time discussions useful in raising issues or problems. Their attitudes to school are largely positive and a number have developed a real thirst for learning, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Not all lessons are planned with a

sharp focus on satisfying the wide range of abilities in the class and the lessons occasionally do not stimulate and challenge the pupils enough to foster a desire to learn. As a result, some pupils' attention wanders and this detracts from the progress they make in their behaviour and their learning. In lessons where elements of teaching and learning are good, pupils enjoy rising to the challenge of working harder and learning more.

8. All children are now being encouraged to listen to one another with respect. Pupils' spiritual awareness is developed well as a result of such experiences. In lessons and assemblies pupils discuss stories with moral themes enthusiastically and learn to value different personal histories and opinions. Consequently, they are making appropriate progress in their moral development. The school is actively promoting pupils' social development and providing additional opportunities, such as the newly formed school council, for them to become more involved in decision making. As a result their social development is developing appropriately. The pupils' cultural development, including their multicultural awareness, is satisfactory overall, and the school has forged links with other places, such as Australia.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching and learning and the planned curriculum are satisfactory. Provision for the pupils' care, health and welfare and the school's partnerships with local schools and the community are also good. Links with parents are satisfactory.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning and the teachers' assessments of the pupils' work are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are very good in Years R, 5 and 6, where teachers' promote independence in learning by offering responsibility to the pupils.
- An improved emphasis on problem solving and investigation in mathematics and science is helping to raise standards.
- The more consistent emphasis on identifying specific learning objectives and sharing them with pupils at the beginning of lessons is strengthening learning across the school.
- Teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4 still lack interest on occasion and this is not helpful in sustaining pupils' concentration.

### **Commentary**

#### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 19 lessons***

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	5	5	9	1		

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

9. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the school is satisfactory. Although one unsatisfactory lesson was observed, the proportion of good and very good lessons was higher than at the time of the last inspection. In the context of a school where there has been a significant change of teachers in recent years, improvement overall has been satisfactory since the last inspection. The teaching seen in Year R was consistently very good. A key element in this class is the consistent and highly effective balance between developing children's learning from their own ideas, suggestions and choices and through teacher and adult led activities and learning opportunities. Teaching in Years 5 and 6 was mostly good and occasionally very good. Similarly, the teacher's skills in setting high expectations and in empowering the pupils to take responsibility for their work enriched learning in this class. Teaching was less effective, but mostly satisfactory, in Years 1 and 2, and in Years 3 and 4, where the unsatisfactory lesson was observed. In this lesson learning was restricted by the disruptive behaviour of a few pupils.
10. In the Years 1 and 2 class, an improved emphasis on pupils learning through practical work is having a beneficial impact on pupils' learning in mathematics and science. Good planning and use of resources is promoting the pupils' interest. At times there is scope for a closer match between the work set and the pupils' prior attainment to lift achievement even more. Teaching in Years 3 and 4 has been strengthened this year by the appointment of new staff and by the headteacher's personal commitment. Here, the procedures for managing the behaviour of pupils with behavioural and emotional needs, of which there are more than found in other classes, are helping to promote more consistent learning. However, in some lessons, for example, in science and English, there was too much control and not enough stimulation from the activities planned; this led to weakened levels of pupils' personal responsibility and their interest waned.
11. Evidence from discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of their work showed the impact of less effective elements of teaching, for example, inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' work and in their progress in different parts of the school. Inconsistencies in the use of marking and in the challenge of the work set were also evident. Successful teaching now in Years R, 5 and 6 is raising standards and has lifted pupils' achievement. Improved and now satisfactory teaching in Years 1 and 2 is promoting consistent learning and has overcome the underachievement previously evident in this part of the school. Mostly satisfactory teaching now in Years 3 and 4 is sustaining satisfactory progress, but there are occasional weaknesses in managing pupils' behaviour and in stimulating the pupils in their learning.
12. Overall, the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The staff of the school are effective in including pupils equally, for example through questioning in whole class sessions and in group work. The quality of support varies with the quality of teaching, however. The pupils' needs are not always identified sufficiently in lesson plans and targets set in the pupils' individual education plans are occasionally too general, which restricts their progress.
13. In the lessons seen the quality of teaching was satisfactory overall in English, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education and followed the pattern and features seen in the different classes. Not all teachers use ICT with appropriate effectiveness in support of pupils' learning and pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop sufficient skill in a cumulative way as they move through the school. This results in underachievement in ICT and constrains the impact this technology should have on pupils' learning across the curriculum.

14. The school is developing procedures to record pupils' work and progress through the school. These assessments are used satisfactorily to inform planning and teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but they are developed less effectively in other subjects, especially in ICT, for example, where pupils' underachievement is a weakness. Teachers acknowledge the pupils' efforts when marking but suggestions about how pupils can improve receive insufficient emphasis.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It is very good in the Foundation Stage (Year R) and satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. Opportunities for enrichment are good. Accommodation is satisfactory and resources are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is very good provision for children in the Foundation Stage.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- There is a good equality of access and opportunity for all pupils.
- There is no long-term planning for personal, social and health education (PSHE).

### **Commentary**

15. The curriculum is appropriately balanced to provide breadth and continuity in learning. Time allocations are in line with recommendations and National Curriculum requirements are fully met. National guidance is used to support planning and there are good strategies in place to promote learning in English and mathematics.
16. The curriculum for PSHE is included within other subject plans. This ensures that the necessary statutory elements, including drugs awareness and sex and relationships education, are taught appropriately. Satisfactory timetable provision is made for teaching this area of the curriculum but there is no long-term planning specifically for this aspect, and there is scope to develop the curriculum further so that aspects of citizenship are covered in greater depth and detail. However, all pupils have good equality of access to the curriculum. The school aims to be fully inclusive, welcoming pupils with a wide range of special educational needs. Overall there is satisfactory provision for pupils with special educational needs. Support in helping pupils to meet the targets set out in their individual education plans is evident, but occasionally general support in lessons is not as well focused on their particular learning needs.
17. Pupils have good opportunities for learning through a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including music, sport and art. The school choir has performed in the community and produced several Christmas concerts, including one outdoor production in 2004. Visitors make a good contribution to the curriculum; the local vicar is a regular visitor to the school.
18. The match of the support staff to the curriculum is satisfactory and there is an appropriate number of support staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. Staff are given the opportunity to update their skills and to acquire additional training. The school recognises that staff training in ICT is a priority.
19. Overall accommodation is satisfactory and the outside environment is very pleasant, with a playing area, a large school field and attractive views over the surrounding countryside. However, office facilities are cramped and inadequate; the headteacher

has no permanent office; staff toilet facilities are inappropriate; storage space is inadequate; and there is no room where larger groups of pupils can learn computer skills. This slows their rate of learning and affects overall attainment in ICT. Resources for learning are good overall.

### **Care, guidance and support**

There are good arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. The school provides pupils with satisfactory support, advice and guidance. The involvement of pupils through seeking and acting on their views is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have trusting relationships with their teachers and other staff.
- The school has effective child protection procedures.
- Good induction procedures ensure that pupils have a smooth start to their education.
- The support for pupils' behaviour is inconsistent.

### **Commentary**

20. The school's child protection procedures fulfil requirements and are effective; staff are regularly briefed on their responsibilities and the necessary records are kept. The school has appropriate links with agencies such as social services to ensure that pupils get additional help when they need it. The school provides a safe working environment. There are regular safety audits of the site and their main findings are acted upon. Risk assessments are being completed to cover school trips, although more formal assessments of routine activities are needed. The school has sufficient first aid provision and fire safety procedures are in place.
21. Pastoral care of pupils is good. It starts with good induction arrangements for children entering the school from the on-site nursery. Regular visits to and from the nursery ensure that children make a stress-free transition into their formal education. The Year R class provides an exceptionally warm and supportive start to their schooling and is a strength of the school. In many cases further up the school, teachers and other staff try to build productive relations with pupils, supporting them but at the same time encouraging self-reliance. Their relationships with the pupils are good and as a result most pupils are confident that there is an adult they could confide in with a problem. Although improved, strategies for promoting good behaviour of pupils in Years 3 and 4 lack consistent effectiveness. There are limited formal systems to monitor pupils' personal development, but many of the staff know the pupils well; in this small school with limited class sizes everybody is known as an individual. The school has been supportive of the traveller children, with the result that they have increasingly integrated into the life of the school. The school sees its role as supporting the families as well as the pupils themselves, when appropriate.
22. Early identification is made of pupils with special educational needs so that appropriate support is provided as soon as possible. Individual educational plans set out targets that are discussed with the pupils, though at times these are not specific enough to develop the pupils' confidence through the achievement of clear, short-term goals. The support of outside agencies is obtained as required. Pupils who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs receive their entitled support and are fully included in the day-to-day life of the school.

23. There is a recently established school council made up of elected representatives from each form. This group is developing into an effective means of ensuring that pupils' views contribute to the way the school is run. For example, they have decided what playground equipment the school should buy, a fact appreciated by many of the pupils now using it. In addition, pupils have been involved through other means to develop school and class rules.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

There are satisfactory links with parents. There is a good partnership with the wider community and good links with other local schools.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most parents are supportive of the school and feel valued, but a significant minority of parents have negative views.
- The school is an important part of the local community.

### **Commentary**

24. Parents particularly appreciate the good induction arrangements when their children first start school. They think that teaching is good and that their children make good progress and are encouraged to become mature and independent. A limited minority have concerns about being informed about their child's progress and would not feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems. There is a significant minority of parents who have concerns about behaviour and bullying, whilst about a third of them do not think the school is well led or that it seeks and acts on their views. Particular parents do have specific issues with the school. In general, however, inspection findings suggest that although parents' concerns have been well founded in the past, recent improvements have made them less of an issue - although there is no room for complacency.
25. Overall the quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. Parents are kept informed about what is going on in the life of the school through occasional letters home; these tend to focus on specific issues, sometimes in a slightly hectoring tone, rather than involving parents in the positive aspects of school life. Letters home from some class teachers do include information on what will be taught to enable parents to help their children. The school does not have a web site. Parents have regular opportunities to discuss their children's progress at annual parents' evenings in the autumn and spring terms. The written reports they receive on their child's progress are limited in scope, tending to be too general and lacking clear statements on the levels being reached. In places they are quite terse. They could helpfully be made more individual, including clearer statements on how the individual is performing against national norms. There is a need to ensure that parents of pupils with special educational needs contribute their views to their individual education plans and are kept well informed about their children's progress. Many parents support the school well through the Friends of St Nicholas, which organises social and fundraising events. There is support for the school from volunteer parents and members of the local community for maintenance days on the school site.



26. St Nicholas School is an important part of its local community. As a church school, it has particular links with the local C of E parish and its parish priest, who is also a school governor. Visits to the church to celebrate Christian festivals are a regular feature of school life. The local government parish council has also been supportive of the school. A variety of visitors come into school to support the curriculum, for example, this year's music week saw visiting dancers, musicians and a drumming workshop helping pupils to participate. The recent celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school buildings was a village-wide event.
27. The school has close links with the Windmill Nursery, which is located on the school site and shares its facilities; this is of considerable benefit to children when they transfer. The two establishments work together on the 'Annual Fun Day', which as well as raising funds also provides a way of bringing together the wider community. The school is part of the Wantage Area Schools Partnership, which includes the local secondary school. This allows a range of joint activities to be organised; in particular, King Alfred's specialist sports college status benefits the pupils at St Nicholas in terms of specialist teaching and access to facilities. There is a good planned programme of visits to help Year 6 pupils transfer to the secondary school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher is satisfactory overall. The leadership of other key staff and the management and governance of the school are satisfactory. Instability in staffing has been a barrier to school improvement.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the Foundation Stage is very good.
- There is a good commitment to inclusion, and equality of access and opportunity.
- The school makes a good contribution to initial teacher training.
- The induction of new staff is good.
- Whilst staffing has now stabilised, the role of subject co-ordinators is not yet fully developed.

### **Commentary**

28. The headteacher is appropriately helping the school to raise standards, although there has been more success in raising standards in English and mathematics than in science. The headteacher and the governors have had to make some difficult decisions about staffing issues and other matters in recent times. However, the school is now making steady progress in addressing those issues. There is now a satisfactory climate for learning and a good commitment to inclusion of pupils.
29. With the lack of stability in staffing, it has been difficult to allocate important curricular responsibilities. Co-ordination of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and of special educational needs is satisfactory, but a number of other subject leaders are new to their posts and have not yet had sufficient time to fully develop their subject areas. The leadership of the Foundation Stage (Year R) is very good and the teacher in charge has developed the provision and the curriculum most effectively. In other areas, however, the co-ordination of subjects is inconsistent.

30. Analysis of the school's performance data is satisfactory. It is established in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science but is inconsistent across subjects, and the information gathered is not yet fully developed to inform future staff training needs. The school is aware of the need to develop the monitoring and evaluation of subjects and of the curriculum. As yet, this process is at an early stage of development.
31. The governing body is supportive of the school. In the past, the governors had not been effective in ensuring that the school maintained standards. This has provided a salutary experience from which they have learned and now the governors are far more active in keeping the staff to account and acting as an effective critical friend. The flow of information to governors is much improved and they have developed a satisfactory appreciation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, although many of the governors are still quite inexperienced in the role. The chair is effective in the post and supportive of the school, whilst the finance governor has a good understanding of the school's finances and is monitoring them well. The governing body is fulfilling its statutory duties appropriately. Individual governors have a range of experiences and skills which they are starting to put to good use in fulfilling their roles.
32. The school development plan is satisfactory as a mechanism for school development, but it does not ensure that initiatives and actions are evaluated sufficiently and rigorously throughout the year. The school has supported new and newly qualified members of staff well. It makes a good contribution to the initial training of teachers and has developed good links with one teacher training college.

***Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005***

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	245,128	Balance from previous year	46,500
Total expenditure	250,850	Balance carried forward to the next	40,778
Expenditure per pupil	3,059		

33. Approaches to financial management have been strengthened. There is a clear link between the priorities in the school development plan and the funds available. This now ensures appropriate budgetary management and control and a positive focus on improvement. The substantial funds carried forward include an element accumulated in order to sustain staffing levels and to undertake much needed improvements to the administrative and staff facilities of the school. The planned carry forward for this financial year has been reduced to £18,035. Best value principles are applied satisfactorily. Overall the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

### AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

34. Provision for children in Year R, the Foundation Stage, is very good and a significant strength of the school. The designated outdoor area is spacious, very well equipped and has significant charm and character that enriches the children's learning experiences. The centrally located tree is a unique feature that enables children to make good use of the area during inclement weather and creates a visibly attractive and stimulating environment. This outdoor area represents a substantial improvement since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and leadership by the teacher and her learning assistant are also much improved.
35. Children are introduced to the school carefully and settle quickly into the school routines. Overall attainment on entry is below average, particularly in relation the children currently in Year R, many of whom started at a younger age than in previous years. The attainment levels and number of children commencing school vary considerably from year to year.
36. Consistently very good teaching enables all pupils to achieve very well, and most children are reaching the expected early learning goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and personal, social and emotional development. Such consistent attainment reflects the warm and very effective support given in all these areas of learning. A key feature of the very successful teaching seen was the consistent and highly effective balance between developing children's learning from their own ideas, suggestions and choices and through teacher and adult led activity and learning opportunities.
37. Most areas of learning are reported in detail below, but not enough teaching could be seen in knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development, so these areas were sampled. Role-play was used very effectively to promote learning in **knowledge and understanding of the world**. Children played outdoors in their garage and learnt how to care for animals indoors in the Veterinary Centre. They extended their understanding and aided their social development by the additional use of table-top models of RSPCA rescue and emergency vehicles. The teacher questioned the children closely and supportively, building on their previous knowledge by focused questions that were developed from their own ideas. Similar very effective and supportive questioning developed the children's ideas when using digital photographs of a recent environmental visit to Sutton Courtney and when exploring the differing tastes and textures of bread and honey.
38. **Physical development** was promoted very enjoyably and comprehensively in the very well resourced outdoor area, in which children played and collaborated with enthusiasm and consideration. Children were seen using large wheeled toys and tricycles with skill and confidence. Children practised their manipulative skills in many activities, when cooking, working with clay and when cutting, pasting and drawing. In **creative development**, children experience a full breadth of very well planned activities. These include cookery and making clay models of butterflies and caterpillars. The children's observations of the life cycle of a butterfly were displayed attractively and in a warmly celebratory fashion, clearly signalling the degree to which their efforts

are valued and encouraging them to contribute with confidence. The children's creative ideas and painting skills are encouraged by painting and drawing favourite storybook characters such as 'The Lion and the Mouse' and 'Jack and the Beanstalk'.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The children enjoy school and learn very well, because they feel valued and involved by the respect adults give to their ideas and contributions.
- The children achieve very well and are reaching reach the expected early learning goals in this area of learning by the end of Year R, because of very effective teaching that places a strong and consistent emphasis on this area of the curriculum.

## **Commentary**

39. A key feature of the very successful teaching and learning in this area of the curriculum is the diligent way that adults encourage the development of the children's independence in learning. From the moment children enter school they are required to access their own equipment and return it to the proper location after use. Children are encouraged to offer their own ideas, to make choices and to be able to explain why they made such choices. In the lessons observed all children were meaningfully engaged at all times, some playing with others, and some happy to play and learn on their own. Children were happy to share large wheeled toys, repaired cars in the garage and rescued injured animals together in their role-play activities. Throughout these sessions the teacher and her assistant were constantly encouraging, questioning and supporting the children in their learning. In whole-class discussions the children were expected to listen carefully to sustain concentration and to respect and value what others were saying. The children did this wholeheartedly and willingly.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is very good and promotes the children's very good achievement.
- The rigorous and precise teaching of phonic skills underpins the children's literacy skills.
- The teacher and her assistant are very skilful in making close connections with children's previous learning, thus aiding their achievement.
- The teacher presents challenge in a most stimulating and enjoyable fashion that instils confidence in the children and extends their learning.

## **Commentary**

40. Teaching and learning are very good and the children achieve very well to reach the early learning goals expected for this aspect of the curriculum. The teacher and assistants sustain a very effective balance between direct teaching, for example, of phonics, and the use of questioning that develops learning from the children's ideas. The teacher and her assistant combine careful pronunciation of letter sounds with hand actions and this is successful in developing the children's understanding. Children are encouraged to work together and to share and communicate their ideas through role-play, as when using the animal rescue toys. All lessons ended with a careful plenary discussion that reinforced new learning, celebrated the children's achievement and valued their contributions. The children's speaking and listening and reading skills were taught in a unified manner and children were encouraged to have a go and they did so

confidently in the knowledge that their efforts would be appreciated. One very good example occurred when the teacher was discussing the importance of washing hands before handling food. One little boy eagerly exclaimed, "Water - soap - water - dry!" - a phrase he had heard on television and an idea that was quickly and very advantageously welcomed by the teacher as an aid to learning, much to the boy's pleasure.

41. The children's early writing skills are developed well by using whiteboards and by encouraging children to write individual letters, words and phrases. As their confidence grew children were encouraged to attempt sentences using these words. The teacher's clear knowledge of the children's ability enabled her to match the challenge at the right level, leading to enjoyable learning and progress. Often the teacher modelled the writing for the children, setting high but appropriate expectations, and the children responded eagerly. Speaking, listening, writing and readings skills are extended across a full range of stimulating areas of learning. Consequently, , most children know initial letter sounds, recognise an appropriate range of words and read short sentences. The children enjoy talking about their work and ideas and their writing is developing well, with some children writing meaningful sentences.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching and learning enable the children to achieve very well.
- Teachers and assistants are diligent in ensuring that the children's learning is strengthened by many and varied opportunities to learn through practical activities.
- Supportive links with other areas of learning present meaningful examples of how mathematical skills can be enjoyed and valued.

### **Commentary**

42. Teaching and learning are very good and the children achieve very well to reach the expected early learning goals. Learning is firmly and effectively based on learning through everyday activities. This promotes the children's confidence and helps them to understand the value of being able to count and use numbers accurately. Opportunities to develop the children's numeracy skills are promoted in all areas of learning. For example, when reading about Winnie the Pooh, the children were encouraged to count the number of 'busy bees'. This exercise enabled most children to count to ten and then to take one away in a systematic and accurate way. The children's learning is also enriched by the teachers' consistent and carefully planned use of ICT. As in other areas of learning, the children's developing skill is assessed and recorded in a careful manner. Such assessments are used to inform future teaching and learning, enabling the teacher to sustain the children's ongoing achievement in this area of learning.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is effective in helping pupils make good progress in lessons.
- Subject monitoring in English is underdeveloped.
- Marking does not consistently show pupils how to improve.

## **Commentary**

43. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in Year 2 are broadly in line with national averages. In Year 6, standards are above average. Achievement overall, however, is satisfactory and this is because it varies across the school. Standards in writing are not as strong in Year 6 as they could be and pupils in Years 3 and 4 are only beginning to make more consistent progress in their literacy skills.
44. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are above average in Years 2 and 6, and this is because the school is working hard to improve this aspect of the subject. However, pupils in Years 3 and 4 are still not making good progress in these two important aspects of literacy. Reading skills in Years 2 are average, and they are just above average in Year 6. Writing skills, although broadly average, remain the weakest of the literacy strands in Years 2 and 6.
45. Standards in Years 3 to 6 range from below average to just above average. As a result of the substantially good teaching and learning now taking place in Years 5 and 6, standards in Year 6 are above average. This represents a similar picture to that found at the time of the last inspection.
46. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In Years 5 and 6, it is good and often very good. Here, the main strength is the way in which the teacher plans carefully for pupils to have interesting and challenging tasks. Expectations are high in this class and pupils are engaged throughout the stimulating lessons. The scrutiny of work reveals that spelling strategies, grammar and punctuation are consistently reinforced for the pupils in Years 5 and 6. The presentation of work is also of a high standard and the quality of writing is improving markedly. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is often stimulating and the work is well adapted to the emerging learning needs of pupils of all abilities. In Years 3 and 4, however, pupils often do not listen well enough and they tend to lose concentration when the teaching does not engage their interest. The school works hard to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills and teachers regularly and consistently reinforce these important aspects of pupils' learning. Regular question and answer sessions are salient features of the good lessons.
47. Teachers' use of assessment to raise standards is generally appropriate. There are developing assessment systems, but they are not yet consistently and systematically applied across the school. Teachers' marking is often supportive, but marking is inconsistent and does not provide pupils with enough advice and guidance on how to improve their work. Subject portfolios and individual target setting are at an early stage of development.
48. The subject leader is currently providing satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. She has been co-ordinator for just over a year and she has clearly identified strengths and areas for development in the subject. There is a subject action plan, which is focused on raising standards through improving the quality of teaching and learning. The monitoring of the subject is at an early stage of development and is

not yet fully effective across the school as a whole. Resources are generally satisfactory, but the overall library provision is unsatisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection is broadly satisfactory.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

49. The school is seeking to improve pupils' standards of writing. Opportunities for pupils to write, practise and refine the skills they learn are satisfactory in literacy sessions. Scrutiny of work reveals, however, that there are missed opportunities to enable pupils to practise their extended writing in subjects such as history, geography and religious education. This has a limiting effect on pupils' achievement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well in Years 5 and 6 in response to very good teaching.
- A strong focus on challenging questioning and solving problems is promoting pupils' learning in Years 5 and 6.
- An improved emphasis on using and developing pupils' understanding in real life situations is supporting pupils' learning in Years 1 and 2.
- Although improving, there is still too great an emphasis on developing pupils' learning through completing worksheets in Years 3 and 4 and this is constraining the pupils' interest.

### **Commentary**

50. Teaching and learning have been improved in Years 1 and 2, enabling pupils to reach an average standard by Year 2. The match of challenge to the prior attainment of pupils is closer and as a result more pupils are developing the practical learning and numeracy skills expected of pupils of this age. These findings represent improved outcomes compared to the pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests in recent years and stem from more consistent teaching strategies over the past year. Very effective teaching in Years 5 and 6 involves the pupils much more successfully in their learning than in other classes and has enabled a more able year group of pupils to attain above average standards in Year 6. Pupils' progress, although much improved this year, is still limited to a satisfactory degree in Years 3 and 4 by the pupils' restricted independent learning skills, and the pattern of learning is therefore inconsistent across the school, resulting in satisfactory achievement overall. These findings show that the improved outcomes seen in last year's National Curriculum tests have been sustained by ongoing improvements in the quality of teaching. Although the average standards found in Year 2 are lower than at the time of the last inspection, the above average standards in Year 6 reflect satisfactory improvement overall since the last inspection.
51. Most pupils in Year 2 add and subtract two-digit numbers and solve real world money problems in pounds and pence. Not many pupils are performing at an above average standard, but the effective support given to previously lower attainers is helping to sustain average standards and satisfactory achievement. Although improved, pupils' learning in Years 3 and 4 is restricted by a significant number of pupils with emotional and behavioural needs. The pupils' limited concentration span is not helped sufficiently, on occasion, by the teachers'



overuse of tasks involving the completion of worksheets. As a result of good and often very good learning in Years 5 and 6, by Year 6 most pupils achieve well and use their skills confidently and enjoy the challenge of solving problems. They possess good knowledge of place value in number and use long division and multiplication accurately to calculate distances travelled. Most have an equally well developed knowledge of shape and space, investigate equivalence intelligently and understand the concept of rotation.

52. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 to 4 and very good in Years 5 and 6. The teaching in Years 5 and 6 meets the pupils' needs very accurately. The teacher used her very good subject knowledge and her understanding of the pupils' prior skills most effectively to extend their number skills and to develop their concept of plotting grids using co-ordinates. ICT was used well in this class to enrich pupils' learning. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 was strengthened by warm relationships and by the good planning, but the challenge offered to pupils within the different year groups, especially the older Year 2 pupils, lacked effective precision at times, limiting learning to a satisfactory level. The quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4 was more variable and slipped to an unsatisfactory standard on one occasion when the pupils' behaviour deteriorated and was not managed effectively by the teacher. Discussions with staff and pupils and a scrutiny of the pupils' work shows that there has been significant improvement in this class this year. Although challenges remain, learning is mostly satisfactory and is no longer resulting in the under-achievement seen in previous years.
53. Co-ordination has been improved to a good level, especially over the past twelve months, and this has been a key factor in re-establishing satisfactory achievement overall. The co-ordinator has been successful in updating the planned curriculum, which is now satisfactory, and in promoting the beneficial and increased emphasis on problem solving. She is keen to develop the use of ICT more consistently across the school. Pupils' work and progress are assessed satisfactorily and information is being used to better effect now to inform future teaching and learning. The quality of marking is variable, however, and teachers are not consistently identifying ways of improving to the pupils and this is restricting the impact on their progress. Resources for learning are good. Practical equipment such as counting and measuring aids is used appropriately but there is insufficient use of ICT across the school to aid independent learning.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

54. Mathematics has a central position in the school's curriculum and pupils' skills in this subject are used and developed appropriately in other subjects. In science, for example, pupils measure how much light is reflected. In general, however, cross-curricular approaches to enriching pupils' learning are at an early stage of development.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- After an ongoing period of underachievement, pupils' achievement has been raised to a satisfactory rate across the school.

- Previous gaps in pupils' skills and understanding are being addressed effectively by a strong emphasis on learning through practical investigation.
- Pupils' attitudes and independence in learning, especially in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6, are enriched by the interesting range of planned practical activities undertaken.
- Resources for learning are good and are used well to interest pupils.
- There is still too much teacher led activity and worksheet completion in Years 3 and 4, and this is limiting the pupils' independence in learning.

## Commentary

55. In Years 2 and 6 standards are average and reflect satisfactory achievement. This is not as good as seen at the time of the last inspection in Year 6, but represents a significant improvement compared to the pupils' performance in the National Curriculum tests and teachers' assessments in recent years.
56. Last year, following a careful analysis of the pupils' well below average performance in these tests, gaps were found in the learning opportunities presented to the pupils. These showed that specific areas of the curriculum had not been taught sufficiently. With support from colleagues, the co-ordinator has updated the planned and taught curriculum and has ensured pupils have more and now appropriate opportunities to learn through practical investigation. This has raised pupils' interest and has led to the improvement in learning and standards achieved.
57. In Year 2, pupils consider and know the similarities and differences between man and animals. Pupils study how light moves and can draw flow diagrams to show this. A few higher attainers and several average attainers show appropriate investigative skills, especially observational skills. Some lower attainers, however, lack the necessary literacy skills to record their ideas and findings in writing and have too few alternative ways of expressing and recording their findings and ideas, and this limits their achievement. Learning in Years 3 and 4 is also limited at times by giving pupils tasks that lack interest and by insufficient opportunities, for example, for the pupils to investigate the school's rich outdoor environment independently. By Year 6, pupils enjoy more investigate experiences. For example they consider the effect of vibration on water and predict that heat will be generated when micro-organisms break down decaying material. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are given increasing opportunities to set up their own lines of enquiry, for example, how to investigate the differing habitats of insects and other mini-beasts. These more interesting approaches to teaching and learning are bridging gaps in pupils' prior knowledge and are raising standards.
58. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Improved relationships, stimulating learning activities, careful questioning and good use of resources are the stronger elements that are helping to enthuse pupils and improve their achievement. Most of these factors were present in lessons seen in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 5 and 6. At times, however, the teachers attempted to cover too much and had too many activities planned and this detracted from the main learning opportunities identified. Learning was securely satisfactory though, because the pupils were interested and derived benefit from practical observations of plants and seeds.
59. The quality of teaching in the lesson seen in Years 3 and 4 was more variable and, although still satisfactory overall, included activities that were less beneficial. These included completing worksheets that introduced little new learning. The best feature in the lesson seen was again an opportunity for the pupils to conduct some practical work, in this case planting seeds and experimenting and thinking about what seeds

and plants need to grow. There is an increasing and beneficial focus on encouraging pupils to set up and follow their own lines of enquiry and this is raising standards. This was seen, for example, in the recorded work of pupils in Years 5 and 6. In general pupils would benefit from more opportunities to reflect on their findings and to consider future applications and considerations.

60. Co-ordination is satisfactory but the co-ordinator has insufficient opportunities to have greater influence in all classes. The curriculum is planned appropriately and learning is enriched by a good range of resources. ICT is used effectively at times in some classes, for example, an electronic microscope to examine the tiny parts of the flower, but not sufficiently across the school. Pupils' work and progress are assessed satisfactorily and information is being used to better effect now to inform future teaching and learning. The quality of marking is variable, however, and teachers are not consistently identifying ways of improving to the pupils, for example, by encouraging pupils to reflect more.
61. Overall there is a positive momentum of improvement but pupils still need to be given more time to explore and to experiment independently.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in ICT is unsatisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have important gaps in their knowledge and experience; as a result, standards in Year 6 are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory.
- At present, not all the teachers have appropriate subject knowledge.
- Strategies for assessing and recording pupils' progress are ineffective.
- The resources available do not allow sufficient opportunity for using ICT in other subjects.

### **Commentary**

62. Although standards are average in Year 2, pupils have insufficient opportunities to learn by using computers and do not achieve well enough in ICT by Year 6. There is some appropriate work on display in classes and there have been some exciting introductions, for example, with the use of PowerPoint presentations in history. However, many of the pupils in Year 5 and 6 lack some basic skills and have not had the experience of some important aspects of the required curriculum. Most of them are adept at managing text and graphics, but are less skilled in creating and using spreadsheets or in controlling events. Most pupils throughout the school have only just started having lessons in ICT during this school year and they acknowledge that there are areas in which they lack expertise. There is a significant difference between the achievement of pupils who have access to computers at home and those who do not. Most pupils make patchy progress at present because there is unsatisfactory provision and insufficient time for the systematic acquisition of skills.
63. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Pupils show an appropriate interest in their ICT sessions and in discussions with visitors. Their behaviour is unfailingly good when they are working at the computers and they display enthusiasm for the tasks in hand. In the lessons observed, the teachers were enthusiastic and engaged the learners appropriately. Although some teachers have benefited from training and

exhibit commitment to using ICT, not all teachers are entirely secure in their ICT knowledge and this impacts on pupils' progress. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.

64. Although the co-ordinator was only appointed in April 2005, she has acquired an appropriate grasp of strengths and areas for development in ICT. She has prepared a robust action plan and sought expert advice in order to plan for the future development of ICT. She recognises the importance of developing whole-school strategies. At present, however, leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. Resources are generally unsatisfactory. Overall there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

65. ICT is not being used sufficiently to aid teaching and learning across the curriculum in a consistent and effective manner. There was little use of computers in classrooms to support the teaching of English or mathematics during the inspection. Sampling of work in other areas shows that ICT is used satisfactorily in science, but is not used appropriately in the humanities or in religious education.

## **HUMANITIES**

*Religious education was inspected and is reported below in full. Geography and history were not inspected.*

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Whilst standards are average, the curriculum is not sufficiently monitored to make sure that all teachers interpret the locally agreed syllabus in the most effective way.
- Methods of assessment, including marking, do not always give a clear indication of how well pupils are learning and what they could do better.
- The role of the subject leader is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

66. Pupils are reaching the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in Year 2 and Year 6. Achievement overall is broadly satisfactory. By Year 2, pupils recognise religious symbols and identify some religious beliefs. They are starting to recognise some aspects of what is of value and concern to others. A conversation with pupils of a range of abilities in Years 3 to 6 reveals that they had clearly discussed many aspects of Christianity and Judaism over time in school, but their knowledge and understanding of Islam was much less secure. Their views on deeper questions were satisfactorily expressed, but they were not well developed or clearly connected to their studies.
67. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted appropriately through the subject. Pupils have good opportunities to reflect on the significance of key religious festivals, stories and events.

68. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. The lessons observed indicate that discussion features prominently in teaching and learning and that such an approach makes pupils think hard and reflect on important issues. The impact of lessons on pupils' learning is not complemented by effective recording. As a result, knowledge and understanding are not securely developed by some pupils. ICT is not used enough to support learning. Other than marking and annual reports, assessment procedures are underdeveloped in religious education.
69. Subject leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is insufficient monitoring of standards, teaching and learning or of the curriculum. Opportunities to write at length are limited and there is a widespread use of worksheets, which do not challenge the pupils. Resources are generally unsatisfactory. The curriculum is strengthened by links with whole-school assembly themes but other links are limited. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

### **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

*Art and design, design and technology, music and physical education were not inspected.*

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

*This area of the curriculum was sampled.*

70. The curriculum in this area of learning is included within other subject plans. This ensures that the necessary statutory elements are taught appropriately. There is no separately planned curriculum in this aspect, however, and this is a weakness that leads to some inconsistency in provision, for example, in the management of pupils' behaviour. Most teachers strengthen their approach by making useful links with the school's collective worship and religious education provision. Pupils' views are being considered in a more organised and systematic way now, through aspects such as the relatively newly created school council, whereby representatives of pupils express their ideas and suggestions about the school. Suggestions have included more play equipment and this has led to a significant improvement at lunch and playtimes. In addition, more pupils are feeling valued; this has led to much improved behaviour and this is having a beneficial impact on pupils' learning.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	4
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>4</b>
Attendance	6
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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