

INSPECTION REPORT

GREAT CASTERTON CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Stamford, Lincolnshire

LEA area: Rutland

Unique reference number: 120185

Acting Headteacher: Mrs C Rowbotham

Lead inspector: Mr C Parker

Dates of inspection: 25th and 26th April 2005

Inspection number: 273662

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 to 11 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 56

School address: Pickworth Road
Great Casterton
Stamford
Lincolnshire
Postcode: PE9 4AU

Telephone number: 01780 762417
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body
Name of chair of Mrs M Markey
governors:

Date of previous 8th March 2004
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is nearing completion of the process of federation with Empingham CE Primary School three miles away. A headteacher was appointed in January 2004 to take the two schools to federation in September 2005. However, he left to take up another post in March 2005. At the time of the inspection the senior teacher at each school was acting as headteacher with the support of a mentor headteacher. The two acting headteachers are working jointly. In addition to changes in leadership there has been a complete change of teaching staff in Years 3 to 6 in the last year.

The number of pupils has fallen in recent years and there are now 56 on roll. They are taught in three classes. There is some mobility; a small proportion of pupils leave to take up places in the private sector. Almost all pupils are of white British descent and all speak English as their first language. Each year group is quite small, between seven and nine pupils and in some there is considerable imbalance in the number of boys and girls. The proportion of pupils taking free school meals is well below average. Overall attainment on entry is broadly average.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average but the proportion of children with statements has been high in recent years – currently two pupils have statements.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11897	Chris Parker	Lead inspector	Mathematics; science; information and communication technology; art and design; design and technology; physical education, personal, social and health education; special educational needs
14083	Andy Anderson	Lay inspector	
19387	Mari Powell	Team inspector	English; history; geography; music; religious education; Foundation Stage;

The inspection contractor was :

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school's **overall effectiveness is satisfactory**. The teaching and, as a results, pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall, though in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 both are good. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The use of monitoring and evaluation to inform improvement planning is not sharp enough
- The pupils make a good start in the Foundation Stage and standards continue to improve in Years 1 and 2
- Standards are not yet as high as they should be by Year 6
- Marking is not consistently helping the pupils to improve
- Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are not being developed effectively across the curriculum
- The school seeks pupils' views and takes full account of them

Since the school was last inspected in March 2004 it has consolidated rather than furthered its improvement. Changes of teachers and the recent departure of the headteacher have interrupted plans. Standards have improved in Years 1 and 2 but they still need to improve further in Years 3 to 6. There have been improvements in the pupils' science work but more needs to be done to improve work in geography. However, the school has made considerable strides forward towards federation.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

The **pupils are achieving satisfactorily**. In the Foundation Stage all of the children make good progress to achieve, and in some cases, exceed the goals set for the end of the reception year.

The results of national tests at the end of Year 2 have improved faster than the national trend over the last few years. The improving trend is evident in lessons and in the pupils' work and standards are currently above average in reading, writing and mathematics. They are achieving well and making good progress because the good start made in reception is built on effectively and they are consistently well taught.

The upward trend of improvement at the end of Year 6 was not maintained in 2004 when results declined to below average in English and well below average in mathematics. However, of the eight children in the Year 6 cohort two pupils with special educational needs did not take the tests because they did not reach the range to be assessed. Nevertheless, all of the pupils made good progress and achieved particularly well in English when compared to their test results at the end of

Year 2. Currently, achievement is satisfactory but standards remain below average at the end of Year 6; there is, however, a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in a small cohort. Most of the pupils are working at the expected level in English, mathematics and science but not all are reaching the levels they should because of weaknesses in past provision and because work is not consistently well matched to the needs of all abilities.

The **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is satisfactory**. Most pupils are happy to come to school and are eager to learn. They are attentive, co-operative and collaborate well with each other. Most, but not all, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Behaviour among the younger children is good. However, a minority of older pupils can at times be unco-operative.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **quality of education is satisfactory**. Improvements have resulted in stronger provision in reception and Years 1 and 2. **Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall**. The teaching in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 is good and in Years 3 to 6 it is satisfactory. In reception and Years 1 and 2 expectations of behaviour are high, pupils are challenged and tasks are interesting and motivating. In Years 3 and 4 there is an element of unsettled behaviour that sometimes interrupts, rather than disrupts, learning but results in pupils making satisfactory rather than rapid progress. In Years 5 and 6 lessons are well paced to engage the pupils; as a result they are interested in the tasks they are set. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and generally provide good support that allows pupils with special needs to have access to tasks and full involvement in, lessons. Efforts to improve the quality of marking ensure that pupils' work is now frequently marked with additional written comments, but these are of varying quality and usefulness.

The curriculum is satisfactory but the pupils are not being given sufficient opportunity to extend their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. The school provides a good range of opportunities for enrichment. The accommodation and resources are good and have been considerably enhanced by the impressive facilities for ICT. Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. The school provides very good information for parents

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. A partnership development plan provides a strategic overview for improvement but it does not draw sufficiently on the evaluation of the monitoring of teaching, the scrutiny of children's work or the analysis of pupils' performance to provide the precision needed for rapid and continuing improvement. The co-ordinators are satisfactorily managing the individual subjects of the curriculum and have, in a relatively short time, developed the professional trust and a shared determination to improve further. Plans for the federation with Empingham CE Primary School are now at an advanced stage. A joint committee of the governing bodies of both schools has taken significant steps forward and developed the structures and procedures that will allow them to formally function in partnership. Except in one detail of the school prospectus, governors fulfil statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most of the parents are very satisfied with the work of the school and many are very pleased with the improvements made in the last two years. They particularly welcome the openness and improved communications. A few expressed concerns about behaviour and relationships between pupils. This was also reflected in the responses to pupils' questionnaires. The school is using its involvement in the healthy schools initiative to improve personal development and to increase the pupils' awareness and respect for others.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Accelerate the rate of progress in Years 3 to 6 so that pupils reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science
- Extend the range and frequency of opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum
- Make full use of information from monitoring and self evaluation to plan for further improvement

In addition:

- Ensure that all requirements for the prospectus are fully met.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Standards are above average at the end of Year 2 and below average at the end of Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils make a good start in the Foundation Stage
- In Years 1 and 2 the pupils make good progress and standards continue to improve
- Standards are not as high as they should be by Year 6

Commentary

1. Attainment on entry is broadly average but a few children have above average speaking, listening and social skills when they begin school. The teacher and the nursery nurse work together effectively so that the transition to the National Curriculum is achieved very smoothly. As a result of good teaching all the children achieve well and reach the goals set for the end of the reception year in all areas of learning and in some cases, the pupils exceed them.
2. The results of national tests at the end of Year 2 have improved faster than the national trend over the last few years to be average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics in 2004. When compared to similar schools results are below average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. The improving trend is evident in lessons and in the pupils' work and standards are currently above average in both English and mathematics. They are achieving well and making good progress because the good start made in reception is built on effectively and they are consistently well taught.
3. The upward trend of improvement at the end of Year 6 was not maintained in 2004 when results declined to below average in English and well below average in mathematics. However, of the eight children in the Year 6 cohort two pupils with special educational needs did not take the tests because they did not reach the range to be assessed. Analysis of individual pupil's progress shows that most of the pupils made good progress and achieved particularly well in English when compared to their test results at the end of Year 2. Those pupils with special needs made satisfactory progress. Value added measures are above and well above average.
4. Currently, standards in Year 6 in English and mathematics remain below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 6 cohort is similar to last year. In lessons and in their books the pupils are making satisfactory progress and most are working at the expected level. A few are exceeding it. However, standards are not yet as high as they should be because of the legacy of weaknesses in past provision. The teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall and ensures the pupils achieve satisfactorily, but it is not sufficiently precise and well targeted, for example, in teaching the pupils the more demanding elements of writing to help them to make rapid and accelerated progress. The pupils still do not have enough opportunities to use and develop their writing skills in other subjects such as history and geography.
5. Teacher assessments in science at the end of Year 2 indicate that standards are above average but over the last few years they have been below average at the end of Year 6. Analysis of individual pupil's results shows that all of the pupils in Year 6 last year made at least the expected progress between Year 2 and Year 6. The pupils' work shows above average

standards are being maintained in Year 2 and that the standards remain below average in Year 6. Pupils are, however, making satisfactory progress although the skills of scientific investigation are not being systematically taught and applied as the pupils move through Years 3 to 6.

6. There are considerable differences in the results of boys and girls year on year, but less so over time. The most evident is that girls appear to do less well than boys at the end of Year 2 but it is difficult to draw conclusions because in some year groups there are very small numbers and on occasions only one boy or girl.
7. The pupils' competencies in information and communication technology are in line with expectations but they are not making extensive use of the school's very good resources in their learning right across the curriculum.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality are very good. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils are interested in school life and the range of activities provided
- Pupils are willing to be enterprising and take responsibility

Commentary

8. Most pupils are happy to come to school and are eager to learn. They are attentive, co-operative and collaborate well with each other. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Behaviour among the younger children is good. However, a few older pupils occasionally behave unco-operatively and are not always dealt with effectively. This sometimes interrupts learning in Years 3 and 4. Where pupils are offered opportunities to take on responsibilities, for example, helping the midday supervisors at lunchtimes, they respond in a mature and responsible manner.
9. The majority of parents agree that children behave well in school. However, a significant number of parents, and some of the pupils themselves, expressed concerns about bullying. During the inspection no signs of bullying or harassment were observed. The school is dealing with issues, such as respect for others and emotional well being, through the healthy schools initiative.
10. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is satisfactory. The school seeks to establish a respectful and caring community and in many ways it is successful. Efforts to make improvements in these areas are clearly evident in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. The legacy of past provision is sometimes seen in the attitudes of the older pupils. There is currently a strong focus on social and moral development but opportunities for spiritual enhancement are sometimes missed. For example, in an assembly strong messages were skilfully conveyed about the inequities caused by discrimination but too little consideration was given to the feelings of those excluded and discriminated against. Assemblies do not make enough use of music or a meaningful focus to set a spiritual tone.

Attendance

The table below shows the attendance figures for the school. The attendance rate at the school is well above the national median. Most parents ensure the full attendance of their children.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
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School data	4.3
National data	5.1

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.

Exclusions

The have been no exclusions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory education. Improvements have resulted in stronger provision in reception and Years 1 and 2.

Teaching and learning

Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 is good.
- Marking is not consistently helping the pupils to improve.

Commentary

11.The teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. Teaching of the small group of the youngest children is well led by the nursery nurse. The class teacher and the nursery nurse plan their work together very effectively. The children are sensitively nurtured and challenged through interesting and motivating tasks that ensure they make good progress and achieve well. The learning environment is very well planned and used effectively to promote learning to suit different stages of the children’s development. The pace of teaching and learning is good. Expectations of behaviour are high and the adults are very diligent in assessing the children’s progress and very good records are kept.

12.The teaching in Years 1 and 2 is very well managed to provide good conditions for learning. The calm and purposeful atmosphere provides a positive backdrop against which the teacher engages the pupils in tasks and activities that are well matched to their ages and abilities. At the beginning of all lessons the teacher makes it very clear to the pupils what they are expected to learn. Introductions are well focused and generate interest and enthusiasm amongst the pupils which the teacher channels very effectively by maintaining a good pace and ensuring they have a variety of tasks to maintain their concentration. The good relationships and good teaching have a very positive impact on the pupils’ learning and consequently they achieve well.

13.In Years 3 to 6 the teaching is satisfactory. All lessons have a clearly expressed intention which is shared with the pupils who mostly respond well and show an interest in what is taught. In Years 3 and 4 the unsettled behaviour of a few is adequately dealt with in most, although not all lessons. In some cases unco-operative behaviour punctuates rather than disrupts lessons. However, in one design and technology lesson pupils did not achieve enough in the time available because of the disruption. Lessons are planned in considerable detail, outlining tasks with an appropriate degree of challenge. For example, in a mathematics lesson pupils were set money problems that

provided the right amount of challenge for the different ability groups within the class. The pupils settled well and responded positively to the tasks. In Years 3 and 4 teaching ensures that pupils make adequate progress but the influence of the unsettled behaviour of a minority is hindering more rapid achievement.

14. In Years 5 and 6 the secure teaching of English, mathematics and science ensures the pupils achieve satisfactorily. Lessons are well paced and the pupils are interested in the tasks they are set, for example, when they looked at the poetic language used in 'The Highwayman'. Tasks in the lessons seen were well matched to the needs and abilities of different groups of pupils but work in their books indicates that this is not always the case. The teaching assistant is effectively deployed and provides good support that allows pupils with special needs to have access to, and full involvement in, lessons and activities. In a good mathematics lesson the teacher made effective use of the interactive whiteboard to help the pupils to estimate and measure angles.

15. The legacy of past provision and the many changes of leadership are evident in some aspects of the teaching. Although there are documented policies for, for example, behaviour management, common strategies are not in evidence and are not being consistently promoted across the whole school. Similarly, efforts to improve the quality of marking have not been strongly promoted, monitored and improved. Consequently, the pupils' work is now frequently marked with additional written comments but these are of varying quality and usefulness. They do not consistently help the pupils to make improvements and to do better in their next piece of work.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 15 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	2	5	7	1	0	0

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school provides a good range of opportunities for enrichment. The accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are not being developed effectively across the curriculum

Commentary

16. The planning for the curriculum draws heavily upon national guidance and provides a broad and balanced diet. It is appropriately organised to ensure all subjects are taught. However, in geography and history in Years 3 to 6 the coverage of some topics is superficial and, in addition, the pupils' literacy skills are not promoted effectively in their recorded work. While some opportunities are provided for pupils to use and apply their numeracy skills in science here too they are too infrequent and sometimes constrained by the use of printed worksheets. Good progress has been made in the development of the pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) but they do not have extensive opportunities to apply what they have learned in other areas of the curriculum.

17. The Foundation Stage curriculum for the youngest children is well planned and carefully developed to involve and interest them in activities that develop their language and social skills very well. The nursery nurse engages the pupils fully so that they enjoy learning and use role play effectively to develop their language.
18. Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are well managed. Individual education plans have clear attainable targets and are reviewed regularly. Parents are fully involved and kept informed. At the pre-inspection meeting one parent spoke very warmly about the provision made for a child with a statement.
19. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Parents feel that opportunities in sport and music are increasing and welcome the potential of the federation to increase the range of activities available to pupils. Links with the local secondary school have led to the modern language teachers running a weekly French club, which is well attended and enjoyed by the pupils. Trips and visits enhance the curriculum, such as, the visit to a Gurdwara.
20. The accommodation is very well presented and provides a good learning environment. The new ICT suite and dedicated space for the Foundation Stage have added significantly to the accommodation and resources. However, a consequence has been a reduction in the space available for the provision of a wide range of outdoor activities to compliment the otherwise good curriculum for the Foundation Stage.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. Provision for support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is satisfactory. Involvement of pupils through seeking and acting on their views is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's arrangements for ensuring health and safety are good
- Relationships between children and adults are very good
- The school has good induction arrangements for pupils.
- Child protection procedures are secure

Commentary

21. The school provides effective care for its pupils. All members of staff are very approachable, caring and committed to the children in their charge. Supervision at breaks and lunchtimes is alert and vigilant. All staff consistently demonstrate a very good knowledge of the school's pastoral and welfare procedures. Arrangements for first aid and dealing with minor injuries are very good.
22. Every child has a very good and trusting relationship with one or more adult in the school. Teachers listen to pupils and value their opinions and ideas. The School Council, supported by class councils, offers pupils very good opportunities to have input into the day-to-day running of the school. This is valued by the pupils.
23. The school's child protection procedures are fully understood by all members of staff. The governing body and acting headteacher take their health and safety responsibilities very seriously. All the required checks and inspections, including comprehensive risk

assessments, are regularly carried out. However, recording of health and safety matters tends to be haphazard and would benefit from a centralised system.

24. Teaching assistants provide good support to teachers and pupils. The support given to Foundation Stage children is very good. Children with special educational needs are supported well across the school. This has a positive impact on the standards they achieve. Teachers maintain comprehensive assessment and tracking records on groups and individual children. However, the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' work is not sharp enough to direct support effectively and improve the quality of children's work.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and the community are good. Links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of parents hold the school in high regard
- Most parents support their children's learning well
- The school provides very good information for parents

Commentary

25. Links with parents are good overall. The majority of parents are pleased with most aspects of the school and hold the school in high regard. The acting headteacher and staff are available, approachable and welcoming to parents. Most parents support their children's education at home and in the school well. There is good support for home reading and homework. Parents willingly respond to specific requests for assistance, for instance, they will help supervise children on out of school trips. The parent support group is very well supported and has raised considerable funds for the school.

26. The provision of information about all aspects of school life is very good. The school prospectus is attractive and informative though incomplete in a couple of areas. The governors hold an annual meeting with parents and publish a comprehensive annual report. Parents receive very good day-to-day information in the way of weekly newsletters and regular letters about specific events and activities. The school is developing its own website.

27. Parents are given an informative annual progress report that clearly states how well their child is doing and sets targets for future improvement. They are offered the opportunity to attend appropriate consultation evenings each year.

28. The school uses the community well. The pupils are taken on appropriate trips and are exposed to wide range of visitors that enrich the curriculum and support their personal development. The school is actively involved in the local cluster of schools, for example, staff share joint training sessions. The sound relationship with the main receiving secondary school ensures pupils have a smooth transition to the next stage of their education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has made considerable strides forward towards federation
- The use of monitoring and evaluation to inform improvement planning is not sharp enough

Commentary

29. The prospect of a more settled future for the school when it was last inspected twelve months ago has not materialised. Two new teachers took up their posts at the start of this academic year, again offering the prospect of stability in the teaching. The departure of the headteacher at the end of last term has left the school without the settled leadership it needs to continue to make rapid improvement. The interim arrangement of making the senior teacher (jointly with the senior teacher at Empingham CE Primary School) acting headteacher, with the support of an associate headteacher from the local authority, has secured the leadership of the school until a new headteacher is appointed.

30. As a result of these changes the school has consolidated rather than furthered improvement since the last inspection. Nonetheless, in response to the issues highlighted in the last report a Partnership Development Plan was devised to provide a strategic overview for improvement for both schools in the proposed federation. However, it does not draw sufficiently on the evaluation of the monitoring of teaching, the scrutiny of children's work or the analysis of pupils' performance to provide the precision needed for rapid and continuing improvement. The subject co-ordinators, who have responsibility in both schools have, in some cases, created development plans that are well focused on improvement, for example, in information and communication technology. The links between monitoring, evaluation, partnership, school and subject improvement lack clarity and consequently the priorities for improvement are not focusing precisely enough on the weaknesses that have been identified.

31. The co-ordinators are satisfactorily managing the individual subjects of the curriculum. In the core areas of the curriculum much monitoring is undertaken but in too few instances is sufficient consideration given to the impact of the teaching on the pupils' progress. Similarly, when checking the pupils' work not enough consideration is given to whether pupils are doing well enough, reaching the levels they should or establishing clear targets for improvement. Evaluations such as, 'progress is fine' do not provide the detail and clarity needed for continuing improvement. Nevertheless, the teachers have, in a relatively short time, developed the professional trust and team ethos to welcome the views of colleagues about their teaching and there is a shared determination to improve further.

32. The governors and in particular the chair of governors has provided strong support and stability through a period of considerable change. Through training the governors have established a much stronger position that allows them to challenge as well as support the schools in its programme of improvement activities. Governors visit the school and lessons to see how well it is doing. As a result the governing body is now well informed about the school's performance. They have taken plans for the federation with Empingham Primary School to an advanced stage. A joint committee of the governing bodies of both schools has developed the structures and procedures that will allow them to formally function in partnership. The governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities fully except in regard to the current edition of the prospectus which omits an item of

statutorily required information; details about religious education provided, including parents' right to withdraw from religious education and collective worship.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	234 543	Balance from previous year	-17 465
Total expenditure	251 086	Balance carried forward to the next	- 34 008
Expenditure per pupil	3 639		

33. The school has a significant deficit that could have proved to be a significant barrier to further improvement. However, the associate headteacher working with the governors has devised a savings plan that will return the school to a balanced budget within three years. This arrangement has the agreement of the local authority and will allow the school to continue to improve and to move into the proposed federation from the start of the next academic year.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for the Foundation Stage is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The adults have high expectations of the children and support them very well.
- The teaching is consistently good and, as a result, children are achieving well.

Commentary

34. The seven children in the Foundation Stage are taught alongside the pupils in Years 1 and 2. However, they benefit from a considerable amount of good teaching in a discrete group that is well led by the nursery nurse. The teacher and the nursery nurse plan their work together so that the transition to the National Curriculum is achieved very smoothly. Attainment on entry is broadly average but a few children have above average speaking and listening and social skills by the time they begin school. As a result of the sensitive nurturing and challenging teaching all the children make good progress to achieve, and in some cases exceed, the nationally defined Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year.

35. The learning environment is very well planned but does not yet include a safe outdoor area to extend the range of learning. The activities are interesting and there is a good variety to consolidate learning for those who need it and to provide extended learning to suit different stages of development. The pace of teaching and learning is good. Adults are very diligent in assessing the children's progress and very good records are kept. Expectations of behaviour are high and the children's overall welfare is very well attended to.

36. The **personal, social and emotional development** of the children is effective. They have a clear understanding of classroom routines because the adults have provided strong guidance and supported the children very well. The overall atmosphere in the classroom is calm and orderly so that the children focus consistently well on their activities. They sustain concentration well while they engage in a good range of activities that they enjoy. For example, a small group directing vehicles around a floor mat were considerate and co-operative towards each other. They held spirited exchanges about the conditions on the roads and tracks. One child was adventurous enough to include a horse in the traffic and due regard was given to its safety by other road users. They confidently select tasks they wish to undertake and readily seek help when they encounter difficulties.

37. The children have good opportunities to develop their **communication, language and literacy** skills. The adults are skilful in promoting the children's speaking and listening skills through their engagement with the children as they work. Good questioning techniques were seen as the children undertook an activity to describe capacity and again as a group of children were constructing a junk model of a train. The adults vary their vocabulary so that the children effectively acquire new words to describe their activities. The children enjoy sharing stories. They are making good gains in reading the printed words because the adults miss no opportunities to reinforce their recognition

of sounds associated with various letters. Most are achieving well to write some of their letters, for instance, to record their names and in some cases, captions to accompany their work. Many are close to achieving the Early Learning Goals and a few are already exceeding them.

38. The teachers plan a good range of activities to promote **mathematical development** and consistently promote numeracy skills. The children learn to count and apply their skills well, for example, when counting plastic animals or spoonfuls of lentils into containers. During a language activity involving ping pong balls painted with letters of the alphabet to be used to make simple words, the children also counted the balls as they removed them from a water tray. One child accurately spoke the numbers on a telephone handset as she placed an order for a bouquet of flowers. They have had a useful opportunity to use a programmable device to count steps and to use the language of direction. They can talk about objects being heavier or lighter and use the language of capacity to describe containers of materials. They are very well placed to reach the expected levels.
39. The immediate and local environment is used well to promote **knowledge and understanding of the world**. The children are encouraged to be observant about items brought into the classroom, about the surrounding area and increasingly the area beyond the school perimeter fence. When looking at buildings, for example, the local church, they are gaining an understanding of why it is a special place. They also use their shape vocabulary to describe some of its features. Opportunities to look at photographs taken in the village enable them to appreciate some of its features, for example, a variety of road signs. The children enjoy making models and using construction materials. Two children created a very realistic representation of a visit to a flower shop including the process of making up bouquets for different clients. They use the computer and concentrate well when they listen to stories on tape in the listening centre.
40. It was not possible to observe outdoor sessions to assess provision for **physical development** except during morning and lunchtime play. During these times, the children ran around energetically and exercised good control in twisting, changing direction and stopping safely. Their finer motor skills are developing well. They hold pencils and brushes appropriately and can use scissors confidently to cut out paper, card and fabric. They are dexterous when using construction equipment and as they play with smaller items such as plastic animals or use different materials, for example, to decorate their fabric mice.
41. Most of the children are imaginative and show that opportunities for **creative development** are effective in the way they devise their role play and as they create the accompanying dialogue. This was well illustrated when, after reading a story about a train journey, the children started to make a junk model. They very quickly became absorbed in the activity and began to chatter fluently and excitedly about train journeys they had undertaken.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision for English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils are making good progress and achieving well in Years 1 and 2
- Standards are not as high as they should be by the end of Year 6

Commentary

42. Standards are above average in reading and writing by the end of Year 2. They are below average by the end of Year 6 because there is high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in a small cohort but also weaknesses in past provision have hindered progress. The teachers have undertaken a comprehensive review of the teaching and learning in English that has resulted in greater continuity in what the pupils learn. It has also focused on areas of weakness in the teaching of writing and these are being appropriately addressed, for example, by ensuring that the older pupils, in particular, undertake a broader range of writing tasks. The library provision has been thoroughly reviewed and restocking is on-going to ensure the pupils have access to a good range of books. In Years 1 and 2, the teachers and their assistants plan carefully to ensure that all groups of pupils undertake work suitable to their needs. In Years 3 to 6, satisfactory and often good support is provided for pupils who have special needs. However, the higher attaining pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to write at greater length or at a more sophisticated level.

43. The pupils in Year 2 are making good progress in reading because the adults are very alert to opportunities to include reading within a wide range variety of tasks. During a lesson in religious education the pupils were invited to read a variety of labels on the plan of a church. They benefit from opportunities to undertake shared reading in small groups but are also heard to read individually. The impact of their reading on the quality of their written expression and their spelling is very positive. Many of the pupils in Year 2 are adept at drawing inferences from text because the teacher consistently challenges them to look for the meaning behind the author's words.

44. Older pupils are making satisfactory progress in reading but have yet to develop more advanced skills. However, they now benefit from an improved range of books in the library and regular access to text on the computers, for instance, to support work in geography and history. Where teachers themselves provide role models as expressive readers, the pupils' expression and fluency improve. Individual pupils benefit from regular sessions where they share texts as a group, take turns to read and to listen to others read. The phonic confidence of some pupils is not well established but learning assistants are aware of this and provide good support. Assessment procedures continue to improve to provide a reliable basis on which to plan reading development programmes for the pupils.

45. The writing skills of many pupils by the end of Year 2 are now above average. During this year there has been a clear trend for improvement with the younger pupils achieving well overall. Most of the pupils can now order their ideas logically, spell basic, commonly used words accurately and correctly use full stops and even, at times, speech marks. From the evidence of more recent assessments, standards in writing are still somewhat below average by the end of Year 6. However, more focused teaching is resulting in satisfactory achievement. The range of writing is now more in line with national requirements but marking of work, although encouraging, is still not sharp enough to further improve features such as the pupils' organisation of work into paragraphs or to encourage higher attaining pupils to write at greater length and to be

more rigorous in their use of punctuation. The teachers recognise that a further thrust is required to accelerate the achievements of the pupils in writing and to reach higher standards.

46. Work in Years 1 and 2 is neatly presented and laid out. In the older classes presentation is often unsatisfactory. Where written tasks are not completed within a lesson, they do not know how and when pieces of writing will be finished. In addition, the pupils are inconsistent about how to edit and correct work. Handwriting skills are taught but some older pupils have regressed in the consistency of the size of their letters and the flow of joined writing that results in a neat legible script.

47. Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. The programme of work ensures that the curriculum for literacy is well covered and is tailored to meet individual needs. The good communication between the teacher and support staff, together with effective record keeping ensure that the pupils progress appropriately. Learning objectives are now clear and shared with the pupils so that they know what is expected of them. The pupils themselves are keen to learn and enjoy sharing their work with adults. The recently appointed teachers of the older pupils have a clear understanding of the school's development planning for English and are consistently working to implement it in order to raise the standard the pupils achieve.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

48. In Years 1 and 2 language skills are a natural adjunct to a wide range of work in other subjects. For example, the pupils in Year 2 used a lengthy excerpt of text about Dick King-Smith and recorded appropriate notes from it. They were also able to talk about what they had learned. They have recently visited the local area and absorbed the wide ranging use of language on signs and notices. Older pupils are increasing in confidence to download text from the Internet and select items for their own use. However, insufficient use is made of writing to record work in history, geography and religious education in Years 3 to 6.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good and pupils are achieving well
- Marking is inconsistent and not helping all pupils to improve

Commentary

54. Recent improvements in standards at the end of Year 2 are being maintained. Currently standards are above average; this is confirmed by lessons observations and the scrutiny of the pupils' work. The teacher begins lessons with a carefully targeted mental warm up activity that ensures all of the pupils are involved and challenged. This includes setting problems for the more able to enable them to use what they already know in an everyday context. The teaching assistant is well deployed to provide support for a group of pupils enabling tasks to be well matched for different ages and abilities. Good resources and timely interventions by the teacher maintain the pace of learning and the pupils' concentration.

55. Standards in Year 6 remain below average but most of the pupils are on course to reach the expected level and a small minority is working at the higher level. There is, however, a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in a small cohort. Work in the lessons seen was planned for different ability groups but scrutiny of the pupils' past work indicates that some tasks are not well matched to the needs of the least able. In one good mathematics lesson clear, accurate direct teaching of mean average, mode and median built effectively on the pupils' existing knowledge. As a result of tasks with a good degree of challenge the pupils made good progress and achieved well in the lesson. The teaching in Years 3 and 4 is satisfactory. Discussion with pupils indicates that they enjoy mathematics and the tasks they are set provide a good level of challenge which engages them well. Discussions also confirm that improvements in standards at the end of Year 2 are being adequately maintained in Year 3. Overall, teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory and the pupils are achieving satisfactorily.

56. The pupils' work is marked, and in some cases the teachers make helpful comments, but in too many cases the pupils are not given clear guidance on how they can improve their work. The presentation of work is inconsistent and does not reflect a common expectation in all classes.

Mathematics across the curriculum

57. The pupils have some opportunities to use their data handling skills in science and to create graphs using ICT but they are not extensive enough to help them to use and apply their skills in a range of contexts and to challenge the most able.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are achieving well and standards are above average in Year 2
- The skills of scientific investigation are not being systematically developed in Years 3 to 6

Commentary

54. It was only possible to observe one science lesson during the inspection but a thorough scrutiny of the pupils' work was undertaken. The scrutiny of the pupils' work in Year 2 shows that they are making good progress and developing a range of scientific skills. They have good opportunities to observe, investigate and record their findings. The pupils predict the outcomes of investigations and make simple interpretations of results. Their work shows growing independence in recording, with decreasing reliance on prompts and worksheets. As a result the pupils are making good progress and achieving well although they are not yet making deductions from graphs and charts.

55. The work of Year 4 pupils shows that they are achieving satisfactorily and gaining a sound knowledge. However, their skills of scientific investigation are not being enhanced because they use too many worksheets that are not providing sufficient challenge, particularly for the higher attaining pupils. Nevertheless, the pupils do cover an

appropriate range of topics some which involve investigation and they are, for example, able to give explanations of a fair test when investigating magnetic forces.

56. In Year 6 the pupils continue to achieve satisfactorily. They have completed a good range of work which shows they are able to use accurate scientific vocabulary and construct scientific diagrams, for example, of circuits. However, they have fewer opportunities to analyse data and graphs or make deductions from their findings. There is little evidence of raising hypotheses or identifying questions for a fair test. This was very evident in the lesson seen where the pupils experienced some difficulty in establishing exactly what would be the focus of their fair test into the length of shadows. Nevertheless, the lesson was well managed by the teacher and gave the pupils an interesting opportunity to carry out a fair test with a good degree of independence.

57. The pupils' work in Years 3 to 6 shows that they do not have enough opportunities for independent writing or the use of ICT to record, analyse and present their findings.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school now has very good facilities for ICT
- The pupils do not have enough opportunities to use ICT across the curriculum

Commentary

58. The school has recently benefited from building improvements and new computer resources that have placed it in a very strong position to make extensive use of ICT in teaching and learning. The co-ordinator has introduced a planned programme for teaching the skills and competencies the pupils need to become effective users of the technology. This is working well and, as a result, the pupils reach the levels expected of them by Year 2 and Year 6.

59. During the inspection the Foundation Stage and Year 1 and 2 pupils made good use of the facilities. In one lesson these pupils were taught how to use essential elements of a word processor through a literacy activity in which they constructed alliterative sentences. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils were taught how to send an e-mail; this activity allowed them to communicate with the pupils at Empingham CE Primary School forging good links in preparation for the federation of the two schools.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

60. ICT is not yet used extensively to promote learning across the curriculum. The teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively in their lessons and do provide some opportunities, for example, to use painting programs to create patterns in art. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 used an Internet search engine to find information about the author Dick King Smith and older pupils have created graphs as part of their mathematics work. However, taken overall there are too few opportunities for the pupils use and apply the skills they have learned in subjects of the curriculum, particularly in Years 3 to 6.

HUMANITIES

61. It was possible only to observe one lesson in **geography** in Years 1 and 2 and one in **history** in Years 5 and 6 during the inspection. Displays of work were evaluated, pupils' books inspected and subject plans analysed. Three pupils in Year 6 talked with interest about what they had learned in history lessons but too little of what the pupils know and understand is written down consequently opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills are missed. The work that is recorded is not sufficiently well organised.
62. In Years 1 and 2, good use is made of the local area to encourage pupils to ask geographical questions, for example, about prominent local features. There were also good opportunities for them to use their numeracy skills, for example, to record data about traffic and local services. The journeys of Barnaby Bear encouraged the pupils to gain some understanding of geographical and historical aspects of other countries. An attractive display about Ireland showed the striking landscape features as well as some of the early Celtic historical inheritance.
63. In Years 3 to 6, the pupils have successfully taken advantage of news bulletins to raise their awareness of various natural phenomena such as the melting of the Arctic ice cap, earthquakes and volcanoes. Recorded work on the Vikings bore evidence of a recognition of the past of the local area together with the fact that archaeologists are responsible for uncovering information. The older pupils retain some enthusiasm from an earlier study of Ancient Greece but the pupils' own recall and recorded work about important features of Greek society are very superficial. The lesson seen, the first of a series about the Aztecs suffered from a paucity of material resources to stimulate the pupils' early interest.
64. The marking of work currently lacks sufficient depth to inform pupils of how to improve the content and presentation of their work. The pupils clearly take some care to illustrate their work but its collation and coherence, together with the limited records of carefully written work, charts and diagrams indicates that the history and geography curriculum is superficial in Years 3 to 6 and the older pupils do not undertake the expected depth of study.
65. It was possible to observe one **religious education** lesson in Years 1 and 2. During the lesson the pupils gave lively accounts of a visit to the local church. They recognise that it is a very special place for believers and a prominent feature of the local community. The stained glass windows were clearly a source of some awe and wonder. The pupils also expressed interest in the baptismal certificate brought in by a pupil. It helped them to appreciate that the church is the location for some very special events. They recalled some of the particular features of the interior such as the font and pulpit. This was a useful contribution to their acquisition of some specialist vocabulary as well as providing an opportunity to learn about their function. The pupils know that the Bible is a special book for Christians and that it contains stories about the life of Jesus.
66. The teachers' planning in Years 3 to 6 reflects an appropriate variety of topics. In addition to important aspects of Christianity that include learning about how the Christian life impacts upon believers, the pupils have opportunities to learn about other world faiths such as Sikhism and Islam. In discussion they satisfactorily recalled key features of both religions. As well as having extended their study of their local church, the pupils vividly recalled a visit to a Gurdwara and could recognise the special features of a mosque they had visited. The local church provides a valuable resource where pupils celebrate various festivals in the calendar of the church's year. A group of pupils had visited the cathedral in Peterborough and retained a powerful impression of it. The

teachers' planning in Years 3 to 6 is appropriate but insufficient work is recorded to fairly reflect the pupils' learning. What is recorded is not presented with enough care and pride.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

67. One design and technology lesson was observed. No art and design lessons were seen but the pupils' work on display and in their folders was scrutinised. No physical education or music lessons were seen.

68. The **art and design** work on display is of a standard and quality expected by Year 6. For example, the pupils have made celebration masks which they have decorated in interesting and attractive ways. They have also created black and white dress designs in the style of Mary Quant in the 1960s. The oldest pupils worked collectively to create a large abstract painting based on the work of Friedrich Stowasser (Friedensreich Hundertwasser). This illustrates well the interesting opportunities now being provided for the pupils.

69. The one lesson of **design and technology** seen during the inspection, in Years 3 and 4, was unsatisfactory. The pupils were set an appropriate task, as part of a series of lessons to make a pop-up story book, and provided with good resources but failed to make sufficient progress in the lesson. Unsettled behaviour continually disrupted the lesson and was not adequately managed by the teacher. Nevertheless, a wall display shows that the pupils are able to evaluate their finished products and identify how they can make improvements.

70. Parents were particularly pleased with the improved provision made for **music**. A specialist teacher works in the school on one day each week which discussions with pupils indicates provide interesting and enjoyable opportunities. The pupils are learning to play the ocarina and have participated in performances for parents which were greatly appreciated. The pupils were heard to sing tunefully during school worship and some older pupils expressed enthusiasm especially for composition and performance opportunities. The school has good facilities for **physical education**, including a reasonable sized multipurpose hall, hard play area and a playing field.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

71. The school's **personal, social and health education** programme is closely linked to the work it is doing to gain accreditation under the healthy schools initiative. The work planned for the pupils covers a wide range of issues including personal safety, citizenship and emotional well being. Some elements of this work are being used to improve attitudes and behaviour in Years 3 to 6. In one lesson seen the theme built successfully on the morning assembly. The focus was respect for others and the teacher used a strip cartoon to develop discussion about the story line. This satisfactorily tackled the issue of consideration for others.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	Grade
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	4
Attendance	2
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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