

INSPECTION REPORT

OFFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Huntingdon

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110682

Headteacher: Ms M Siequien

Reporting inspector: J Bald
17932

Dates of inspection: 25 – 27 June 2001

Inspection number: 197500

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior school

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Miller Close
Offord Darcy
St Neots
Cambridgeshire
Postcode: PE19 5SB

Telephone number: 01480 810308

Fax number: 01480 810529

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Dr B Howes

Date of previous inspection: September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17932	John Bald	Registered inspector	English	The school's results and pupils' achievements
			History	
			Religious education	Attitudes, values and personal development
			Special educational needs	How well are the pupils taught?
			Equal opportunities	How well is the school led and managed?
1166	Rosemary Hussain	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
10367	Norma Myers	Team inspector	Foundation Stage	
			Mathematics	
			Geography	
			Music	
27736	Jeremy Collins	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			Design and technology	
			Art and design	
			Information and communication technology	
			Physical education	

The inspection contractor was:

Open Book Inspections
6 East Point
High Street, Seal
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN15 0EG

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Offord Primary School is small, with 117 pupils. Very nearly all are white, of United Kingdom heritage, and no pupils have English as an additional language. The social and economic context of the school is favourable, and very few pupils are entitled to free school meals. The standards reached by pupils joining the school have risen in the last year, and are now above average overall, though they are average in mathematics and in early reading skills. However, the school has an average proportion of pupils with special educational needs (17 per cent). The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is well above average; these pupils have serious learning and behavioural difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school, with several outstanding features. Standards are well above average, and pupils develop very good attitudes to life and work. Teaching is good overall and often better, and leadership and management are excellent. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards at eleven are well above average in English, mathematics and science.
- Management and leadership are excellent.
- Teaching is good overall, and very good to excellent in almost half of the lessons.
- Pupils with statements of special educational need make exceptionally good progress.
- There is very good provision for children up to five.
- Pupils develop excellent attitudes and behave very well.
- The school takes excellent care of its pupils and provides excellent personal guidance.
- The school has an excellent partnership with parents, other schools and the community.

What could be improved

- The teaching and learning of writing.
- Some subjects, notably history and geography, need more time and greater challenge.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected in September 1997, its work was satisfactory, but with significant weaknesses. Pupils were reaching average standards, teaching was mainly satisfactory rather than good, and planning was weak. Standards and progress were not effectively tracked, pupils were not learning enough about cultures other than their own, and the community was not fully involved in the school. The present headteacher and governors have planned and carried out a wide-ranging and practical programme of change that has led to significant improvements in all the areas of weakness identified in the last report. The quality of teaching and learning has shown great improvement, so that there is now very good or excellent teaching in almost half of all lessons. Standards at eleven are now well above average, and provision for pupils with special educational needs is now outstanding. The school has become a focal point for the life of the community, which contributes generously to its work. Leadership and management have improved from satisfactory to excellent, and there is a very strong sense of teamwork within the staff, who are well prepared to take on leadership responsibilities. Overall, the school's improvement since the last inspection has been excellent, and it is very well placed to tackle the remaining weaknesses in its work and to make further progress.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11-year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	B	C	A	A
mathematics	C	B	A	A
science	C	B	B	B

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards at eleven are well above average for similar schools, and have been rising at a faster than average rate, with a sharp improvement between 1999 and 2000. Results of the 2001 national tests for eleven-year-olds, which arrived shortly after the inspection, showed further improvements. Two thirds of pupils reached higher than expected standards in all three subjects, and almost nine tenths did so in science. Standards in numeracy are particularly strong, but standards are lower in writing than in reading. Standards at eleven are very good in art and design, and good in information and communication technology and physical education. They are broadly average in other subjects, and very good in instrumental music.

Seven-year-olds reach well above average standards in mathematics, and above average standards in English and science. There was an improvement in standards in writing at seven immediately prior to the inspection, following four weeks of concentrated teaching. Seven-year-olds reach above average standards in design and technology, physical education and art and design. Standards in other subjects are average, but pupils' use and understanding of computers is improving. Children up to five learn very well, and are now reaching well above average standards for their age.

The standards reached by pupils joining the school have risen recently and are now above average. However, the school has a significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs, and the number of pupils with statements of special educational need is well above average. These pupils' achievements are a major strength of the school. Because of the small number of pupils in each year group, results may fluctuate from year to year more than in larger schools. Nevertheless, the trend of improvement is now well established. Overall achievement in the school is very good, and it meets its realistic and demanding targets for improvement.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils are proud of their school and of their achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils show great consideration for each other in working in large classrooms, and look after each other in the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Very good overall. Relationships are excellent, and pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility to each other and to the community.
Attendance	Well above average, with very good punctuality.

The school's excellent relationship with parents and the community enables it to build on the values pupils bring from home. Pupils work hard and take part enthusiastically in activities outside the classroom. They complete homework regularly, but older pupils could develop greater independence. The personal development of pupils with statements of special educational need is outstanding.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching is good, with a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching. This has been a key factor in raising standards and in promoting pupils' excellent attitudes to learning. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 100 per cent of lessons during the inspection, and very good or better in 48 per cent. Teaching is very good for children up to five, in art and design throughout the school, and for pupils about to move on to secondary school. In mathematics, including numeracy, teaching is very good to excellent in equal measure. There is very good, and occasionally excellent, teaching in individual lessons in other subjects and in personal and social education. Planning in English, mathematics and science takes good account of the needs of the broad ranges of age and ability in each class. Teaching is good in science and in English, although pupils in some English lessons have too little time to finish their written work.

There is good teaching and learning in information and communication technology, physical education and in the aspects of design and technology that are taught. Planning in history, geography, and some religious education lessons, however, is not matched closely enough to the range of learning needs and abilities in the class, and leads to learning that is satisfactory rather than good. Gifted and talented pupils are identified early, and their learning is effectively promoted through individual education plans. Pupils with special educational needs are very well taught, and the learning of those with statements of special educational need is of exceptionally high quality. There are very good contributions to teaching and learning from teaching assistants and volunteers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall, with strengths in mathematics and provision for children up to five, but barely enough time for history and geography.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good, and exceptionally good for pupils with statements of special educational need, both learning and in personal development.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall, and excellent for moral and social development. Pupils become mature, considerate and responsible, and are well prepared for secondary education. The school provides a very good introduction to pupils' own and to other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent for pupils' safety, well-being and personal development. Good procedures for tracking and assessing progress.

The school has an excellent partnership with parents, the community and other schools. The home-school agreement includes a review of pupils' targets, and annual reports to parents are very good. Opportunities for learning outside the classroom are excellent. All adults in the school know pupils very well, and give effective day-to-day support and guidance. Pupils' progress is assessed very well in English, mathematics and science, but assessment needs to be developed in other subjects.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher combines a strong personal lead with very clear identification of priorities, efficient organisation and consistent arrangements to monitor progress. She and other key staff have created a very strong sense of teamwork throughout the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent. Governors play a full part in the leadership of the school, and work very closely with parents and the community.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school keeps very close track of its performance in relation to national standards and the work of similar schools.
The strategic use of resources	All staff and resources are deployed very well, and additional grants, especially for pupils with statements of special educational need, are used for the maximum benefit of the pupils.

The headteacher and governors have built up a good staff of suitably qualified and experienced teachers and assistants. The school has good accommodation and resources for learning, including a new computer suite with good software. The grounds are attractively laid out, and the site is maintained to a high standard by the caretaker and his staff. Subject co-ordinators provide good leadership, especially in mathematics and in work for children up to five. The management of special educational needs and of provision for gifted and talented pupils is an important strength. The school has excellent procedures for consulting parents and for obtaining the best value in its spending and allocation of resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is well led and managed. • The teaching is good. • Children are expected to work hard and do their best. • Parents would feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem • Children become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities outside lessons • Homework

The proportion of positive responses was well above average, and these parents' positive views were confirmed by inspection evidence. On the other hand, inspectors found that the range of activities outside lessons was much broader than in most schools, and excellent for a school of this size. They consider that the school makes good use of homework.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. At the time of the last inspection, eleven-year-olds were reaching average standards in most subjects, and below average standards in information and communication technology and religious education. Pupils with special educational needs were making satisfactory progress, but higher-attaining pupils were achieving less than they should. The school has transformed this situation. Standards in the 2000 national tests for eleven-year-olds in English and mathematics were well above average, both nationally and in comparison with similar schools. The rate of improvement since the last inspection has been above the national trend, and there was a sharp improvement in test results between 1999 and 2000. Pupils' work during the inspection, and the results of national tests and teachers' assessments for 2001, show further, very significant gains, especially in science. Two thirds of all pupils reached higher than expected standards in all three subjects, and 13 out of the 15 pupils did so in science. All pupils, including one with a statement of special educational need, reached the standard expected nationally in science. Pupils with statements of special educational need perform overall at very high standards in relation to their learning difficulties.
2. Standards in English throughout the school have improved most in reading and in speaking and listening, in response to effective use of discussion and skilled questioning by teachers and teaching assistants. Seven and eleven-year-olds reach above average standards in their best work, and do well when they have time to work on their writing. For example, a four-week course of writing for seven-year-olds, during which the class teacher concentrated solely on this age group, while the headteacher taught the six-year-olds in their class, brought about a very significant improvement in standards immediately prior to the inspection. The school plans to build on this success in the autumn term, when it will have additional teaching resources. However, standards in writing, both in national tests and in pupils' work in class, are generally lower than in reading. In a significant number of lessons, pupils do not have enough time to complete written work they have started, and this is limiting standards and progress. Older pupils' work in science contributes to learning in writing, but written work in other subjects contributes less than it should. Pupils with special educational needs related to literacy make very good progress in reading and satisfactory progress in writing.
3. Standards in mathematics, including numeracy, have shown particularly strong improvement since the last inspection, and are now well above average among both seven and eleven-year-olds. Pupils develop very good skills in mathematics across the whole range of the National Curriculum, with particular strength in number work. All pupils with special educational needs make very good long-term progress in mathematics, and the standards reached by those with statements of special educational need are often exceptionally good. Standards in science are well above average at eleven. Pupils have good understanding of investigation and experimental work, and of scientific vocabulary. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of science at seven is above average, though they do not record their findings regularly enough. Standards in information and communication technology at seven are broadly average, though pupils are using computers with increasing confidence, and can save and print their work independently. Eleven-year-olds use

computers well for a broad range of purposes, and are now reaching above average standards.

4. Standards in religious education, history and geography are broadly average throughout the school. Pupils develop sound understanding of Christianity and of other major faiths, and reach average standards in those aspects of history and geography that they study. Standards in all three subjects are lower than they should be, however, as planning does not provide sufficient challenge to higher-attaining pupils. Standards in history and geography also suffer from lack of teaching time. Most teachers do not have the specialised skills to enable pupils to reach above average standards in music lessons, and standards are broadly average. However, pupils sing well, and those taking instrumental music lessons reach well above average standards. Standards in design and technology are above average at seven. Eleven-year-olds reach good standards in the work they do, but there is too little of it.
5. Pupils throughout the school work confidently in a broad range of artistic media and techniques. They reach above average standards at seven, and well above average standards at eleven. These are reflected in beautiful displays of work around the school. Standards in physical education are above average throughout the school. Pupils develop good skills across a broad range of games and gymnastics, and almost all eleven-year-olds can swim 25 metres unaided.
6. Children up to five make very good progress in all aspects of their work, and standards are well above average by the time they start work on the National Curriculum. They do particularly well in mathematics and in early literacy work, and use computers confidently. They develop a strong interest in learning.
7. Gifted and talented pupils achieve very good standards, both in lessons and in specialised activities, such as musical performance. There is a trend of rising standards among pupils joining the school, though standards vary from year to year, and are average in mathematical understanding and in early literacy skills. However, many older pupils join the school with below average standards for their age, and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is higher than in most schools in comparable social contexts. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is well above average. In this context, standards reached by eleven-year-olds represent a very good level of achievement. Targets for pupils to reach nationally expected standards are, rightly, rigorous. The school meets these targets, and is also placing good emphasis on enabling as many pupils as possible to reach higher standards than those expected for their age.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. At the time of the last inspection, pupils had good attitudes to work and behaved well. The school has built very effectively on this strength, and attitudes and behaviour are now excellent. The school's work in this area builds on the values children bring from home, and parents at the pre-inspection meeting and in the school's own survey strongly supported it.
9. Children from the Little Pips playgroup on the school site are involved with many of the school's activities. They attend assemblies and play with the older pupils, who help look after them and send each child a birthday card. This ensures an exceptionally smooth start to school, and helps the children develop above average

social skills for their age. They make excellent progress in the reception class, learning to pay close attention to the teacher, to sustain concentration and to co-operate with each other. Children up to five also show consideration for other people in the school, including adults.

10. The layout of the building requires two classes to share one large room. Excellent behaviour ensures that pupils in each class can concentrate on their work without interruption. Pupils are conscientious in carrying out responsibilities, for example in ensuring that overhead transparencies are used in the right order in assembly. They are friendly and polite to visitors and to each other, and develop excellent understanding of their place in the community. Relationships throughout the school are friendly and respectful, and pupils appreciate the work that adults do for them. They enjoy learning, complete homework willingly, and are very actively involved in activities outside the classroom.
11. Minor, isolated incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with effectively, and no pupils have been excluded from the school since the last inspection. The behaviour and personal development of pupils with statements of special educational need, including those with serious behavioural difficulties, is exceptionally good. They are fully involved in all aspects of the work of their class, work to the limits of their abilities and are proud of their achievements. Attendance is well above average, with no unauthorised absence in the year prior to the inspection, and punctuality is very good.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

12. When the school was last inspected, most teaching was satisfactory to good, but long-term planning was weak, and there was no very good or excellent teaching. The school has made very good improvements to this situation. Teaching is now at least good in three quarters of lessons, and very good to excellent in almost half. There have been excellent improvements in planning to take account of the full range of attainment and ability in classes containing two year groups of pupils, including some gifted and talented pupils alongside others who have serious learning difficulties. Teachers have also greatly extended their use of collaborative work and of promoting speaking and listening skills in all subjects. As a result, pupils are strongly committed to their own learning, and are very well prepared for secondary school. For instance, one eleven-year-old, who had been achieving below average standards two years before the inspection, had now exceeded the standard expected in English, mathematics and science, and was grateful to his teachers for enabling him to do this.
13. The quality of teaching during the inspection was almost always good or better in English, mathematics and science. Teaching in mathematics, including number work, has shown the greatest improvement since the last inspection, and is now very good, with excellent features, for pupils aged five to eleven, and excellent for children up to five. Teachers have very clear knowledge and understanding of the subject, including the National Numeracy Strategy, and their planning is meticulous. Learning and presentation of pupils' work have been transformed, so that even pupils with serious learning difficulties are reaching standards close to those expected for their age, and pupils capable of reaching average and higher standards are fully extended.
14. The teaching of English is now good, and at times very good, in reading and in speaking and listening. The teaching of writing during the inspection was satisfactory, and very effective teaching for seven-year-olds, immediately before the

inspection, had enabled them to reach slightly above average standards in national tests. However, pupils' work over the year includes much that is unfinished, almost always because the time allowed for writing, in the second half of the literacy hour, did not enable pupils to complete work to a good standard. The teaching of spelling is systematic and effective for most pupils, but in some cases is not tied in closely enough to pupils' work, so that their spelling improves in tests, but not while they are writing. The teaching of writing in subjects other than English is satisfactory, and has good features, for example in making notes in science. However, some writing tasks do not make a full contribution to literacy skills. The school is adjusting its planning to deal with these issues. It was not possible to observe the teaching of science to pupils aged five to seven. Science teaching for pupils aged seven to eleven ranged in quality from good to very good. Very good teaching for pupils about to transfer to secondary school enabled them to develop a broad range of scientific skills and to reach above average standards.

15. The teaching of physical education is very good, with well-paced lessons that develop a broad range of skills. Teaching is good in art and design, where it includes exceptionally well-designed displays of pupils' work. The teaching of music, for which the school has no specialist, is satisfactory, and there is very good teaching of instrumental music. The school timetable provided limited opportunities during the three days of the inspection to observe teaching in information and communication technology, history, geography, and design and technology. Discussion with pupils and analysis of their work during the year indicated that teaching was good in information and communication technology, and satisfactory overall in the remaining subjects. In these subjects, and in other lessons in which the teaching is satisfactory rather than good, teachers plan activities that offer reasonable opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject. However, work is not matched closely enough to the range of learning needs in the class, and is too easy or too difficult for some pupils. In music, some teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is only just sufficient to enable them to teach effectively.
16. The teaching of children up to five is very good overall, with excellent teaching in mathematics and in personal development, where work during the inspection had a religious theme. Teaching throughout the new curriculum for children of this age-range is consistently well planned and enthusiastically presented, so that children develop a strong commitment to learning and enjoy their work. In mathematics, the quality of learning benefits from team teaching of very high quality.
17. The single personal, social and health education lesson observed during the inspection was excellent, with very well written role-play activities that obliged the pupils to think hard about difficult situations they might encounter in their lives outside school. Teaching enables gifted and talented pupils to make very good progress, particularly in mathematics and in instrumental music. It meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs very well, with exceptionally effective close support for those with statements of special educational need. This is reflected in the consistently excellent learning of these pupils, and in the standards they reach, which are often very high in relation to their learning difficulties.
18. The improvements in teaching, and particularly in planning, since the last inspection have been at the heart of the overall improvement in the school's work, and are the main reason for the recent sharp rise in standards in English, mathematics and science. The school is well placed to extend these qualities to subjects in which teaching is satisfactory.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

19. When the school was last inspected, there were significant weaknesses in the curriculum. Planning and co-ordination were weak, there were no schemes of work, and provision for information and communication technology and religious education did not meet legal requirements. The school has made very good improvements to its curriculum, particularly in planning to meet the needs of classes containing two year groups. The curriculum is now very good for children up to five and for those with special educational needs, and is good for other pupils, though further improvements are needed. The range of learning activities outside the classroom has been extended, and the community is playing a most valuable role in promoting learning and pupils' personal development. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, including sex education and education in the misuse of drugs, is very good. All legal requirements are met.
20. The curriculum for children up to five is very good; it is based upon the recently introduced national guidance for children of this age. All activities are carefully planned, and there is excellent provision for mathematics, including very effective support for lower-attaining pupils. This is a very good improvement since the previous inspection and prepares children very well for the National Curriculum.
21. The curriculum for pupils aged five to eleven is good overall, with emphasis on English, mathematics and science and on the use of computers. Planning for mixed-age classes in these subjects takes good account of the broad range of learning needs in each class, including those of pupils with special educational needs, and of gifted and talented pupils, who are given more demanding work, sometimes moving out of their own class for this purpose. Planning in mathematics is particularly effective, and leads to teaching and learning that are consistently very good or excellent in the subject. With the support of parents, the school has also given priority to physical education, ensuring that the pupils are regularly exercised and learn to swim well. Some subjects, however, notably history, geography and design and technology, now have barely enough teaching time to enable pupils to make satisfactory progress, and work in subjects other than English is not used consistently enough to promote literacy skills. The present curriculum has had a major impact on the improvement in standards since the last inspection, and the school is well placed to make the further adjustments that are needed.
22. Throughout the school, pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties are identified at an early stage and given effective additional teaching. Individual education plans are of excellent quality, with very clear targets and suggested teaching methods, and are followed through in the classroom. Provision for pupils with statements of special educational need, who have serious difficulties with learning and behaviour, including autism and Down's Syndrome, is of exceptional quality and leads to outstanding improvements in learning and behaviour. This work is a major strength of the school.
23. The school maintains an ethos that values everyone, and takes great care to ensure that equal opportunities are provided for all pupils, including those with particular gifts and talents. For example, a pupil with a talent for playing the piano is encouraged to perform regularly in assembly. The range of extra-curricular activities is excellent, especially for a small school. There is a before-school club and a homework club, both of which provide excellent support for learning, and the school has several

bands. Football and netball are open to boys and girls, and the gardening club contributes to the beauty of the school grounds. Ten and eleven-year-olds take part in a residential visit.

24. The contribution of the members of the community to the children's learning is outstanding. They have established the Little Pips pre-school group in the school grounds, which co-operates very closely with the school and provides an exceptionally well-supported start for the education of children in the village. The village gardening club created a pond for science investigations, to which the school has added a very large wild woodland walk. Local firms have sponsored sports kit. Many parents, grandparents and the local vicar are known as 'reading buddies' and support the pupils regularly. A community-school project has endowed the school with three beautiful mosaics of Offord in the past, which provide a focal point for the school hall. Ten and eleven-year-olds produce and distribute a community newsletter. The school has built up an excellent relationship with local secondary schools. The secondary co-ordinator for new pupils visits the school, and the eleven-year-olds visit the secondary school for a day with their teacher. They participate regularly in athletic events organised by secondary students in the Sixth Form, and students from secondary schools regularly visit the school for work experience.
25. Provision of spiritual development is good, with some outstanding features. In one excellent religious education lesson, children in the reception class developed good understand of generosity of spirit. Following a most exciting reading of the feeding of the five thousand, they made each other birthday cakes and happily shared their 'food' (play dough) with their friends. They then shared the task of clearing up. Older pupils showed great insight into the nature of forgiveness, one commenting that '...forgiveness is more than saying it. It is helping someone to start a new life'. On the other hand, there are relatively few opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work in some subjects, and the content of a minority of assemblies does not do enough to challenge pupils and sustain their interest.
26. Provision for moral education is excellent. Pupils not only learn right from wrong but also realise that it is by doing the right thing that a more positive world develops. For example, young pupils, realising that the teaching assistant had a great deal of equipment to clear after a games lesson, spontaneously went to help, and this encouraged other pupils to help too. The teachers, teaching assistants and all other adults in the school set the tone for such behaviour through the respect they have for the children and each other.
27. Social education is carefully planned, chiefly through the excellent personal, social and health education programme, which gives pupils relevant and comprehensive information and teaches them to make sensible choices. Pupils are encouraged to develop a strong sense of responsibility towards each other and the community. They work well together and they play well together and, with the great involvement of the local people in the school, the children develop an understanding of their place in the community.
28. Provision for cultural development is very good, particularly in music. A high proportion of pupils are learning musical instruments, and they perform as a small orchestra from time to time. Pupils often enter assemblies to the music of their friends. The fine mosaic displayed in the hall relates to early times in Offord and other fine pieces of work include Anglo-Saxon illuminated script and pictures based on Aboriginal art. Pupils receive a thorough introduction to their own and to other

cultures in assemblies, personal, social and health education and religious education. The school has a very good display of religious items from Buddhism, Islam and the Jewish faith.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

29. Offord School takes excellent care of its pupils. It is a happy, secure environment where pupils feel valued as individuals. The teachers and staff know the pupils well. Parents appreciate their high level of commitment and support, and find them very approachable and accessible. The support for pupils with special educational needs is outstanding. They have detailed assessment reports of exceptional quality that show a high level of insight into each pupil's individual needs. They address the needs of pupils who need extra help and those who require greater challenge to achieve their potential. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
30. The school has excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, with emphasis on self-discipline and consideration for others. Staff expect high standards of behaviour, and act very quickly to deal with isolated and rare incidents of bullying. Parents are confident that the school promotes very positive attitudes and values. Monitoring of attendance is excellent. The school has undertaken a detailed evaluation of absences and ensures that parents and pupils are fully aware of the importance of good attendance. Absences are rigorously followed up, and the headteacher does all she can to discourage holidays in term time.
31. Teachers work hard to keep track of pupils' personal development with detailed and regularly updated personal profiles. Information is shared across the staff for the pupils' benefit. Personal targets include social as well as academic aspects, and these are included in the home-school agreements, which are updated and signed annually. Personal development is promoted through the personal, social and health education curriculum, which focuses on health issues and sex education with the emphasis on independent learning and accepting responsibility. Child-protection procedures follow the local authority guidelines and teachers are trained to carry out their responsibilities. Health and safety procedures are secure and risk assessment is carried out regularly.
32. The school's concern for the pupils extends beyond its statutory responsibilities. Following consultation with parents, it founded an after-school club, 'Apple Jacks', which has a carefully planned programme of educational activities. A homework club effectively supports pupils who have difficulty completing their homework at home. The school has very strong links with the on-site playgroup, which is run by a committee of parents, a teacher and a governor. They include the playgroup children in school events so they are familiar with life in school before they arrive, and the playgroup leader also helps with the school lunches. Some children who will be starting next term told inspectors with delight how much they were looking forward to going to the 'big school'. This high level of support both in and out of school makes a very positive contribution to pupils' learning.

33. There are very effective arrangements to assess and track pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science. The school uses the information generated from this very well in planning work, both to build on high achievement and to identify and tackle problems at an early stage. This often has a direct effect on improving standards, for example in mathematics and in writing for seven-year-olds. In subjects in which the teaching is satisfactory rather than good, however, pupils' work is not assessed with the same rigour, and this contributes to a lack of challenge. The school has excellent systems for identifying and planning for the needs of gifted and talented pupils and for those with special educational needs. Individual education plans for these pupils are of very high quality, and include personal development as well as education targets.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

34. Parents responded very positively to the questionnaire and at the parents' meeting about all aspects of the school. They particularly praised great improvements in standards since the last inspection, which they considered were due to the headteacher's excellent leadership and managerial skills, 'a top professional', as one parent put it.
35. Parental involvement in the school is excellent. Many parents help in school on a regular basis, for example by helping with the teaching of reading. The school really appreciates their valuable support and provides effective training and guidance. One parent acts as an unofficial press officer, securing much coverage in the local press for the pupils' achievements. Parents who serve on the governing body make valuable contributions through a wide range of specialist skills. The thriving parent-teacher association makes significant financial contributions each year. Recently, over £5000 was raised for equipment in the new information technology suite, and parents raised over £2000 for the adventure playground. The strong partnership between the school and parents is reinforced by the home-school agreement, which contains targets for pupils and is renewed annually. The school regularly canvasses parents for their views and concerns and acts upon them promptly. Good examples of this are the renewed homework policy and the response to a request for French classes, which will start after school next term. Most parents give good support with homework and respond positively to attendance at the homework club.
36. The school keeps parents very well informed about their children's progress and school events. The school brochure and the Governors' Annual Report to parents are detailed, attractive, and professionally produced. Weekly newsletters, which also include village news, are useful and informative. Curriculum letters are sent each term and curriculum meetings are held. Parents praised the system of target books as a means of keeping track of their children's progress. The standard of annual reports has improved since the last inspection, they have a strong personal touch, give parents a clear idea of their children's achievements, and contain good personal guidance. Parents' meetings are held each term and parents find them very useful, with teachers willing to go into as much detail as requested. Particular care is taken to involve parents whose children have special educational needs and those of gifted and talented pupils.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37. At the time of the last inspection, the school had no permanent headteacher. The acting headteacher had made a positive contribution to leadership and management over a very short time, but co-ordinators were not able to carry out their responsibilities effectively. The community was not sufficiently involved in the school, and its future was threatened by falling numbers of pupils.
38. The present headteacher and governors have made an excellent improvement in all aspects of the leadership and management of the school. They began by giving priority to raising standards by improving the quality of teaching. Teaching is now monitored regularly in all subjects, and this is supported by professional development in subjects where teachers need to improve their skills. The initial emphasis, in line with national priorities, has been on English and mathematics, and the school has more recently improved teaching in science. As a result, overall standards are now well above average, and the learning of pupils with special educational needs is very good, with exceptional progress on the part of the pupils with the most serious difficulties. Improvements to planning for younger pupils and for children up to five have raised standards and the quality of learning, particularly when the school has identified and addressed weaknesses in its own work, for example in the teaching of writing to seven-year-olds in the run-up to national tests. These improvements in standards have transformed the school's standing in the community. They are reflected in the high proportion of positive replies to the parents' questionnaire, and in the number of pupils in the school, which has risen by over 60 per cent since the last inspection. The school deploys additional teaching resources very effectively to points of need.
39. The headteacher and governors plan very effectively for the development of the school, and keep a clear eye on the need to raise standards further. They compare the school's results closely with those of similar schools, and set realistic and demanding targets for improvement, which the school meets. The governors investigate specific concerns in great detail. For example, they have analysed authorised absence very closely, even though attendance is well above average, in order to detect any weaknesses at an early stage. The school consults parents and the community widely, and a press officer ensures that the school's achievements are reported in neighbouring villages. Financial planning is detailed and effective, and funds are directed towards the school's education priorities, for example in ensuring adequate support for pupils with special educational needs and in the new computer suite. The governors and headteacher have made very significant improvements in the school's relationship with the village, and this has generated significant sponsorship for equipment and for activities, such as the gardening club.
40. There have been significant improvements in the work of key staff since the last inspection. Co-ordinators in English, mathematics, science, art and design, information and communication technology, physical education, personal, social and health education and work for children up to five provide very effective leadership. This has contributed to rising standards, particularly where teachers have to plan for more than one year group in their class. Except for music, in which the school has no specialist, co-ordinators of work in other subjects have the skills they need to lead and manage their subjects, although these have received less attention in the school's priorities. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is outstanding, and has enabled pupils with serious behavioural difficulties to

take a full part in the life of the school without interfering with the learning of others. The school has an inclusive ethos, and welcomes pupils with special educational needs and the small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

41. The school has sufficient qualified teachers to teach all of the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, and is very well provided with qualified and experienced teaching assistants. It has good accommodation, including attractively laid-out grounds, and good resources for learning. There is good access to the site for people with disabilities.
42. The management and leadership of the headteacher and governors are excellent. Together, they have built a strong sense of teamwork that goes beyond the staff to involve the whole of the village in its school. They have placed the school in an excellent position to build on its success.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

43. In order to continue the excellent pattern of improvement that they have established, the headteacher and governors should take the following steps:
 - (1) Improve the teaching and learning of writing, by:
 - improving planning for writing in the literacy hour and in other lessons;
 - ensuring that pupils have time to complete their work to a good standard;
 - integrating the teaching of spelling with pupils' writing.
 - (2) Raise standards, particularly in history and geography, by:
 - providing enough time for pupils to make good progress in each subject;
 - integrating reading and writing in all subjects with work in the literacy hour;
 - ensuring that all pupils work consistently to the highest possible standard.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	29
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
14	34	28	24	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	117
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	20

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.3
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	9	2	11

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Total	11	11	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (88)	100 (88)	100 (88)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	88 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Total	11	10	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (88)	91 (88)	100 (88)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	8	6	14

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Total	14	12	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (76)	86 (71)	100 (82)
	National	75 (70)	88 (86)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Total	12	12	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	86 (65)	86 (59)	93 (65)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	93
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	29

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	156

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	214,885
Total expenditure	211,201
Expenditure per pupil	1993
Balance brought forward from previous year	7801
Balance carried forward to next year	11485

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	112
Number of questionnaires returned	49

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	39	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	61	35	2	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	35	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45	43	6	4	2
The teaching is good.	71	27	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	47	4	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	24	0	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	22	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	47	43	6	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	76	24	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	27	4	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	41	8	4	6

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

44. The school makes very good provision for children up to five. The quality of teaching is very good and has a positive impact on children's learning. This represents a very good improvement since the previous inspection, when the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory.
45. The standards reached by children joining the school have improved recently, and most begin with skills that are above average for their age. They show particular strengths in personal, social and emotional development and well above average speaking and listening skills. This is confirmed by initial assessments conducted with these young children. Most children are on target to exceed all the early learning goals before they are five. In literacy, most were working within the Programmes of Study of the National Curriculum at the time of the inspection. Standards in numeracy are very high as a result of the excellent quality of teaching in this area.
46. Almost all children have had nursery or playgroup experience. Most attended the Little Pips playgroup, with which the school has established very good links.

Personal, social and emotional development

47. Most children enter the reception class with above the expected levels in their personal, social and emotional development. The good quality of teaching by all staff ensures good achievement and above average standards by the time the children start work on the National Curriculum.
48. Children thrive in a secure, lively and colourful environment. They respond positively to school rules and their behaviour is very good. All staff are on the lookout for small improvements and reward children immediately. As a result, children are confident in their approach to learning tasks and when talking to other children or adults. When working together to make a three-dimensional mathematical model, they listen to the ideas of others and give their opinions confidently. Children relate well to skilful staff, who fully understand the steps and support needed in the development of young children socially and emotionally. All adults provide very good role-models for children. They sit with children during activities and take evident pleasure in every achievement. This quickly rubs off on children, who come to school looking eagerly to see what is on offer today.
49. Expectations of what children can do, in terms of looking after themselves and their belongings, are high. Children take responsibility for a range of duties, including taking the register back to the office and tidying up at the ends of sessions. They change independently for games and successfully follow well-established routines for using a range of exciting indoor and outdoor resources.

Communication, language and literacy

50. Children entering the reception class in the year of the inspection had above average skills in speaking and listening, but average skills in early reading. The quality of teaching is very good so that by the end of the year nearly all children are on target to

exceed the early learning goals. By the summer term, most children have begun work on the National Curriculum.

51. All staff give high priority to developing confident speakers and purposeful listeners. Activities begin with well organised discussions, with the teacher asking challenging questions. One girl explained the difference between a raincoat and other coats by stating, 'The raincoat will protect you from the wet but others will keep you warm'. Children enjoy listening to stories. They calm down extremely quickly, even after exuberant activities, if they know a story is coming. All staff make their high expectations clear to children who, as a result, listen carefully and express their own views confidently. Adults give children time to talk and take an interest in what they say. As a result, good speaking and listening skills become very good speaking and listening skills.
52. Elements of the National Literacy Strategy are very well used, including both word- and text-level work. Teachers have good knowledge of basic skills development, and children make very good progress in learning letter sounds. Activities planned are varied and matched well to identified needs. They develop learning effectively. Achievement is very good, especially as early assessments show that this is an area where standards on entry are average. Higher-attaining children have started to read a range of early books. Children have access to a good range of books and regularly take them home to share with parents. Reading development is well supported by sound assessment systems, which guide and inform planning for each stage of development.
53. Children are taught how to form letters properly and this is linked effectively to their learning of the ways in which letters represent sounds. Higher-attaining children learn to write in well-constructed sentences and are already aware of the importance of full stops and capital letters. When describing a seaside picture, children show confidence in their independent writing skills. The few children who are still at the very early stages of writing receive good support as a result of clear assessments of their needs.

Mathematical development

54. This area of learning is particularly well taught. Children enter school with average number skills, and leave the reception class with skills that are well above average, far exceeding the early learning goals. The quality of teaching is excellent, and benefits from support of equal quality from the headteacher.
55. Elements of the National Numeracy Strategy are used very well to give shape and focus to lessons. All children can count and sequence numbers, most go up to 20 with some going on much further. Children see mental mathematics as fun because the teacher keeps it lively and active. They sing as they add and subtract, using numbers to 20 with ease. As the teacher involves them by name, children cannot wait to hear who is in the next sum! A very well-chosen range of practical activities supports learning. Children use 'Ellie flips', pictures of elephants, to learn addition and subtraction bonds to ten. Higher-attaining children carry out successful investigations into the number 14, finding at least three number combinations that add up to it. These advanced mathematical skills are well used to inform children's three-dimensional model making. Robots, rockets and aeroplanes are known to need cubes, cylinders and cuboids. The teacher has very high expectations of children, and translates these into high achievement.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

56. Children start school with good understanding of the world around them, and the school develops this well. Children visit the orchard area to identify its features. They then make good comparisons with features seen in other parts of Offord. Teaching assistants and helpers are particularly well used to support activities, enabling good development of children's speaking and listening skills. Very good teaching strategies support learning about the way weather patterns influence the clothes we wear. Children confidently choose items of clothing to match the teacher's description of a hot or cold day. Very good use is made of music to focus attention on weather patterns. Good attention is given to developing children's awareness of the pattern of the days of the week, months of the year and seasons.
57. The quality of teaching of information and communication technology skills is very good. Good assessment of the children's skills informs teachers' planning for time in the computer suite and promotes very effective learning. Technical language is explained and successfully modified and matched to the needs of these children. Displays show good standards in using computer programs to support learning about the seaside.
58. Children are particularly good at using construction toys. These are of good quality. The teacher's good planning adds an air of excitement to their use as higher-attaining children, guided by instruction cards, challenge each other to build models to a rigorous specification. Models made from scrap materials successfully enhance mathematical and social learning, as groups work co-operatively supported by skilful adult guidance.

Physical development

59. Children have good access to both inside and outside areas for physical activities. In their small secure outdoor area they use a good range of wheeled toys. They have regular lessons in the hall, where they run, jump and balance to a good standard. Children change independently and put a great deal of effort into improving ball skills. Physical development is also enhanced by the allocation of a reception class play area during break and lunchtimes, where children can gradually become confident when moving in a large space with older pupils about.
60. The very good range of activities planned helps children develop skills in handling simple tools, malleable materials and construction kits. Such activities support children's developing eye and hand co-ordination. Children follow simple safety rules and use equipment sensibly. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and children are on target to exceed the early learning goals.

Creative development

61. Children enjoy all creative learning. Sound teaching enables good standards to be maintained. Close co-operation between teachers, assistants and helpers enables children to learn effectively. They were engrossed by a good demonstration of printing techniques, showing joy, as a painted hand became a colourful fish. They were very keen to try out this new learning, though in this activity there were too few opportunities for children to explore their own ideas. Children know and obey well-

established routines for the care of resources. They cut and paste adeptly and persevere until they are satisfied with their model aeroplane.

62. Children join in confidently when performing their large repertoire of number and learning rhymes. Singing is used very well to support all areas of learning and is a strength of provision for creative development. Imaginative play areas have been successfully created and are very well used by children. Roles are agreed by discussion and strictly adhered to. In a beach café, money is not taken from a customer until the waiter delivers their order. Learning through play is good. Imaginative play allows achievements to be made in moving confidently, playing agreeably and responding very positively to the interest and attention of adults.

ENGLISH

63. Standards were broadly average at the time of the inspection, and have risen sharply. Standards in national tests for eleven-year-olds in 2000 were well above average, and there was a further rise in 2001 tests and teachers' assessments, in which all pupils who did not have special educational needs reached the nationally expected standard, and two thirds exceeded it. The proportion of eleven-year-olds exceeding the nationally expected standard in national tests doubled from 2000 to 2001. However, while standards rose in both reading and writing, they remain lower in writing than in reading. Standards at seven are above average in reading, slightly above average in writing, and well above average in speaking and listening. As these pupils had reached average standards in communication, language and literacy when they joined the school, standards at seven represent a good level of achievement. Standards at eleven represent a very good level of achievement. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very good overall standards in English, with excellent learning and progress from those with statements of special educational need. There has been very good improvement in English since the last inspection, and this trend is continuing.
64. Speaking and listening skills develop very well throughout the school in response to teachers' careful use of question-and-answer sessions in all subjects. Pupils listen well to the teacher and to each other, and are prepared to change their minds in response to other people's arguments. They learn to express their views clearly, and to support them with evidence, either from texts or from direct observation. They think quickly in oral sessions in mathematics, show close understanding of technical points in discussing English grammar, and share ideas well in art and design. In a minority of lessons, in which the content is not pitched at a high enough level, pupils do not have to think hard enough, and their speaking and listening skills mark time. Nevertheless, by the time they move on to secondary school, pupils sustain fluent conversations on matters that interest them, with appropriate use of formal language and complex sentences. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with behavioural difficulties, take a full part in speaking and listening, often with the support of a teaching assistant, and develop skills close to those of other pupils of their age.
65. Almost all eleven-year-olds read to well above average standards. They pay attention to detail, and their answers to comprehension questions show very good skills in detecting meaning below the surface level of a text. The oldest pupils' reading shows good understanding of complex vocabulary, though some pupils of average attainment for the school are less confident in their phrasing when reading aloud. Pupils aged five to seven make good progress in the early stages of learning

to read. They learn to use the links between letters and sounds effectively in the literacy hour, and can often correct their own errors when reading aloud. Learning benefits from regular reading at home, and from the work of skilled parents and volunteers in school.

66. The quality of learning in writing is satisfactory, though it is less consistent than in other aspects of English. Seven and eleven-year-olds make significant improvements in their writing in response to concentrated teaching in preparation for national tests. Their writing in these lessons shows good attention to detail, and improvements in sentence construction and composition. However, much of the writing in other lessons, particularly in the second half of the literacy hour, is compressed into too short a time, and is often left unfinished. This prevents pupils from building up the writing skills they need to produce work of consistently high quality. The quality of writing in subjects other than English is also inconsistent. Pupils aged ten to eleven write good notes and accounts of experiments in science, and pupils aged seven and eight write well in geography. However, much of the writing pupils carry out is not planned in sufficient detail to enable them to make progress in writing as well as in the subject. The writing of pupils with statements of special educational need is neat, accurate, and close to the standard expected of pupils of their age. This is an exceptional achievement given the nature of their learning difficulties, and owes much to very effective support from teaching assistants.
67. The overall quality of teaching in English is good. Teachers have very good understanding of the National Curriculum and of the National Literacy Strategy, and plan work in great detail to match the broad range of learning needs in each class. They manage their classes excellently, provide very clear explanations of points of difficulty, and ask skilful questions that probe and develop pupils' thinking. The design of tasks often has an imaginative twist that engages pupils' interest. In the most successful lessons, teachers use their extensive knowledge of children's literature to devise interesting writing activities, such as describing a variety of dragon, the 'Cambridgeshire Whip-tongue', in the style of A J Rawlings. On the other hand, while teachers' planning ensures a good balance of reading and writing tasks within lessons, it does not always provide pupils with time to finish their writing, and this impedes learning. The teaching of writing is, however, very effective in lessons in which it is the main priority. Teachers make good use of marking and other assessment techniques to track and promote progress, and to identify pupils with special educational needs. They make effective use of homework.
68. The co-ordination of English is effective. Teaching is regularly monitored, and its effectiveness, with the progress of each pupil, is tracked through voluntary national tests. The school takes action to build on strengths and to address weaknesses. For example, the lower standards in writing are addressed in the school development plan, and teachers have begun to change the focus of teaching within lessons to give greater priority to writing. This contributed to rising standards in the period prior to national tests. The school provides a good range of additional learning opportunities, including a book week and a homework club. There is some effective use of computers in English teaching, but this could be further developed. The library is well stocked and enables pupils to develop good skills in reading non-fiction.

MATHEMATICS

69. Standards in mathematics are well above average. Standards in national tests in 2000 were well above average for both seven and eleven-year-olds, in terms both of national average standards and of the standards reached in similar schools. Standards in national tests for 2001 showed further improvements in the proportion of pupils exceeding the standard expected nationally, including an exceptionally high mark from a gifted and talented pupil. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection, when standards were average for both seven and eleven-year-old pupils. Pupils now have very good basic mathematical skills and as a result are confident in their approach to all mathematical tasks. Pupils with special educational needs are identified very early, and make very good progress as a result of work that is carefully matched to their needs. Pupils who are gifted mathematicians are also identified and given enhanced programmes of work, sometimes working with older pupils. As a result, they too make very good progress. Pupils begin work on the National Curriculum with above average standards in mathematics, reflecting the flying start to mathematics that children receive in the reception class. The school builds most successfully on this good start, and the overall level of achievement in mathematics is very good.
70. By the age of seven, pupils have a good understanding of numbers to 1000, and are competent with addition and subtraction, using two digit numbers. Most have begun to learn multiplication tables and apply this knowledge to work with fractions. Pupils use these above average skills confidently when working with sums of money up to £10. The teacher and learning assistants working with pupils aged five to seven are skilled at increasing the level of challenge imperceptibly, through carefully-staged questioning. As a result, pupils have very good opportunities to investigate problems, put forward hypotheses and estimate numerical results.
71. By the age of eleven, pupils are very good at mental calculations, using all four rules of number. Teaching and learning routines have been well established, so that, for example, a very large group of pupils on a very hot day showed real enthusiasm for a number chase. Above average skills give pupils confidence in their approach to problems based on real life, and teachers enable them to apply their mathematics skills well, for example to identify all the mathematics needed to ensure that their forthcoming musical production is successful. Ideas ranged from estimating how many people you could get in the hall to working out the size of the stage area. Skills in number, algebra, space, shape and measures, and data handling are very good. As a result, mathematics is a lively and enjoyable subject, a favourite activity for most pupils.
72. The quality of teaching is always very good, and was excellent in a third of lessons for pupils aged five to eleven. The teaching of the basic skills of number work in mathematics is excellent. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of mathematics, and provide very well for the wide range of ability in each class. They monitor progress regularly and use the information from this assessment to place pupils in ability-related sets, spanning two year-groups. These groups are flexible and take account of strengths and individual areas for development across the full range of the National Curriculum. Pupils have such good knowledge of their own learning that they know why they might be in a top group for fractions but in group 2 when working on other topics. Work planned is varied and interesting, and problem-solving is related to real life experiences. All teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Even pupils identified as below average are working at levels

which are at the national average. The pace of lessons is very good. Teachers have successfully implemented the numeracy strategy but have a flexible approach. If on-going assessment tells them a point needs further explanation, that is rightly seen as a priority. Information technology is used well to support data handling. The very good contribution made by able support staff and volunteers, fully involved in all planning, further enhances this picture of effective teaching and learning in mathematics. On the other hand, teachers do not develop and apply pupils' mathematical skills enough in other subjects.

73. The subject has been extremely well led by a knowledgeable and outward-looking co-ordinator, the headteacher. Monitoring of teaching has taken place regularly and is viewed positively by teachers. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' work are very good. Information from them is used in teachers' planning and is regularly shared with parents, together with ideas for further mathematical activities. Homework is systematically given and is taken seriously by pupils. Resources are good and their use increases the lively approach to the subject, which is doing so much to raise pupils' standards throughout the school.

SCIENCE

74. Standards have shown very good improvement since the last inspection, and are above average at seven and well above average at eleven. Results in national tests for eleven-year-olds in 2000 were above average, and there was a further sharp improvement in these tests in 2001: all pupils, including one with a statement of special educational need, reached the standard expected nationally, and almost nine tenths exceeded it. This outstanding result was reflected in the quality of the oldest pupils' work during the inspection.
75. It was not possible to observe teaching for pupils aged five to seven during the inspection, but analysis of their work and of their teacher's planning indicates that standards are above average. The teacher's planning is very detailed and takes good account of the range of learning needs in the class. The curriculum is very well covered, and every opportunity is taken to give pupils first-hand experience in their investigations. A very good example of this was the experiment showing how germs are spread. One pupil had paint (the germs) spread over a hand and then shook hands with another who in turn shook hands and so on. This developed into a good investigation, with fair testing, where the pupils discovered how best to wash away the germs. However, much work is oral. Pupils' recording of their work is very brief and does not clearly convey the level of understanding achieved, although it does reflect their interest and enthusiasm for the subject.
76. Standards and the quality of learning for pupils aged between seven and eleven are very good, and pupils' attitudes are very positive. In one lesson for seven to nine-year-olds, pupils explained clearly the life cycle of a flowering plant. They realised the importance of the flower's function of producing seeds, following a good and well illustrated teaching session. The pupils' enthusiasm was such that most voluntarily brought in seeds to sow them and watch them germinate and grow. Pupils aged ten to eleven demonstrated their wide and far-reaching understanding of scientific method in a very good series of lessons. After studying techniques of propagation, they became deeply engrossed in investigating whether and how cut-up potatoes, dandelion roots and succulent leaves might propagate. Pupils worked very well in groups, discussing the possibilities, and then made individual predictions, which they explained very well. They also took the opportunity to find out, by fair testing, the

best conditions in which the plants might propagate. The pupils recorded their investigations carefully, taking pride in their work.

77. The quality of teaching in science is very good, and has shown major improvement since the last inspection. Planning is very detailed and includes skilful questioning based on extensive subject knowledge, which challenges the pupils to think. Work is very well adapted to suit pupils with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils. The school's emphasis on teaching through first-hand experience fires the pupils' interest, and this is combined with high expectations, which lead pupils to study issues in depth and reach high standards. Independent learning features strongly, and this gives the pupils growing confidence in their own abilities to achieve well. The management of pupils is excellent and is characterised mainly by the respect the teachers have for them. It also gives the pupils space and time to reflect on their work in a purposeful and calm environment.
78. The co-ordination of science is very good, and has contributed much to the improvement in standards. The co-ordinator monitors the teaching regularly, pupils' work is assessed in very good detail, and information from this assessment is used to guide planning. Computers are under-used in teaching science, but other resources are very good and very well used.

ART AND DESIGN

79. Standards are above average at seven and very good at eleven, particularly when pupils are working in the style of famous artists. Standards and provision have improved substantially since the last inspection, when some of the work was unsatisfactory. The learning of pupils with special educational needs is very good, and the subject provides good scope for pupils with talents for art and design.
80. Six-year-old pupils had painted very atmospheric and recognisable pictures of winter woodland scenes. They produced similarly misty chalk-drawn pictures about a fox that had been spotted one day. Their work related well to the teaching of other topics and there was a good display of painted trains. Teachers introduce pupils to a wide range of artistic media, and seven-year-olds produce ceramic tiles from their observational drawings of houses. There was a wealth of colour to be found in their displays of 'Joseph's Coats'.
81. Eleven-year-olds reach well above average standards in their work. The quality of the Monet-inspired chalk drawings is outstanding, as are a group of mixed-media townscapes based on Cézanne. There are fun drawings too, miniatures on wanted posters and many historically inspired and colourful Roman mosaics, which are very well executed. Pupils prior to the inspection had produced an outstanding display of Tudor miniature portraits. A broad range of artistic traditions and cultures is represented in the work of pupils aged seven to eleven, including Aboriginal art and clay masks.
82. Teachers make art and design lessons vibrant and rewarding. They plan work carefully to ensure that pupils use a broad range of materials and techniques, and provide very good opportunities for them to reflect on their work. Teachers have exceptional talents in presenting pupils' work in displays, which promote high standards in art as well as contributing to the learning environment of the school. Teaching assistants make a most effective contribution, especially in areas such as mask-making, in which they have particular skills.

83. Co-ordination is good, and the school's policies and planning have been well revised to reflect the changes in the curriculum. The school has good resources for the subject and makes very good use of them. The contribution of art and design to pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures has shown particular improvement since the last inspection, and is now very good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

84. At the time of the last inspection, standards were broadly average throughout the school. They remain average at eleven, but are now above average for seven-year-olds. The school has improved its planning for the subject on the basis of national guidance, but standards at eleven have yet to improve because pupils do not have enough time to practice and consolidate their skills. Pupils with special educational needs have good support when required and make good progress.
85. Six and seven-year-olds have carried out some very good research on the best way of joining fabrics. Each pupil has produced a very good sampler card of different materials with very good evaluations of the suitability of the different methods used. This is a very good preliminary exercise, well considered by the teacher, before making a 'coat of many colours'. The partially-finished coats reflect the original designs well. They also show the great interest and good attitude of the pupils towards the subject of design and technology. When pupils aged eight and nine years worked on cards with moving parts (paper engineering), they did so very carefully and the results are well made and neatly finished. Fairground rides, produced by pupils aged ten to eleven, had strong structures, but their working mechanisms were only developed from recycled materials and were just satisfactory. They were, however, attractively made and well finished, and showed the potential for higher standards if the ideas behind them had been further developed.
86. While no teaching was observed during the inspection, pupils' work indicates that they understand the process involved in designing and making satisfactorily, and that they reach above average standards when the subject is given additional attention.
87. Co-ordination and resources for learning are good. The policy is good and the schemes of work are successfully adapted from national schemes. Pupils' work is regularly assessed and the results of this are used to guide future planning. The school is very well placed to raise standards at eleven.

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

88. Standards in both subjects are broadly average throughout the school, though pupils occasionally reach above average standards in aspects that they have either studied closely or that have caught their interest. At the time of the last inspection, pupils aged five to seven did marginally better than this in geography, but standards have otherwise shown little change. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make sound progress. Most pupils have good literacy and numeracy skills and are therefore well equipped to achieve better than they do.
89. Seven-year-olds gain good understanding of similarities and differences between different sites, and during the inspection had been strongly motivated by a recent visit to Hunstanton. Preparation for the visit had been good, with pupils predicting what they would see in Hunstanton. One wrote, 'I will see a lighthouse, the sea and a car

park'. Pupils gain sound knowledge of local places as a result of good fieldwork. However, opportunities to involve them, especially more able mathematicians, in devising recording methods for findings, are missed. Good word-banks are built up to take account of what pupils have noticed, but all pupils record their work in exactly the same way. In history, pupils aged five to seven had completed only occasional pieces of written work, to broadly average standards. No history lessons for this age group took place during the inspection.

90. Pupils aged seven to eleven reach broadly average standards in their work on aspects of the National Curriculum, including coastal erosion, Victorian England and invaders and settlers. However, pupils aged seven and eight reached significantly higher standards in environmental work, which included analysis of noise level recordings, with good graphs that communicated their results clearly. These pupils' litter investigations, both in the school area and the village, involved good mapwork to show findings, and all pupils made good use of computers. These higher standards indicate both what the pupils are capable of in history and geography, and the contribution the subjects can make to a broad range of learning skills.
91. Opportunities to observe teaching in both subjects were severely limited by the school's timetable. The single lesson observed in geography was satisfactory. Discussion with older pupils, and analysis of their work and of teachers' planning, indicate that teaching is satisfactory, though some lessons do not fully challenge higher-attaining pupils. Teachers plan from a selection of national and local schemes of work, which ensure adequate coverage of the National Curriculum, but do not always refer to the more demanding National Curriculum level descriptions in planning for higher-attaining pupils. Overall, standards in both subjects have been limited by the school's decision to give priority to literacy and numeracy, and it is now in a position to improve them.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

92. Apart from one lesson in the reception class, no information and communication technology lessons were observed during the inspection. However, discussions with pupils and analysis of their work indicate that standards are above average at seven and eleven. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection, where standards were unsatisfactory. All areas of weakness noted in the last report have been eliminated, and pupils are competent in using computers for many purposes. Pupils who will shortly be leaving school will have had the advantage of a very wide curriculum in information and communication technology, and those with special educational needs have made good progress.
93. Five-year-olds begin work on the National Curriculum with a good range of skills for their age, and understand how to access a program and to follow it through. One child happily explained to a visitor how to use the program selecting a mini-beast and writing about it. They access a word bank successfully and can delete errors. The children are not always in full control of the mouse, but they know where they want it to go.
94. Seven-year-olds operate computers independently, can save and print their work, and use art programs effectively. Eleven-year-olds can devise their own program to include animations and sound effects to interest a particular audience, interpret and store data well and can use spreadsheets. Teachers' detailed planning shows the depth of coverage, and pupils make good progress throughout the year.

95. Co-ordination is very good and the co-ordinator has driven the subject very well in order to give confidence to teachers and to raise standards. She gives good support to teaching through monitoring and arranges for much in-service training for all members of staff. Resources, both in computers and in software, are very good and there is now an extensive computer suite so whole classes can use computers at the same time. The school is very well placed to develop its work further.

MUSIC

96. Standards in music are broadly average at seven and eleven, and they are good in singing, where pupils show confidence and enjoyment. Pupils taking instrumental music lessons reach well above average standards. The school is good at identifying pupils who need extra support, especially behavioural support, to cope with music lessons, and provides gifted and talented pupils with opportunities to develop and share their musical abilities with others. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
97. At seven, pupils listen carefully to music and clap, tap and march in time to the beat. The teacher is very quick to note and praise interesting variations in clapping strategies, as pupils work successfully with a partner. This encourages individuality in response and pupils work hard at composing original patterns. When given the opportunity to use a good range of percussion instruments, pupils do so with a lively yet sensible approach. They sing with a pleasing tone, managing to learn a new song joyfully. Because the teacher is using a well-structured published scheme, lessons contain the right amount of challenge and interest for these young pupils.
98. A similar pattern of sound teaching and learning is seen in classes for pupils aged seven to eleven. Eleven-year-olds thoroughly enjoyed learning a new song, well linked to computer experiences. The teacher was particularly good at interjecting challenging questions in order to combat any fatigue felt by pupils on an extremely hot day. As a result, pupils successfully varied the tempo of the song, and volunteered in large numbers to accompany whole class singing on chime bars, responding well to a challenging beat. Younger pupils reached above average standards when painting a musical picture of a storm, using a good range of percussion instruments. Throughout the school, music making is enhanced by pupils' ability to work and rehearse in co-operative groups. The quality of junior singing, as they rehearse for their summer production, is above average. They sing with feeling and evident enjoyment, with some outstanding individual performances. The curriculum is enriched by the range of instrumental teaching available, with almost a quarter of the school taking lessons.
99. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, and good in some lessons. The school has done well to take note of a relative weakness in musical expertise and take effective steps to remedy this. The co-ordinator has introduced a good scheme of work, which enables teachers without special expertise to teach music successfully. It is very new and plans are in hand to review the effectiveness of the scheme, once teachers are familiar with it. It has had a very positive impact on learning by ensuring that pupils cover the full Programmes of Study of the National Curriculum, and that pupils enjoy making music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

100. Standards are above average throughout the school, and have improved since the last inspection, when they were broadly average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and are well supported. The very good quality of learning seen during the inspection indicates that standards are set to improve further.
101. The quality of learning and progress is very good. Six and seven-year-olds work very hard to better their skills in batting, catching and throwing accurately. They show considerable awareness of space, and move very sensibly to avoid unintentional contact. Pupils understand that the heart beats faster during exercise in order to pump blood around the body to give it energy. They listen carefully to their teacher, who does not have to repeat instructions. Although the weather during the inspection was very hot, pupils never flagged, so keen were they to improve their standards. They also showed consideration to the teaching assistant by volunteering to put the apparatus away.
102. Pupils aged eight and nine caught and threw to a higher standard and were improving their work at a faster rate. The teacher made the games more complex, and the pupils were kept very busy working out strategies to improve their performance. Though they were quite competitive, the pupils showed a great deal of sportsmanship, which made for an enjoyable but very focused session. Pupils discovered that by throwing the ball in different directions they were likely to score more runs. The response to the teaching was very good and the pupils' attitude was very positive throughout.
103. In swimming, the oldest age-groups work very hard in the pool, and standards and learning are good. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress here, and 90 per cent of the pupils in their final year at the school can swim 25 metres or more. Their attitude to swimming is purposeful and all pupils endeavour to improve their skills. Their very good behaviour enhances their opportunities in learning, and teachers adapt work very well to local conditions, for example by having some pupils swim in t-shirts and trousers so that they will know what it is like to swim in clothes in case of an accident.
104. The overall quality of teaching is very good. The teachers' brisk pace ensures that the pupils have plenty of opportunity to exercise and improve their techniques. They have very good knowledge and understanding of the games, which they have devised themselves, and which are very appropriate to the age of the pupils. In selecting groups or teams for games, teachers make sure that no individual is left out or embarrassed in any way. This ensures that all pupils are engaged in their work and enjoy it.
105. The school has allowed good time for physical education in the curriculum, and co-ordination is very good. There is a large training programme for all the staff, and the local authority adviser has led many of these sessions. This, with monitoring of lessons, has contributed to the consistency and quality of teaching. Accommodation is very good with a large hall and a very large grassed area, and resources are good.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

106. The school has made satisfactory improvements in religious education since the last inspection, when standards and learning were unsatisfactory. Standards are now broadly average throughout the school. There is an excellent introduction to religious education for children up to five as part of their work on knowledge and understanding of the world. Work in religious education lessons is reinforced by religious themes in assemblies.
107. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Pupils develop sound understanding of a suitable range of topics from the local Agreed Syllabus, including Bible stories from the Old and New Testaments, Islam and Sikhism. They handle a good range of religious items, and consider the significance of rituals and ceremonies, sometimes by trying procedures out for themselves. Younger pupils develop good understanding of the importance of kindness in the context of Christianity. Older pupils during the inspection were beginning to use a computerised encyclopaedia to investigate Islam, but were restricted to this one source of evidence. In the most successful lessons and assemblies, pupils are encouraged to become personally involved in the issues raised, which gives them an insight into practical questions of morality. As often, however, their learning is limited by approaches that do not lead them to reflect on the content of the lesson or assembly in sufficient depth. As a result, opportunities for pupils to fulfil their potential in the spiritual aspects of religious education, and to use it to re-inforce and develop their skills in reading and writing, are often lost.
108. At the time of the last inspection, religious education was not contributing enough to pupils' knowledge of other cultures. This aspect of its work is now satisfactory.