

INSPECTION REPORT

JOHN HAMPDEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Thame

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123076

Headteacher: Mr Alan Haigh

Lead inspector: Selwyn Ward

Dates of inspection: 17th – 20th May 2004

Inspection number: 256563

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 – 12
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	339
School address:	Park Street Thame Oxfordshire
Postcode:	OX9 3HU
Telephone number:	01844 212291
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Le Mesurier
Date of previous inspection:	16 March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

John Hampden Primary School is a large urban school catering for boys and girls aged 5 to 12. Pupils join the school in the term following their fifth birthday. This means that children born in the summer months go straight into Year 1 with no full-time reception year experience. All but a very small number of pupils are white and of British background. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Pupils are from socio-economically above average backgrounds, as is reflected in the below average number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with special educational needs is average and an average proportion have statements of educational need. Until recently, the school had a unit for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and some of the pupils who attended that unit are now integrated into the school. There is a small number of Year 7 age pupils in the current Year 6. They are treated the same as the Year 6 pupils and follow exactly the same curriculum. The school caters for pupils with a wide range of abilities but, overall, pupils are above average when they join the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
9271	Selwyn Ward	Lead inspector	
9756	Ken Parsons	Lay inspector	
28014	Peter Buckley	Team inspector	Mathematics; information and communication technology (ICT); geography; history; religious education; special educational needs
32954	Wendy Hawkins	Team inspector	<i>Foundation Stage</i> ; science; personal, social and health education
20963	Judy Keiner	Team inspector	English; art; design technology; music; physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a sound quality of education and gives satisfactory value for money. Teaching is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall and reach above average standards by the time they leave the school, although they make slower progress than they should in Years 1 and 2. The school is competently led but there are shortcomings in management.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children get off to a very good start in the reception year
- Pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6
- Reading and mathematics are not taught well enough in Years 1 and 2
- Most pupils behave well and have a positive attitude to learning
- Pupils benefit from good opportunities for varied and exciting work in history and the arts
- Teachers do not all have a clear enough idea of how well pupils are doing
- Management of the school is not effective enough in ensuring that action to improve teaching and learning and raise standards is consistently followed through
- Staff are not sufficiently aware of health and safety issues

There has been **satisfactory improvement** since the last inspection. Although results in the Year 2 tests have fallen, Year 6 test results have improved. There are still weaknesses in the management of subjects but the improvement in provision for reception year children is excellent.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in <i>National Curriculum</i> tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	C	B	A	B
mathematics	C	A	B	D
science	B	A	B	D

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

Inspectors judge pupils' achievement looking at the progress they make over their time in school as well as how well they do in lessons. Pupils' overall **achievement is satisfactory** but there is very wide variation in achievement within the school. Those children who benefit from time in the reception year achieve very well in the one or two terms they spend there. Almost all attain all of the early learning goals that children are expected to reach by the end of their reception year and many exceed them. Results in the Year 2 tests in recent years have been low, with pupils not achieving as well as they should. Pupils catch up in Years 3 to 6, however. They achieve well in these years and attain above average standards by the end of Year 6, although the comparisons with similar schools in the table above do not look so favourable because last year's Year 6 actually did very well when they were in Year 2. Work seen in Year 2 shows an improvement on the previously declining trend in standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in these subjects are below average, but they are average in science and all of the other subjects inspected. In Year 6, work is above average in English, mathematics, science and art. Standards are average in all other subjects inspected.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. They have a particularly good awareness of and empathy with other cultures. Pupils get on well with one another and the behaviour of all but a very small minority is good, both in lessons

and around the school. The small number of pupils with behavioural problems account for the high rate of exclusions. Pupils enjoy school and they are keen to learn. Their attendance is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is satisfactory. There is a good, broad curriculum that provides opportunities for pupils to achieve in a wide range of subjects. Special events, such as Art Week, help extend pupils' experience and skills, and the school has been innovative in linking subjects together to make work more interesting. The school benefits from an attractive site and spacious accommodation. There is a shortage of good quality reading books, particularly for younger pupils, but the school is otherwise well resourced. There are sufficient teachers and a high number of teaching assistants to help pupils with special educational needs, but there are few teaching assistants other than those assigned to work with specific pupils, so teachers, particularly in Years 1 and 2, have insufficient support. Arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils are unsatisfactory because there is not enough awareness of health and safety issues. The school has a good productive partnership with other schools and with the wider community. It has also been successful in building a good and effective partnership with parents. This helps parents to support their children's learning at home and contributes to the low absence rate.

Teaching is satisfactory. It is very good in the reception year and it is better in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2. The most effective lessons are well planned. Many have a brisk pace, with varied activities that ensure that pupils' interest is maintained. Pupils are actively involved in assessing the success of lessons. Support staff often work closely with pupils with special educational needs so that they generally achieve as well as others in the class. In less effective lessons, work is not matched well enough to pupils' capabilities. Sometimes teachers spend too much time talking, so that pupils become restless or contribute little to subsequent discussion. Reading and mathematics are not taught well enough in Years 1 and 2. Work is well marked but not all teachers have a clear and accurate understanding of assessment levels, with many pupils categorised as being at a lower level than indicated by their current work.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has been successful in establishing a school ethos where children are made to feel valued. He leads by example and has taken the courageous decision to devote a high proportion of his time to teaching. Although this has undoubtedly helped to raise standards in Year 6, it has inevitably reduced the time available for management. As a result, there is too much inconsistent practice within the school and initiatives that are delegated to subject leaders and other staff are not always followed up with sufficient rigour. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They have been successful in ensuring that legal requirements are met but need to do more to ensure that the school is run as well as it could be.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have strongly favourable views of the school but a number of parents raised concerns that summer-born children were being disadvantaged because the local admissions policy meant that they had no full-time reception year experience. Inspectors found that in the tests taken last year at the end of Year 2, summer-born pupils performed much less well than those who had had time in reception.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise attainment in Years 1 and 2, particularly in reading and mathematics
- Ensure that teachers have a clear understanding of how well their pupils are doing and of their correct *National Curriculum* levels
- Devote sufficient time to making sure the school runs effectively
- Ensure that all staff have a have a clear understanding of health and safety precautions and procedures

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Pupils attain above average standards by the end of Year 6. Achievement is **satisfactory** for pupils of all abilities but it varies too widely between different year groups.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well in the reception year
- Pupils do not do well enough in Years 1 and 2, particularly in reading and mathematics
- Pupils catch up in Years 3 to 6, so that standards are above average by the time they leave the school

Commentary

1. Inspectors judge pupils' achievement looking at the progress they make over their time in school as well as how well they do in lessons. Since the last inspection, standards have improved satisfactorily in Years 3 to 6 but they have fallen in Years 1 and 2. Standards in the reception year are considerably higher than those reported in the last inspection.
2. Children join the school with a range of capabilities, but, overall, they are above average. Most attend the nursery which is attached to but not formally part of the school, and there is close liaison between the reception and nursery teachers. The current local policy is for children to be admitted to school in the term following their fifth birthday. This means that pupils born in the summer months move straight into Year 1 from part-time provision in the nursery. Children with autumn and spring birthdays have one or two terms in the reception year. These children achieve very well. Almost all attain all of the early learning goals that children are expected to reach by the start of Year 1. Many exceed this standard.
3. The tables below show the average points scores attained in the Year 2 and Year 6 tests in 2003 (with the 2002 scores in brackets). One point represents roughly one term's progress, so the tables show, for example, that pupils in Year 2 last year were, on average, a term behind pupils nationally. Pupils in Year 6 were more than a term ahead of pupils nationally. When compared with schools with a similar number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, the Year 2 results were well below average. Results have been low, particularly in reading and mathematics, in most of the years since the last inspection, with the exception of 1999, which was the year in which last year's Year 6 took their Year 2 tests.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.8 (14.4)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.6 (14.6)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	15.2 (15.0)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 50 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. A number of parents expressed concern that summer-born children were being disadvantaged by the current local policy, which only admits children into full-time education in the term following their fifth birthday. Inspectors analysed last year's test results to see whether this was still a significant factor at the end of Year 2. Although a few summer-born children did very well in the Year 2 tests, the average points scores of those who had had no reception year

experience was markedly lower than those who had had time in reception. In reading and mathematics, the difference was the equivalent of around a year's progress. In writing, summer-born pupils were about a term and a half behind the others. Although this inevitably depresses the school's overall Year 2 test scores, even the pupils who have had reception year experience do not do as well as they should. More able pupils, for example, have not reached the higher levels in the national tests. Last year, no pupils were assessed at the higher level in writing.

5. The standard of work seen during the inspection was a little better than that attained in the 2003 tests. Standards in Years 1 and 2 are below national expectations in reading and mathematics. They are in line with national expectations in writing and in pupils' speaking and listening skills. Standards are average in all of the other subjects inspected. Given pupils' above average starting point, this represents unsatisfactory achievement in Years 1 and 2. Weaknesses in the accuracy of teachers' assessments and in the teaching of reading and mathematics in Years 1 and 2 contribute to the underachievement.
6. Results in the Year 6 tests have been much better. The trend has been one of improvement, and at a faster rate than seen nationally. Last year, results were above average in mathematics and science. In English, they were well above average. When compared with schools where pupils performed similarly in their Year 2 tests, however, the results were average, because last year's Year 6 pupils had done well in their Year 2 tests in 1999.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.0 (26.8)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.1 (28.6)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.7 (30.4)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 59 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. The standard of work seen was not quite as good as in last year's tests, but it was above average in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and art. Pupils do relatively well in Years 3 to 6, catching up on ground lost in Years 1 and 2, so that achievement overall is satisfactory. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well supported and so achieve at a similar rate as others in their class. Again, however, they do better in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral and social development, are **good**. Most pupils behave well and are keen to learn. Pupils enjoy school and levels of attendance are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school
- Pupils have a strong awareness of and empathy for other cultures
- Attendance is very good
- There is a small number of pupils with behavioural problems but they are managed well

Commentary

8. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. The small number of pupils with behavioural problems account for the high rate of exclusions. Incidents of misbehaviour from

these pupils are handled well, so that poor behaviour is not generally allowed to interrupt the learning of others. Although a small number of boys account for the 19 temporary exclusions last year, the sanction is being used appropriately.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	296	19	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	20	0	0

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

- Parents say their children enjoy school, and this view is echoed by the children themselves. They are keen to learn, doing homework – particularly independent research – with enthusiasm, and with a high proportion taking part in the various clubs and other out-of-school activities on offer. In almost all lessons, pupils settle to work quickly and without fuss. Boys and girls collaborate sensibly together on paired and small group work. They are encouraged to take responsibility, for example through the school council and through older pupils helping younger ones, and this contributes to pupils’ personal development and growing maturity, which was identified by parents as a particular strength of the school. All the children in the reception year are on target to attain, by the end of the year, the early learning goal for their social development and most are likely to exceed it.
- Although the overwhelming majority of pupils are of white British background, they take a particular interest in learning about other cultures and the different experiences of others. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were involved in some imaginative work on racism and apartheid across several subjects, including literacy, history, art, music and dance. One class, presenting an assembly on the topic, expressed their views passionately. The audience (pupils from Years 3 to 6) were spellbound, with almost every pupil reflecting on the moral indignation voiced so eloquently by the Year 6 class.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.3	School data:	0.1
National data	5.4	National data:	0.4

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

- High levels of attendance, well above those normally found in primary schools, are consistently maintained from year to year. Very low numbers of unauthorised absences are recorded. Punctuality is satisfactory. Although pupils arrive at school on time, some pupils drift in to lessons a little late after break and lunch.
- Behaviour is not quite as good as was reported in the last inspection but pupils’ personal development remains a strength and there has been good improvement in attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. The curriculum is good and the school has developed a good and effective partnership with parents to support their children's education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Assessment and welfare arrangements are unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **satisfactory**. Although there is some good quality marking, assessment is unsatisfactory because some teachers do not accurately gauge pupils' *National Curriculum* levels.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well planned lessons involve varied activities that keep pupils interested
- Reading and mathematics are not taught well enough in Years 1 and 2
- Pupils are actively involved in assessing the success of lessons
- Not all teachers have an accurate picture of how well their pupils are doing
- Teaching assistants are used well to help pupils with special educational needs

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 53 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (4%)	10 (19%)	16 (30%)	22 (42%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

13. Although satisfactory overall, there is more good and very good teaching in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2. Teaching in the reception year is very good. Monitoring by the management of the school has identified some of the variation in the quality of teaching and learning and, in some cases, has provided help in raising the quality of teaching, but the lack of follow-up has meant that this has been less effective than it could be. Nonetheless, there has been satisfactory improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection.
14. The school has taken part in a *Learning 2 Learn* initiative that forms the basis on which most lessons are planned. This involves setting out clear learning objectives at the start of the lesson and involving pupils at the end of the lesson in indicating whether they have understood or made progress. The initiative has been particularly successful in involving pupils in their learning, although not all teachers take sufficient account of signals from pupils that they have not fully understood what they were supposed to be learning.
15. The most effective lessons are well planned. Many have a brisk pace, with varied activities for pupils to carry out against challenging time limits. This ensures that pupils are kept interested and involved. It also results in pupils completing a reasonable quantity of work in the lesson. In lessons that were less effective, however, time was not used so well. Pupils spent too long listening passively to the teacher. For younger pupils, this often involved sitting for a long time on the carpet, where children became increasingly restless and fidgety.
16. As a result of the very good teaching in the reception year and their positive pre-school nursery experience, pupils now start in Year 1 with an enthusiasm for reading, writing and mathematics. Not enough is done to build on this in Years 1 and 2. Many of the reading books are dog-eared

and in need of replacement. Teaching of reading is hampered by there being little classroom support available to the class teachers. All of the teaching assistants are allocated to helping specific pupils with special educational needs. They are used effectively in this role, enabling pupils with special educational needs to make similar progress in their learning as others in the class. However, because there are more pupils with special educational needs in the older classes than in Years 1 and 2, this means that the teachers in these younger classes have relatively little adult support, and certainly less than is usually seen in these year groups. For mathematics, not enough use is made in these classes of the resources available to bring the subject alive and make it interesting to the pupils.

17. Throughout the school, questioning is used well to recap what has been learned before and to check how well pupils understand. Some teachers too readily take answers only from those who volunteer them, but others take care to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully involved by directing questions specifically to them.
18. Teachers' expectations of pupils are generally high, and pupils rise to the challenges they are set. In some lessons, however, work is not well enough matched to the different abilities of the pupils in the class. Sometimes this results in more able pupils being set work that is too easy and sometimes work is too difficult for lower attaining pupils. In some classes, the work is inappropriately matched to pupils' capabilities because the teacher has been inaccurate in assessing how well pupils are doing. In several cases, pupils were assessed as being at *National Curriculum* levels that were significantly lower than was indicated by the work that pupils were producing. Assessment is unsatisfactory as a result of this, although many aspects of marking are good. Pupils often benefit from good, helpful feedback from teachers on their work and this helps them to improve.
19. Parents expressed satisfaction with teaching. Pupils, too, were particularly positive about their teachers. Many said that what they liked best about the school were the teachers. Unsurprisingly, then, relationships between staff and pupils are good in almost all classes, with pupils keen to please their teacher. This enthusiasm for learning extends to homework, which is generally used well, particularly where it involves the pupils in independent research.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is **good**. There is a good range of clubs and other out-of-school activities. Resources and accommodation are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The linking of work in different subjects helps to make lessons interesting
- There is a good range of clubs and out-of-school activities
- The school is mostly well resourced and benefits from good accommodation
- There are not enough good quality reading books for pupils in Years 1 and 2
- Pupils learning an instrument miss the same lesson every week

Commentary

20. Pupils benefit from a good and broad curriculum. In the reception year, the curriculum is very good because it is very well matched to children's needs. The improvement since the last inspection in this part of the curriculum is excellent. Overall, curriculum improvement has been good. The school has taken the lead in successfully implementing ideas suggested in the Government's *Excellence and Enjoyment Strategy* for primary schools, and the building of links between subjects is helping pupils to learn. For example, the work on racism, segregation and apartheid in Year 6 involves art, music and dance, as well as a focus in history on the importance of Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, and reading *Journey To Jo'burg* in English. As a result, pupils enjoy their work, gaining a much deeper appreciation of the topic,

while making good progress in each of the various subjects involved as well as in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

21. The curriculum is enriched through a good range of clubs and other out-of-school activities in which there is good participation from the pupils. In addition, special events, including an annual Art Week, offer pupils from all classes an opportunity to develop their skills and a pride in achievement, together producing work of high quality.
22. The school strives to be inclusive and to provide equal opportunities to all. Paradoxically, it is this that accounts for the high rate of temporary exclusions, as the school balances the conflicting pressures, on the one hand to provide opportunities for pupils with behavioural difficulties and, on the other, the need to ensure that the misbehaviour of a small number of difficult pupils does not interrupt the learning of others. A number of pupils take individual instrumental lessons from visiting music teachers. This necessitates pupils missing parts of a lesson once a week. Because of the timetabling of lessons, however, pupils report that they miss the same lesson every week, which is unsatisfactory.
23. The provision for special educational needs is good. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all aspects of school life and receive good support through planned work delivered by well-trained teaching assistants. The number and deployment of trained support staff is good. Support for pupils with behavioural difficulties is unobtrusive. Pupils' individual education plans are clear, with appropriate targets, but they are not as comprehensive as they could be because ongoing notes on pupils' progress are kept separately.
24. Reading books in Years 1 and 2 are inadequate but the school is otherwise well resourced and the school buildings and site are spacious and attractive. There is a sound mix of skills and experience within the teaching and support staff. Although there is a good number of teaching assistants, all are specifically allocated to individual pupils with special educational needs. The support given to these pupils by teaching assistants is good, but there are no teaching assistants providing more general support to class teachers, particularly for literacy and numeracy lessons in Years 1 and 2.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare and health & safety are **unsatisfactory** because of weaknesses in health & safety provision. Staff provide students with satisfactory support, advice and guidance. The school involves pupils to a satisfactory extent through seeking and valuing their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils have good and trusting relationships with their teachers
- Support and guidance for pupils is good for personal problems but is hampered by the lack of rigour in assessment procedures when it comes to support for academic issues
- Induction arrangements for new pupils do not take enough account of the needs of summer-born children who go straight into Year 1 without any time in the reception year
- Staff do not have enough awareness of health and safety risks

Commentary

25. Most teachers and other staff know the children well. The pupils themselves say that the support they get from staff is one of the things they most appreciate about their school. Teachers are prepared to put themselves out to help with problems the pupils may be experiencing with their work, and they are equally willing to find time to address social or other personal problems. As a result, pupils trust the adults in the school and are confident that any difficulties they experience will be taken seriously and dealt with. The school is also good at using outside expertise to support pupils. Family link workers are involved when necessary,

whilst the school also makes use of resources such as the visiting *Life Education Bus* which is used as part of the personal, social and health education of pupils in all year groups.

26. The school's aims emphasise the worth of each individual, and staff are effective at putting them into practice. Teachers listen to pupils' problems and try to sort them out. Parents appreciate that the staff treat the pupils fairly and that they encourage pupils to become mature and independent individuals. However, the effectiveness of the school's support is reduced by weakness in the accuracy of some teachers' assessments of how well their pupils are doing in relation to national norms. Inspectors identified several examples of pupils who had been assessed as being at a lower level than was indicated by their work. Because of such weaknesses in assessment, the academic support provided to pupils is not always targeted as effectively as it could be.
27. There is close liaison between the school and the separate but linked nursery, including joint planning between the nursery and reception teachers. As a result, there are good arrangements for the induction of pupils who move from the nursery into the reception year. Induction arrangements are not as good for the summer-born children who move directly from part-time nursery provision into Year 1. The low level of general teaching assistant support for teachers in Year 1 adds to the difficulty in supporting pupils in making a smooth transition to more formal teaching.
28. The school has appropriate child protection procedures in place. Although the school has sound policies on health and safety, and the headteacher and governors conduct periodic checks, staff do not have sufficient awareness of health and safety risks and the lack of time devoted to management means that health and safety issues are not followed up with sufficient rigour. During the sunny days of the inspection, for example, though the headteacher raised concerns with pupils in assembly about the need to avoid sunburn or overexertion in the heat, a physical education lesson was held the next day in fierce sunshine and with few pupils wearing hats or protective cream. In another lesson, an inspector had to intervene when a lead to an electric kettle containing boiling water trailed dangerously, whilst, in another classroom, staff dealt with a child with a nosebleed sympathetically but in ways that showed they had insufficient awareness of the need for wearing disposable gloves before potentially coming into contact with blood. Arrangements for care and welfare are not as good as those reported in the last inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **good** links with parents and good partnerships with the local community and other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate what it is achieving for their children
- There are effective partnerships with the attached feeder nursery and other local schools
- The school's good community links help to broaden pupils' experience

Commentary

29. There has been good improvement in partnership arrangements since the last inspection. Parents express positive views about the school. They think it is approachable. They feel that their children like school, are treated fairly and are helped to become mature and responsible. They believe that they are expected to work hard and that they make good progress, with good teaching evident. They consider the school to be "*very good at picking up individuals' strengths and providing support for them accordingly*", as it was expressed at the parents' meeting. This latter point is at variance with inspection findings to the extent that assessment was found to be in need of improvement.

30. A significant number of parents contribute to the work of the school. There is an active parent-teacher association that organises a range of social and fundraising events, whilst several parents help on a voluntary basis in class. The school provides good information to parents about its work. Parents benefit from a particularly good handbook that provides relevant and useful information. There are regular consultation evenings to provide parents with details of their children's progress. Written reports are satisfactory, but could provide more on the attainment of the individual; detail on foundation subjects is too limited and no *National Curriculum* levels are provided for parents except at Years 2 and 6 when national test results are available. Information evenings given by staff for parents on, for example, numeracy, literacy and behaviour management, are well attended.
31. The school has good links with the other schools in the Thame area. In particular, there is an effective partnership between the reception class and the attached but separate nursery. Although not strictly a member of the school's staff, the nursery teacher is also a member of the senior management team and has overall responsibility for the nursery and reception years: an unusual but nonetheless effective arrangement. The local Networked Learning Community partnership of ten local schools is effective in promoting collaboration between them. The school also participates in a scheme that links John Hampden with schools in Italy and Poland. This has involved pupils in various projects to explain their culture to the other schools and to learn about them in return. There are effective links with the local secondary school for the transfer of pupils. A local secondary school has specialist sports college status and provides pupils at John Hampden with additional support with sports coaching and physical education.
32. There are good links with the local community. The school participates in a range of local events, such as the carnival, the Thame Show and the Festival of Christmas Music. The school widens pupils' experiences through visits to local organisations such as the police, fire service, churches and local businesses. A number of local community organisations use the school's buildings for a range of activities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. The leadership of the headteacher and key staff are satisfactory, as is the governance of the school. Management is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is committed to raising standards and leads by example
- Reduced time for managing the school has meant that initiatives are not followed up with sufficient rigour
- The co-ordination of special educational needs is good and contributes to an inclusive school
- Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school but have not ensured that the school is run as well as it could be

Commentary

33. The headteacher has been successful in establishing a school ethos where all pupils are made to feel valued. Teachers and parents respect him for his commitment to the school, but his zest for teaching has taken its toll on management. Due to the high number of pupils with special educational needs in Year 6, the headteacher took the courageous decision to form three classes out of two and teach for three days a week. The rationale for this was to maintain good standards of pupil behaviour, which would set a positive example to the whole school, and to ensure that good academic standards were maintained at the end of Year 6. The governors supported this strategy, which has been largely successful. However, such a large teaching commitment has inevitably been at the expense of the headteacher's management role. As a result, leadership and management are not as good as was reported in the last inspection.

34. The school improvement plan is a well-crafted document, which focuses on the involvement of the whole school community (staff, governors, parents and pupils), identifies clearly the needs of the school and prioritises spending on raising standards and improving the pupils' learning environment. It identifies points for professional development, which form a good basis for performance management targets. However, the issues clearly identified in the school improvement plan relating to pupil underachievement over time in Years 1 and 2, and the strategies planned to raise standards, have not been rigorously enough monitored. As a result, standards in Years 1 to 2 in English and mathematics, though slightly improved this year, remain below average. The management roles of the assistant headteachers and co-ordinators are insufficiently well defined. While there are three assistant headteachers of equal status, one is seen more in the role of a deputy head, and while co-ordinators of the three core subjects have a clear understanding of their role in co-ordinating Years 3 to 6, those for English and science have insufficient awareness of work in Years 1 and 2.
35. The management of special educational needs is good and ensures pupils receive specific support from within the school and from outside agencies. Teaching assistants are included in the schools' performance management arrangements and their training contributes to raising their pupils' achievement. Legal requirements of the special educational needs code of practice are fully met.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	802,282	Balance from previous year	66,794
Total expenditure	829,055	Balance carried forward to the next	40,021
Expenditure per pupil	2,235		

36. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have been effective in managing a number of projects in line with the schools' vision for improvement. They have been successful in securing finance for building renovations and the removal of the dilapidated school swimming pool, replaced with a garden-piazza style makeover. Their consultation with the parent-teacher association has contributed significantly to financing of improvements. The ICT suite and the cabling of a computer for each classroom to provide internet access have contributed significantly to raising pupils' standards in ICT. However, though governors provide good support to the school, there has been insufficient rigour in challenging management and ensuring effective action is taken to remedy the underachievement over time of pupils in Year 1 and 2. In backing the present management arrangements, governors have not done enough to ensure that the school is run as well as it could be. They have not planned strategically for changes in the organisation of classes that may eventually be needed as a result of falling school rolls.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

37. Children enter the reception class in the term following their fifth birthday. There are two intakes each year: in January and again in April. Children who have summer birthdays do not have any time in the reception class. Most children transfer from the separate but attached nursery on the school site. They enter the reception class with above average skills in all the areas of learning and they continue to make very good progress, with almost all rapidly achieving and many exceeding the early learning goals by the end of their reception year.
38. In the last inspection, the quality of education provided in the reception year was identified as a key issue for action. Since then, there have been considerable changes to the provision and significant improvement has been made to the planning, use of space and assessment procedures. The curriculum for children in the reception year is now very good because it provides a highly effective range of experiences that meets children's needs. This, together with high quality teaching for all of the areas of learning, helps the children to achieve very well. Staff get to know the children well and ensure that activities are very well matched to their individual needs. This is especially significant in ensuring the good progress for children with special educational needs. The accommodation and resources for children in the reception year is good. The school has created a spacious outdoor area that is suitably equipped and resourced. There is a very effective partnership with the attached nursery. The reception year co-ordinator, who is the teacher in charge of the nursery, provides excellent subject expertise and effective leadership. The reception teacher and co-ordinator work together well, enabling those children who benefit from reception year experience to build very effectively on what they have learnt during their part-time attendance in nursery, make rapid progress and achieve very well. The improvement since the last inspection has been excellent.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Highly effective classroom management encourages pupils to take responsibility and results in children behaving very well
- Relationships are excellent because the adults are very good role models to children
- Pupils with special educational needs are helped to take a full part in activities

Commentary

39. This area of learning is given a high priority and the children achieve very well. They make rapid progress and, by the time they reach the end of the reception year, almost all the children have reached and many exceeded this early learning goal. The children are helped to feel confident and secure and are usually engrossed in their activities and sustain concentration well. There are good routines in the class to promote children's independence. When they arrive in the mornings, children are keen to get going. All answer promptly to their names in a roll call and want to contribute observations about the day and weather in their regular morning session. Children enjoy the balance of teacher-led activity when they receive guidance and sensitive direction with their learning and the choices they have in subsequent activities. They happily play alongside each other and treat one another with kindness. There is a purposeful intention to activities and staff have high expectations that children will do their best and behave well.
40. All adults encourage the development of social skills in a variety of ways. They are calm and maintain affirmative eye contact with children. They value each child as an individual and this engenders a feeling of mutual respect which is seen in children's play, where they are polite and

well mannered. Children with special educational needs are very well integrated and receive good support. They, and others, are helped to maintain concentration by the nature of the activities offered. As a result, children sit quietly, listen attentively and are confident to try new things.

Communication, Language and Literacy

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and support staff take every opportunity to develop children's language skills, resulting in high achievement
- Effective planning and assessment ensures that tasks are well suited to children's capabilities
- Parents are fully involved with their children's progress with reading as they have daily contact with the school

Commentary

41. Most children are on course to attain this early learning goal by the end of the reception year. High priority is given to promoting language skills and the very good teaching ensures that children make rapid progress. Children are confident sounding out words using initial sounds. They match sounds to letter shapes and most can write them. In a very well planned lesson, they wrote simple shopping lists of four selected fruit for their fruit salad. Another group of children were "shopping" using real fruit and vegetables from a market stall. They matched the labels to the cartons of produce accurately. Staff have good understanding of how well children are doing. For instance, a group of children was given extra practice with matching initial letter sounds to pictures of picnic food as the teacher had correctly assessed in a previous session that they were not as confident with this activity as some others.
42. Children read regularly with adults in the reception class and key vocabulary is reinforced in word games and other activities. Almost all children are reading single words. Many are reading simple sentences and make progress in a recognised reading scheme. Staff monitor reading with rigour. They record and comment in the home-school books and parents are encouraged to do so as well, thus establishing a purposeful dialogue that helps parents to help their child learn. Class records are evaluative and are used to plan activities that are matched well to the children's ability. A word search game was pitched at the right level to help children recognise words such as *the* and *when* which they were meeting regularly in their individual and class reading books. To engender a love of reading and books, the teacher reads regularly from large-print editions of classic storybooks and children have the opportunity to select, from a range of library books, a book to share at home. Good guidance is given to parents and carers on how to make reading enjoyable for young children. Children spoken to during the inspection were very keen on reading and readily wanted to discuss their current books.

Mathematical Development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is high as pupils are well motivated by the stimulating activities and tasks they are set

Commentary

43. As a result of the highly effective teaching of children's mathematical development, most pupils are expected to meet and many exceed this early learning goal. Children count readily to ten and many have a challenging individual target such as to count backwards from twenty. Children are stimulated by the interesting activities they take part in and they absorb information readily. In one lesson, children played a *pass the parcel* game to music and were challenged to compare the weight to another package. Some were initially deceived by size but corrected themselves by using a balance to compare with a degree of accuracy. By the end of the session, they could grade a set of parcels by weight, starting with the lightest and working upwards. The quality of the teacher's questions ensured children used comparative and mathematical language precisely. Play activities provide children with "real life" scenarios to practise sorting, matching and counting with a purpose. They use money to buy fruit from a market stall for their picnic and count the number of apples they need. The quality of the activities and the expert adult guidance enables the children to enjoy learning.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well as activities are made interesting
- There are good opportunities for children to develop confidence in using ICT

Commentary

44. Most children reach the various early learning goals for knowledge and understanding of the world. Teaching is well planned and, as a result, is effective in stimulating children's interest. During the inspection, children visited a local nature reserve. They collected a number of natural items such as feathers and fir cones in egg boxes. They could identify their objects and most commented on their derivation. In a lesson, children were asked to sort between a range of common foods and give reasons why some were more healthy than others. The teacher directed questions well, ensuring that children could make an informed justification for their choice.
45. Children are confident using the computer. They manipulate a mouse to click onto an image and drag it to where they require on a screen. Children are confident using a digital camera and used it purposefully to record comparisons in the size of fruit and vegetables.

Physical Development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent teaching for children's physical development results in children achieving very well

Commentary

46. The children achieve very well. Almost all meet and many exceed the early learning goals. There is a safe outside play area attached to the class that provides children with a good range of opportunities to enable them to extend their skills in running, climbing and in using wheeled toys. In addition, there are teacher-led sessions in the hall. Planning for these is excellent and draws on other curriculum areas for stimulus. For instance, the teacher used the book *Handa's Surprise* to illustrate balancing quoits on heads and moving with confidence. The children were

captivated and enthralled. This focused their concentration to such an extent that they achieved excellent balance and control. In a further extension, the teacher used the shapes of the fruits in the story to encourage the children to stretch and curl to simulate the fruit.

47. Good opportunities are provided for children to develop their manual dexterity. For example, by handling dough, filling containers in the sand and water tray and completing simple jigsaws. They are provided with an appropriate range of pencils for drawing and different tools for painting and printing. As a result, by the end of their time in the reception year, the children demonstrate increasing skill and control in the use of scissors and writing implements and can generally cut and draw well for their age.

Creative Development

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The classroom is vibrant and children's creativity is celebrated well

Commentary

48. Stimulating activities encourage children to participate in imaginative play and, as a result, children reach the early learning goals by the time they leave the reception class. Teaching is consistently good, and daily sessions make effective use of opportunities to encourage children to create an imaginative world through role-play. Adults make purposeful interventions to develop the quality of play. For example, on an imaginary picnic, children were encouraged to select foods they liked to eat. Displays in the classroom are vibrant and colourful. The mini-beast display has a range of collage and models to give an interactive three-dimensional effect to the children's work. While on their visit to a nature reserve, children collected petals from various wild flowers and made miniature, colour-themed pictures that had strong visual impact.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 & 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average
- The lack of support and resources for English for Years 1 and 2 holds back pupils' progress
- Pupils' speaking, listening and handwriting skills are good in Years 3 to 6
- Too little is done to promote pupils' wider reading skills
- Literacy skills are well promoted through work in other curriculum subjects

Commentary

49. Results in the 2003 national tests were well below average at the end of Year 2 and well above average at the end of Year 6 compared with schools nationally. Work seen during the inspection showed that the recent increased focus on developing literacy skills in Years 1 and 2 has improved standards of reading and writing, though they are still below average compared with schools nationally and similar schools. Year 2 pupils write stories and accounts of their work using clear, vivid language, such as *"The female lays her eggs and buries them in the ground. They are transparent and look like little white pearls."* However, pupils do not make enough progress in reading and writing overall in Years 1 and 2 and their achievement is unsatisfactory because the work they do is not well enough matched to their needs. Standards

seen during the inspection at the end of Year 6 are above average. Pupils' speaking, listening, basic reading comprehension and handwriting skills are well above average. They develop skills in writing fluently in a variety of styles. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 is, therefore, satisfactory overall. Nevertheless, pupils' wider reading skills, such as the ability to use the index in a non-fiction book, are not as good as they could be. Many pupils, including more able pupils in all years, read fiction books that are well below their capability. Some say they do not enjoy reading non-fiction books. This is because teachers do not do enough to promote pupils' enthusiasm for reading challenging good quality books in their own time.

50. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers plan work in basic reading comprehension and writing well. Where teaching is good or better, they use clear instructions, role-plays and paired discussion effectively to help pupils understand the books they read, and to write about them. When their teacher transformed herself into an orphaned character in a book they were reading, pupils in a Year 5 class made very good progress because they were so eager to help each other think up and list questions to ask her, and then play similar roles themselves. Year 6 pupils used small group discussions effectively to help make well ordered summary lists of key points about what their class book *Journey to Jo'burg* showed them about the lives of black South African children at the time of apartheid. However, where teaching is less successful, teachers spend too much of the lesson giving lengthy introductions, so that pupils have too little time to develop their own work. The lessons are not well enough planned to give the right type of challenge for low attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Where these pupils work with support staff, sometimes too much time needs to be spent helping them understand instructions and do tasks that are too complex or confusing for them. When they do not have support, they sometimes struggle to understand the tasks they are set and so make too little progress. This is a major reason for the lower achievement of pupils in Year 1 and 2, as teachers do not have classroom support assistants in reading and writing lessons.
51. Teachers use computers effectively to enable pupils to organise, improve and present their writing well. However, they do not use ICT tools enough to help pupils with special educational needs to read and write more independently, for example, by using "talking" word bank programs. Teachers usually mark pupils' work well, regularly giving them clear advice on how to improve their work. However, in some classes, work is not regularly marked, pupils are not required to finish uncompleted work, and the comments do not provide enough guidance for the pupils. Some teachers do not have an accurate picture of their pupils' *National Curriculum* levels. This contributes to work in lessons not being closely enough matched to pupils' capabilities.
52. The subject is not satisfactorily led, because there is not effective leadership of English in Years 1 and 2. This contributes to the continuing slower progress made by pupils compared with those in other years. Although standards have improved recently, there has been too little improvement since the last inspection, when standards at the end of Year 2 were higher, and teaching and learning were consistently good. The co-ordinator sets high standards and has done much to improve book resources in the main library and Years 3 to 6. She has done extensive analysis of pupils' work and some classroom observations. She has worked with the local education authority's advisors to improve writing across the school, and is aware of the need to raise achievement in Years 1 and 2, but has had too little release time in the past year to check how well lessons are taught. Too little is being done to make sure that parallel classes' work in each year group is equally productive and enriching, and that all pupils' work is equally well marked. More needs to be done to ensure that teachers' assessments of pupils against *National Curriculum* levels are accurate. Although the subject resources are good overall, the dated and often dog-eared book stock for Year 1 and 2 pupils is unsatisfactory. It does not offer pupils an exciting and attractive choice of high quality fiction and non-fiction personal reading. Since the last inspection, standards have declined significantly in Year 2. They have improved, however, in Year 6. Improvement since the last inspection is therefore satisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

53. Teachers promote pupils' language and literacy skills well in other subjects because there is so much emphasis on encouraging pupils to brainstorm and share ideas before they discuss or write about them. Teachers also introduce key subject vocabulary at the start of lessons, and often set imaginative writing tasks to extend learning. For example, pupils in one Year 5 class had done excellent work where they produced desktop-published information posters for younger pupils on the life patterns of different animals. These were very well designed and presented information in lively and interesting language. The pupils' literacy skills were further developed by getting them to work in pairs to write brief review points and improvement recommendations on earlier drafts. There is scope for using the library and the internet more effectively to improve pupils' non-fiction reading and research skills.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average by Year 2, but above average by Year 6
- The setting arrangements contribute to pupils' good achievement in Years 3 to 6
- Leadership of the subject has some good features but has not been sufficiently effective in raising standards in Years 1 to 2

Commentary

54. Standards by the end of Year 2, while below average, are now improving, but pupils' overall achievement in Years 1 and 2 is unsatisfactory. In national tests in 2003, results were well below average, as was the number of pupils achieving the higher levels. Last year's Year 6 test results were above average. Standards in Year 6 are above average and pupils achieve well. The setting arrangement, particularly three sets in Year 6, and the high level of special educational needs support contributes to this. Standards in Year 2 are lower than those reported last time but those in Year 6 have risen. Overall, this represents satisfactory improvement.
55. Teaching is satisfactory overall, although better in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2. In Years 1 to 2 there is little additional teaching assistant support other than that provided for pupils with special educational needs, and this constrains the effectiveness of group work. In a large higher ability Year 2 set, pupils had difficulty in understanding positioning objects in relation to each other and their learning was unsatisfactory due mainly to the lack of support. By contrast, in a lower ability Year 6 group with just 10 pupils, the class teacher and the two teaching assistants ensured that pupils achieved well in the lesson. There was a very good focus on pupils explaining how they had reached an answer, a feature that was absent in many other lessons.
56. The subject leadership is satisfactory. The marking of pupils work is good and pupils evaluate their work for themselves well. There is, however, a wide variation between classes in the use of worksheets and the expectations in the way pupils set out their work. To improve the consistency of teaching, training has been provided and teaching has been monitored. However, this has not had the impact of raising teaching to a consistently good standard throughout the school, and in Years 1 to 2 there has been insufficiently rigorous monitoring of teaching and assessment, or action taken to raise standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

57. Numeracy has been well developed in other subjects. For example, in a Year 6 history lesson, pupils used information about the key dates in the life of Nelson Mandela to establish his age at various points. In designing repetitive patterns to produce wrapping paper, Year 5 pupils used a mathematical formula in an ICT program, and there are many examples of the use of data handling.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not doing well enough
- The wide range in the quality of teaching results in uneven progress

Commentary

58. In Year 2, too few pupils reach standards expected for their age. This trend in underperformance has been allowed to continue for several years. Achievement through Years 1 and 2 is unsatisfactory. By the end of Year 6, most pupils reach the standards expected for their age and some exceed them. Pupils have good opportunities to take part in and record scientific investigations. This represents satisfactory achievement, and is an improvement since the last inspection.
59. The quality of teaching is satisfactory but it is not consistent through the school and this impacts on the progress pupils make. Lessons seen ranged from very good to poor. When lessons are well planned, teachers take due account of the different levels of ability within the class and plan investigations with challenge and appropriately pitched support. For instance, in a very good lesson on identifying materials with Year 6, there was supplementary work for the more able and the teacher skilfully developed the pupils' powers of reasoning through well-timed and well-focused questioning. Pupils with special educational needs were supported well with vocabulary and suggestions for a framework to help them record their findings. By contrast, however, in a Year 1 lesson, the teacher set a task that required too much explanation beforehand and did not give pupils sufficient time to explore the effect of forces for themselves. The lesson was overcomplicated and, as a result, the pupils did not achieve enough, given their enthusiasm and prior knowledge.
60. The subject is satisfactorily led and there have been recent changes that have improved resources and planning. There is a useful partnership developing with the local secondary school to share equipment and provide more challenging work to pupils in Year 6 to prepare them for the transition to the secondary curriculum. However, the subject knowledge of the science curriculum is stronger for the requirements of the older pupils in the school. There has been less focus on the need to develop teachers' knowledge and understanding of planning and assessment for pupils in Years 1 and 2.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well due to good teaching
- Good management and the quality of ICT equipment are contributing significantly to raising standards
- The subject is used effectively across the curriculum to enrich pupils' learning
- More use could be made of control and monitoring technology in Years 3 to 6

Commentary

61. An effective programme of staff training, the good use of teaching assistants and the development of the computer suite have all made a significant contribution to pupils' good achievement and the good improvement in provision since the last inspection. One limitation to the suite is the bright sunlight coming through the high windows, which have no blinds, making the data projection screen barely visible. The recent cabling and networking of a computer in each classroom enables pupils to continue their work after using the suite and also provides internet access. Standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with national expectations. Standards in Year 6 would be above average were it not for the limited use made of control and monitoring technology.
62. Teachers plan their work well to develop pupils' skills and at the same time to use these effectively across the curriculum. Teachers use the data projector well for whole class teaching to ensure that pupils know how to open programs, use drop-down menus and save their work, before trying the computer activities for themselves in pairs. Teachers are good at gathering the class together at intervals to evaluate pupils' progress and to show them the next stage. This was effective, for example, in a Year 3 lesson when pupils practised *flood filling*, before filling geometric shapes in the style of artists such as Kandinsky and Klee.
63. The subject is well led. There is a clear scheme of work and one of the assistant headteachers has additionally supported the subject well by developing good assessment procedures to match the scheme. The school has wisely invested, with other local schools, in a technician who provides very good support in maintaining the hardware and ensuring that the software functions correctly. This is important in the context of raising teachers' confidence in planning for ICT. Training for teachers in the use of the recently delivered interactive whiteboards is planned.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

64. Teachers are successful in identifying opportunities for pupils to develop and use their ICT skills. Year 1 pupils used their mouse control skills to *drag* pictures of the stages in the life-cycle of a frog into a correct sequence and then write some text. Year 2 pupils used the internet to research the use of church bells, the organ and the objects used in Communion. Some Year 5 pupils were working on a multimedia presentation, with well-reasoned facts and research on the theme of "*Should Thame be pedestrianised?*", and others had used a garden design program to imaginatively create a garden to a design brief. Word-processing skills are well used across the curriculum, for stories, accounts of visits, invitations and captions.

HUMANITIES

Religious education and history were inspected in full and are reported below. No report is made on geography.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is good and this contributes to pupils' good achievement
- Pupils, particularly the older ones, use their literacy and ICT skills well
- Artefacts, visits and links with other subjects contribute to pupils' enjoyment of history

Commentary

65. Most of the history seen during the inspection was in Years 3 to 6. Achievement is good. Standards are in line with those expected nationally and have been maintained since the last inspection. Teaching is consistently good, helping pupils to develop their independent research skills and making very effective use of work in other subjects to add interest and excitement to pupils' learning.
66. Year 3 pupils used a variety of sources to establish the differences between the rich and poor in Anglo-Saxon times. They listened well and took on the role of archaeologists enthusiastically. In Year 4, pupils developed their research skills well by using books and photographs to interpret how Vikings used to live. They followed this with a session in the ICT suite when researching an internet site for Viking artefacts. Teachers and teaching assistants questioned pupils well. Activities and artefacts were well matched to pupils' abilities, and pupils made good use of their literacy skills to record their work. Pupils of all abilities achieved well. Prominently displayed Year 6 pupils' work on the Tudor period showed good use of literacy skills, of ICT in their research, and portraits in the style of Hans Holbein in art. In a good Year 6 lesson, pupils showed a sound understanding of Martin Luther King's struggle for civil rights, and compared this with Nelson Mandela's long and determined fight against apartheid. The teacher's good subject knowledge, use of information sheets and a video clip contributed to pupils' good achievement in the lesson. They showed a mature empathy with both these influential figures of the 20th Century who tackled prejudice. The teaching assistant worked well with pupils with special educational needs, ensuring that all pupils completed their time line of events.
67. The school makes good use of its locality in the historic town of Thame to enthuse pupils about the subject, and the good leadership of the subject includes maintaining a good stock of artefacts, keeping staff informed of possible visits and visitors, and maintaining a portfolio of work.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work in the subject encourages pupils to treat others with respect
- Visits and visitors to enhance the curriculum are not systematically planned

Commentary

68. The work provided is based on the locally-agreed syllabus and focuses on learning about and from religious and human experiences. The principal focus is the teaching of Christianity, but differences in other religions are explored through the study of the world's major religions. The school places emphasis, from an early age, on caring for others and helping pupils to recognise the importance of their own family and friends. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning and the good relationships within the school as a caring community. Standards are in line with those expected in the locally-agreed syllabus. This represents satisfactory achievement.
69. The teaching is satisfactory. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils were introduced to some Christian artefacts before they used an internet site well to find out about Christian artefacts found within a church. They researched the use of church bells, the organ and the objects used in Communion and showed a sound understanding. In a good Year 5 lesson, the teacher, with the use of a prayer mat, helped pupils to explore sensitively the preparation for worship and the importance of prayer to Muslims. Pupils listened and contributed well, and their recorded work showed good learning and achievement in the lesson.

70. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. There are adequate artefacts to support the planned teaching of major religions, and pupils' spirituality has been enhanced on occasion by visits to the local church and places of worship for people of other faiths. However, these visits, and visitors of different faiths, are not systematically planned into the curriculum, and this diminishes the effectiveness of some good teaching.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design was inspected in full and is reported below. Physical education and music were sampled. No report is made on design and technology.

71. Too few **music** lessons were seen during the inspection to be able to make comprehensive judgements. Teaching and learning in the two lessons seen, in Year 2 and Year 4, were satisfactory. Pupils showed standards in line with national expectations. Standards of singing seen in assemblies and extracurricular activities, such as the drama club, were above average. In both lessons observed, teachers enabled pupils to achieve satisfactorily in developing musical composition. The Year 2 pupils devised symbols to record improvised instrumental accompaniments for a picture of a seaside scene, whilst the Year 4 pupils used a range of instruments to develop an accompaniment for a song. Both lessons showed strength in the opportunities the teachers gave pupils to discuss and improve their work. There were weaknesses in both lessons in the management of time and resources, for example, ensuring that the best instruments for the task were available, or providing enough time for a well-paced and focused final review of what the pupils achieved. There is a good range of individual tuition available for pupils whose parents opt to pay, but pupils are too often withdrawn from the same lessons every week, and this could affect their progress in the subjects they miss.
72. Only two **physical education** lessons were seen, so it was not possible to make judgements about provision, standards, achievement or the quality of teaching and learning overall. Excellent teaching and learning was seen, however, in a dance lesson for Year 6 pupils in which they rehearsed and improved a dance routine for a forthcoming assembly linked to the current year group studies of the evils of racism. Their teacher set very high expectations for the quality of performance and helped pupils of all abilities to work as a team and develop their routines to the best standard they could. The teacher helped them make particularly good progress by choosing the right moment to stop each section of the routine and demonstrate how to improve it. This enabled the pupils to develop their movement skills very well. Satisfactory coaching for outdoor physical education skills was seen in a Year 2 lesson on bat and ball skills. The teacher gave the pupils an increasingly challenging series of goals in balancing and sustaining control over bats and balls individually and in pairs and groups. While the teacher provided well for pupils to warm up at the start and cool down at the end, there was too little account taken of the hot and sunny outdoor conditions, for example in ensuring that all pupils had appropriate sun protection. There was also scope for devoting more of the lesson to demonstrating and reinforcing good techniques.
73. Subject leadership is satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has benefited from very good support from local specialist Sports College, which is also the school to which most pupils transfer at the end of Year 6. This has provided very good training and guidance in developing the curriculum, assessment and skills for checking the quality of lessons. The school provides a good range of extracurricular physical education activities, including competitive team games and dance. Standards seen in after-school dance activities were above average.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The best teaching is based on sustained focused studies which enable pupils to produce striking images of a high standard
- Although pupils achieve well, the quality of work done in art lessons is too variable
- There is too little three-dimensional and ICT-based work done

Commentary

74. Standards and at the end of Year 2 match those found nationally. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 as they make careful drawings and colour collages of natural objects such as shells, plants and fruit, and use paintings by such artists as Lowry as starting points to develop their own images of people in outdoor settings. By the end of Year 6, standards are higher than those usually found nationally. The work produced by pupils in Years 3 to 6 in the school's recent Art Week, based on developing individual portrait studies and striking large-scale portrait collages, showed high standards, particularly in the use of colour and composition. However, the quality of work done in art lessons and seen on displays is too variable, reflecting the very different levels of planning and skills development which go into lessons in different years and classes. Pupils achieve less well in three-dimensional work, because they do so little of it. Although pupils achieve well overall, this variability particularly limits their ability to sustain and develop further the best they achieve, as exemplified in the work done for Art Week.
75. Teaching and learning vary. It is satisfactory overall. Very good teaching was seen in one Year 5 class, based on imaginative and meticulously detailed planning for a three-week period, where pupils worked on developing prints based on repeated and rotated patterns. Their teacher set very high standards, drawing on work by such artists as William Morris and Andy Warhol, and constantly encouraged pupils to aim higher by using sketchbooks and detailed comparisons with the best examples on display. The pupils were enthusiastic and confident about their work, keen to reflect on it and explain how they were using their sketchbooks and trial versions to develop their work further. Less successful teaching is characterised by limited planning which is primarily designed to enable pupils to produce one image or artefact based on brief preliminary consideration of a stimulus such as a small-scale copy of artists' work or historical artefacts. Unsuccessful teaching seen in one Year 5 class resulted from inadequate planning for a 90-minute period which covered little more than the introduction to the lesson.
76. Leadership is unsatisfactory because the co-ordinator has too few opportunities to check and improve the consistency of teaching in lessons and has too little knowledge of pupils' attainment and achievement in different classes and years. Too little thought has been given to how to use the school's ICT facilities regularly to enhance the subject, for example by using digital projectors to enable pupils to study large-scale images of artists' work, and to widen their skills by enabling them to use "paint" programs to create and transform digital images. The subject has not improved enough since the last inspection, because the good overall quality of teaching and learning has not been sustained and standards are not as high.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education was sampled. Citizenship is not taught as a separate subject, although elements of citizenship are included in the personal, social and health education lessons for older pupils.

77. In the two lessons seen, pupils achieved satisfactorily and made sound progress in the topics they were studying. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons seen was satisfactory. In Year 2, pupils developed their understanding of the importance of telling the truth as they discussed an assembly in greater depth. Pupils are encouraged to express their feelings and give their own opinions. They sometimes have activities that require sharing, teamwork and collaboration. By the time pupils are in Years 5 and 6, they are beginning to consider aspects of

citizenship. For instance, they study race relations and extend their knowledge and understanding through drama workshops and art.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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