

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **BURLESCOMBE C of E (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Burlescombe, Tiverton

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113350

Headteacher: Mrs S Brewer

Reporting inspector: Mr M S Burghart  
20865

Dates of inspection: 30<sup>th</sup> June - 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2003

Inspection number: 259414

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 category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	5 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Burlescombe, Tiverton Devon
Postcode:	EX16 7JH
Telephone number:	01823 672521
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Miss O Pearce
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20865	Mr M Burghart Registered inspector	Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage; Mathematics; Information and communication technology; Music; Art and design; Physical education; Special educational needs; English as an additional language.	How well are pupils taught? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13911	Mrs J Gallichan Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22578	Mr G Jones Team inspector	English; Science; Design and technology; Geography; History; Religious education Educational inclusion.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Burlescombe C of E (VC) Primary is a small school in the village of the same name near Tiverton in Devon. The school was built in 1859, extended in 1970, and recently modified to include the old school house. There are two classes one for Years R, 1 and 2 and the other for Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 with older pupils often split into two teaching groups. An independent nursery and a parent and toddler group share the accommodation. There are 58 children on the school roll aged five to eleven. There is an average of 29 pupils per class in the main school. All pupils attend some kind of pre-school group before starting Year R. Their attainment on entry to the school varies, but overall is about average. The headteacher has been in post for three years and began as acting head. The school has suffered considerable instability in staffing over the past five years as a result of long term illness, now resolved. The head is supported by one full time and one part time teacher. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register is above average, whilst the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. No pupils have English as an additional language. Two pupils are from traveller families and receive extra support from the local education authority services. Neither child was present during the inspection. The quality of acts of collective worship is to be inspected by a representative of the diocese. Her report appears under a separate cover.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a good, much improved school which is fast becoming very effective. Many pupils are achieving well regardless of their ability. Relationships are very good throughout. Very good teaching and strong, very effective leadership and management are rapidly overcoming problems in pupils' learning arising from instability in staffing. The school is working hard to raise standards in mathematics and science where gaps in what pupils have covered earlier in their school life have restricting effects on standards. Although by virtue of its small size unit costs are high the school now gives good and improved value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Standards are above average in speaking, listening, reading, art and design and design and technology.
- Teaching is very good.
- The school is very well led and very effectively managed. Very good progress has been made since the headteacher was appointed.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported very effectively.
- Provision for the Foundation Stage<sup>1</sup> is very good.
- There is a very good partnership with parents and the local community.
- The school very successfully encourages pupils' very positive attitudes, good behaviour and personal development.
- It takes very good care of pupils.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards are not yet high enough in mathematics and science for older pupils;
- The profile of geography and history is too low with negative effects on standards at the end of Year 6.
- There is an imbalance in time spent on swimming at the expense of other physical education activities.

*The areas for improvement are already detailed in the school's own improvement plan and will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Foundation Stage' refers to children's education from the age of three until the end of reception.

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The last inspection in 1997 raised four issues for improvement. The school went through a very unsettled period in the meantime as a result of staff change and long term illness. Progress suffered and for some of the time standards declined. In 1999 the school was noted by the local education authority as 'giving cause for concern'. In the last two years improvements have been rapid and very successful to the point where teaching is very good, schemes of work and systems for assessment have been (and continue to be) addressed, and provision for special educational needs has gone from unsatisfactory to very good. Standards in design and technology are now good compared with below expectations. In addition considerable improvements to resources and accommodation are having very positive effects on learning. Much better strategic planning has established and supported the school's educational direction. Highlights amongst other improvements are in the introduction of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy and developing a very successful partnership with parents. Substantial improvements to leadership and management now ensure that the school is very well placed for future development.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores<sup>2</sup> in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	C	C	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E very low E*
Mathematics	E	E	E*	E*	
Science	D	E	E*	E*	

The table would appear to show that the school's performance for eleven year olds was very low compared with all and similar schools in mathematics and science whilst being high in English. However, with only ten pupils in the year group statistics can be unreliable. The school appreciates that there is still more to do to improve mathematics and science where results have been negatively affected by what pupils were not taught. Improvements are being made, but in 2003 there are only four pupils in Year 6 and it will not be feasible to evaluate trends sensibly. Because it is not possible for inspectors to detail standards for eleven year olds without identifying individual pupils, judgements in this report focus on attainment and achievement across Years 3 to 6. Here work in hand is satisfactory with strengths in Year 3, but the aforementioned gaps are still restricting older pupils' performance. Seven year olds did very well in tests in 2002 and this bodes well for the future. Currently standards in speaking, listening, reading, art and design and design and technology are above national expectations throughout. Attainment is above expectations in information and communication technology (ICT) at the end of Year 2 and in line in Year 6. Whilst standards are as expected in geography, history and physical education in Year 2 they are below expectations when pupils are eleven. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements about attainment in music. Children in the Foundation Stage in Year R make good progress to reach nearly all the prescribed Early Learning Goals<sup>3</sup> before they are six.

<sup>2</sup> Average point scores refer to the average of pupils' scores weighted by Ofsted for each level attained in each subject.

<sup>3</sup> The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority has produced a set of 'Early Learning Goals', comprising of a set of skills, knowledge and understanding that children might be expected to achieve by the end of reception year. There are six areas of learning.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils respond well to very good teaching and are usually keen and enthusiastic.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in and out of class and much improved by very good management.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: pupils usually get on very well together in this family atmosphere. They show maturity and take responsibility. Relationships are very good
Attendance	Good and improved. Targets set were exceeded this year.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very 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.*

The overall quality of teaching is very good and better than the last inspection. It is very much improved compared with the difficult interim period in the past. Because of the quality of teaching pupils' learning is good. Pupils now make good progress and often achieve well for their ability and previous experience. To the school's immense credit all of the lessons observed (which were all unannounced) were at least good with over two in five very good. All teachers had very good sessions and the contribution of learning support staff to the quality of teaching was consistently good. Strengths in teaching are in making learning objectives clear, very good relationships, very effective management of mixed age classes (with especially positive effects on the learning of those children in Year R) and high expectations. Staff know pupils very well and plan work effectively at different ages and abilities. The staff's commitment to raising and maintaining standards contributes strongly to the school's very good ethos.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good and much improved: with very good features in provision for the Foundation Stage. The curriculum is broad and with the exception of physical education is balanced. More to do to further develop the profile of geography and history and fill the gaps in mathematics and science inherited from previous years. Homework is used effectively and there is good provision of extracurricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good and much improved from unsatisfactory. Expectations are high and pupils are helped to make at least good progress. Learning support assistants make a strong contribution.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: much improved with very good provision for spiritual, moral and social development. Good cultural and multicultural opportunities.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school has successfully built upon the caring atmosphere described in the last report. Monitoring of pupils' personal development is very good and the use of assessment to promote progress is now well established in core subjects.

The school's reputation is good. Communication with parents is very good and parents support the school very well. School events are very much at the heart of the village.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The school has very clear educational direction because of the excellent leadership of the headteacher and contributions of governors and staff. The school's improvement plan is a very good basis for management. Staff make a very good team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good: governors have played a very good role in enabling the school to make significant progress. Governors are well informed and make particularly useful contributions in financial and accommodation matters.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good: the school has a very clear, accurate view of its strengths and relative weaknesses. Priorities are entirely appropriate and there is an excellent commitment to further development with due reference to the stated aims and values.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: educational priorities are supported very effectively in financial planning. The school uses staffing, accommodation and resources very effectively, and by following the principles of best value provides a good learning environment. The school now gives good, and improved, value for money.

The school has done very well to improve space and resources for ICT. Staff are aware that more large outdoor 'climb on' equipment is needed for the Foundation Stage and that the ongoing problem with damp in the Oaks' classroom needs resolving.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is approachable.</li> <li>• Children like school.</li> <li>• Behaviour is now good.</li> <li>• Expectations are high.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The family ethos.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracurricular activities.</li> <li>• Homework.</li> </ul>

Twelve parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector prior to the inspection and twenty-five returned the Ofsted questionnaire. Four parents met with the lay inspector during the inspection. Almost without exception parents expressed their confidence in the school, appreciating improvements, particularly over the last two years. Inspectors are pleased to support these views. Extracurricular activities are judged as good for this size school and homework is found to be appropriate, supportive of the curriculum and well managed.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. As a small school with year groups varying from four in the current Year 6 to eleven in Years R and 3, statistics are unreliable as a guide to the school's performance. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs in each year group can have a marked effect on standards and this ranges in this school from nine per cent in Year 1 to 66 per cent in Year 4. Whilst the school can take credit for virtually all pupils in Year 2 reaching at least nationally expected levels in 2002 it has to take on board the very low results in science and mathematics for eleven year olds compared with high scores in English. Statistics indicate that the school significantly exceeded targets set by the local education authority for English in 2002, but were well below them in mathematics and science. In order not to identify actual pupils in this report: for example detailing pupils' attainment in Year 6 where there are so few pupils, inspectors have reported achievement across the age range.

2. Children start school having spent time at playgroups or nursery, with attainment which is broadly average. They make good and frequently very good, progress in Year R, and the majority reach nearly all the Early Learning Goals before they are six. Because of very good teaching pupils continue to do well in Years 1 and 2 and most achieve at least the nationally expected levels by the time they are seven. Strengths are in English where speaking, listening and reading are above average, and in art and design, design and technology and information and communication technology where standards are above national expectations.

3. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are currently making good and often very good progress. Those in Year 3 are doing very well and building on their success from Year 2. Pupils at the upper part of the seven to eleven age group are restricted in their performance in mathematics and science by significant gaps in their learning which were the result of staff instability and weaker teaching when they were younger. Although this situation has been resolved it was not possible for pupils to catch up in time for end of 2003 assessments and standards are still likely to be too low. Strengths in speaking, listening and reading where standards are above national averages are the result of very good teaching and the application of the National Literacy Strategy. Pupils do well in art and design and design and technology, being above expectations. This is especially noteworthy in design and technology where attainment was unsatisfactory at the last inspection.

4. Partly as a consequence of increased efforts to improve mathematics and science, geography and history have had a low profile and this is evident in the amount of work covered, and older pupils' less than expected levels of understanding. Pupils have had too few opportunities to research for information and make use of their writing skills to explain and record their work. The school is aware of this and increased emphasis is planned for in the school improvement plan.

5. During the inspection it was not possible to make judgements about physical education standards for seven year olds. However it is clear that pupils' attainment between Years 3 and 6 is below expectations as a result of a disproportionate amount of time spent on swimming at the expense of gymnastics, dance, athletics and games. Whilst this has positive effects on pupils' ability to swim (most can swim the required 25 metres even before it becomes a requirement of the curriculum for pupils aged seven to eleven) it has a negative impact on pupils' co-ordination, spatial awareness and their understanding of team tactics.

6. There was insufficient opportunity to draw conclusions about pupils' attainment in music during the inspection. However, from staff and parents' comments there is evidence of

good singing and participation in school concerts and shows. The school plans to raise the emphasis on creative and performing arts, and this forms part of improvement planning.

7. Throughout the school pupils' attainment in religious education meets the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and this is complemented by well planned opportunities for personal, social and health education and a new commitment to developing pupils' awareness of citizenship.

8. The above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs is very well provided for and makes good progress as a result. Many of these pupils achieve very well for their ability and previous experience and this is often reflected in them reaching or nearly achieving the nationally expected levels for their ages. The school fully meets the requirements of the Code of Practice<sup>4</sup> for special educational needs. This is a clear improvement from the last inspection where provision and support were unsatisfactory. Work is well planned in pupils' individual education plans which set targets for improvement, and are well communicated to pupils, staff and parents. Assessment is used very effectively to gauge progress and develop future plans. Staff in their planning for mixed age and ability classes are careful to provide work which is appropriate for all ability levels, and this particularly benefits those with special needs and those identified as higher attainers. Pupils' attainment is considerably enhanced by the work of classroom and learning assistants and volunteer helpers who give individual attention, and enable the teacher to concentrate on groups smaller than class size. The involvement of the headteacher in teaching ability groups, especially for Years 2 to 6 makes a significant contribution to provision.

9. As they were travelling at the time of the inspection it was not possible to judge the standards achieved by traveller children. However it is clear that work is well planned, that pupils' needs are well considered and that the school works effectively with local education authority officers to provide good support.

10. Inspectors judge that the school makes appropriate efforts to ensure all pupils are fully included in all activities. There does not appear to be any significant difference in the performance of girls and boys.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

11. Standards of pupils' attitudes, values and personal development have improved since the time of the last inspection. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning, their enthusiasm and interest in lesson and school activities contributes positively to the progress they make. Pupils' behaviour is very good and their personal development is very good. Parents feel their children enjoy school, behave well and are helped to become mature and responsible: inspectors fully endorse their positive views. Attendance rates are above the national average and there have been no exclusions.

12. Pupils in the infant class (reception through to Year 2) show their obvious delight in the interesting and varied activities organised for them. They listen well to their teacher and to each other. They sustain concentration and are confident to join in with all activities. The youngest children, in particular, enjoy working outside and proudly explain what they are doing to visitors. Even though their classroom gets very warm by the end of a hot, sunny afternoon they settle quickly to enjoy their end of day story, happily joining in and responding with laughter to the pictures in the book.

13. Pupils in the junior class work hard and persevere to do their best even when they find the work challenging. They actively join in discussions and are keen to answer teachers'

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<sup>4</sup> Code of Practice: This gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1993 Education Act.

questions. They listen carefully to their friends' ideas and views. In an ICT lesson all pupils were totally engaged as the teacher demonstrated the use of a new computer program to record sound. Even though they were very enthusiastic about making different sounds to record as a class, pupils did so with great control, following the teacher's silent instructions carefully.

14. Pupils behave very well and get on well with their class friends as well as the adults that teach and support them. Play and lunchtimes are sociable and enjoyable occasions when pupils from across the whole school age range mix and enjoy each other's company. No inappropriate or oppressive behaviour was observed and pupils are not concerned about bullying. Pupils move about the school buildings sensibly, and treat books and resources with care.

15. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils start to take responsibility for their own classroom organisation from the earliest age. In the infant class Years 1 and 2 take the money in and tick the list for milk and snacks in the mornings and reception children then help with distribution. Pupils in the junior class have a whole range of monitoring jobs to fulfil: for example they take responsibility for keeping the library organised; make sure pencil pots are full with sharpened pencils; and 'buddies' look after younger or new children to the school. Very good relationships permeate the whole school community. Pupils work well in pairs and respect each other's views and opinions. They are very capable of reflecting on the circumstances and feelings of others. For example, when considering the feelings of different characters in the story of the Prodigal Son, pupils quickly identified how each character might experience different emotions at various stages in the story, such as 'happy', 'sad', and 'jealous'.

16. Pupils' enjoyment of school is clear. Although attendance levels dipped last year as a result of many pupils suffering from chicken pox, this year's figures are again above average levels. Punctuality is good with no unauthorised absence recorded. Pupils' regular attendance has a positive impact on the standards achieved.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

17. The quality of teaching is very good and has improved since the last inspection in 1997. There have been significant improvements since the local education authority noted 'cause for concern' in the school in 1999. There was a period of staffing instability following the departure of the previous permanent head involved three acting headships and two periods of considerable long term illness. This resulted in weaknesses in teaching and meant that pupils now at the top of the school were not taught all elements of the curriculum in sufficient depth. Although teaching is now much better and absence problems have been resolved it has not been possible to fill all the gaps in mathematics and science and standards are below expectations.

18. The reasons for the marked improvements in teaching in the last two years are:

- There is now a stable staff;
- Curriculum planning is much better, providing a secure educational basis for progress;
- Monitoring, especially by the head, and better assessment and analysis particularly in English, mathematics and science are proving effective in highlighting areas for development;
- In-service training needs are identified by monitoring and the performance management process, and targeted as priorities in the school's excellent strategic plan. A very good example of this is in ICT where teachers' expertise has been systematically improved by staff training;
- The head and staff have formed a very strong partnership and make a very good team;

- There is a very high commitment of all concerned at the school, staff and governors, to raising and maintaining standards. This is based on the excellent awareness of strengths and weaknesses which is the result of the leadership of the headteacher;
- The school has now a very good ethos and provides a good learning environment.

19. All teachers were observed teaching unannounced on a variety of occasions and across a range of subjects. To the school's immense credit all lessons were at least good and over two in five were very good. All teachers had very good lessons. Examples of such quality were in Year R circle time featuring safety with medicines where the level of discussion was very good; Years 1 and 2 science minibeast hunt around the grounds; and Years 3 to 5 English where pupils made very good progress in report writing about banana production.

20. There has been a significant improvement in developments to planning as required by the last inspection. Staff plan very effectively together and there is a rolling programme of work to ensure that pupils in mixed age classes are involved in a variety of activities year on year. Better use of assessment has enabled staff to modify their planning as necessary, both for the individual pupil and for the curriculum as a whole.

21. Throughout the school literacy lessons and numeracy teaching are consistently very good. The school is very fortunate to have two out of three teachers who have been recognised as leading mathematics teachers and this is having a very positive impact. For example pupils in Year 1 and Year 3 are performing well above what is expected for their ages and standards of speaking, listening and reading are above average. This represents good achievement and progress from children's broadly average starting point when they first start school. There is a very close match between the quality of teaching and learning, except in the Years 3 to 6 class where the teacher is having to work doubly hard to help children catch up before consolidating their learning.

22. Teaching and support for pupils with special educational needs is very good and much improved from unsatisfactory at the last inspection. Expectations are high and pupils often make very good progress in both the personal and academic senses. Teachers and classroom assistants work very well together and this makes a significant contribution to the quality of teaching as a whole. Staff know pupils very well and use this knowledge to promote learning and manage behaviour. Classroom and pupil management is a strength.

23. Teachers use very good questioning techniques to probe pupils' understanding and get them to respond with reasoned answers. For example in a very good Years 3 to 6 art lesson the teacher got the pupils to explain their preferences of other pupils' efforts in critical but positive terms developed from looking at the work of famous artist such as Monet. Staff manage time, accommodation, resources and children well. This means teachers are well prepared and children are well behaved. Teachers make learning objectives clear and plan work for different ages and abilities in the same class. Children are challenged appropriately and they respond by usually working hard and sustaining their attention. Very good relationships give rise to an atmosphere of trust where pupils are prepared to contribute without fear of making mistakes. For example in a very good Years 2 to 4 session about teeth and eating, pupils were confident to relate their own habits and appreciated others' right to be different.

24. The school is not complacent about the quality of teaching and although this inspection raises no specific issues for improving teaching, has highlighted making even greater use of ICT to support other subjects; developing the profiles of geography, history and physical education and the performing arts as areas for further emphasis.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

25. The school's overall curriculum is broad and relevant. For children in the Foundation Stage of learning the curriculum is very good and children move smoothly into the National Curriculum. There remains only the improvement to outdoor climbing apparatus to be tackled in order to give children their full range of opportunities.

26. The curriculum for the rest of the school is good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory for the remainder of the pupils. There is some imbalance in the curriculum considering the amount of time spent on swimming when compared with time spent on other aspects of physical education. Work in geography and history is not as well developed as other areas of the curriculum and deserves more time to be spent to ensure that the development of skills in these two subjects are built upon in a more systematic way, alongside pupils' knowledge and understanding. The school is working hard to raise standards in mathematics and science, endeavouring to fill in gaps in knowledge and understanding, following previous staffing issues. The weakest elements of this work remain in the investigative and experimental areas of these subjects.

27. Notable improvements seen since the last inspection are in design and technology where standards are above national expectations and in information and communication technology where there are strengths in Years 1 and 2. At the same time the school has made significant improvements to its work with pupils who have special educational needs. Provision for these pupils is now very good. Overall planning has improved and is carried out by the three teachers jointly. As a result, and due to the wide range of ages in the two classes, many subjects are planned on a two and four year cycle so that pupils do not repeat work unnecessarily and that work builds systematically from one year to the next.

28. Since the school has had a more settled staff over the last two years, improvements have been made to the work in personal, social and health education. The school has a very good action plan for the continued development of this area of study and is aiming to complete its Healthy School Award in the near future.

29. Over the recent past the school has made much better use of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. These are currently being well utilised by teachers to ensure good planning, clear learning objectives, and teaching based firmly on a three part lesson structure. As a result standards are gradually improving.

30. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, have full access to the curriculum. Teachers ensure this through their planning and through the ways in which they deliver lessons.

31. In spite of some negative comments from parents, the inspection considers that the school provides good extracurricular opportunities for its pupils. Parents and teachers play their full part in activities, although changes in staff naturally affect what can be provided. Sporting clubs such as football, cricket and athletics have been organised, with basketball on the horizon. Batik, computer and gardening clubs were seen in action during the inspection. All of which not only provided pupils with access to an extended curriculum, but at the same time given them opportunities to learn new skills.

32. The school has good links with the local community. Several village people help in school with reading, computer club and choir activities. There are close links with the church through family services, use of the church for key Christian festivals of Easter and Christmas, and the regular visits to the school by the incumbent. Whilst there are few local industries, the school has good links with the local quarry company, who has provided materials for the school and resurfaced the playground.

33. Even more beneficial are the links forged between the school and other local schools. This has resulted in several support groups being established for such curriculum areas as special needs and early years work. Schools meet to discuss standards and to check that

they are grading their work in the same way. They have joined together for music and sport and the headteachers meet regularly to discuss issues of mutual interest and support.

34. The provision that the school makes for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural values is very good overall and has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes to school, to each other and to life in general. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

35. Pupils' spiritual development is very good. The school's ethos and commitment to Christian values gives good support to pupils, helping them to develop not only an idea of 'self', but equally a feeling of being a member of the school family. The school's programme for religious education is coherent and consistent in its view that the subject is not simply about understanding religious practices, but is about exploring fundamental questions of life, enabling pupils to reflect on their own beliefs. This is well supported by the school's collective worship. In an assembly on the theme of the Prodigal Son, pupils were able, through the story telling, to identify with the characters and reflect on their own feelings, before being invited to pray on the theme. Within the more general curriculum, especially in science and art, pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to reflect on the wonders of God's kingdom on earth. Pupils were followed on a minibeast hunt around the school grounds. They marvelled at the creatures that they found, always treating them with care and respect. Pupils' art work enhances their spiritual awareness, whilst some of their poetry and free writing gives pupils opportunities to release emotions and inner feelings.

36. The school's contribution to the moral values of its pupils is very good. The school makes great efforts to teach its pupils the difference between right and wrong and adults in the school provide very good role models. Through the very good quality of its pastoral support and the overall success of its behaviour management procedures, the school ensures the progress of education. Provision for pupils to exercise responsibility and to take initiative are good. Within the curriculum pupils have good and sometimes very good opportunities, through their work in personal, social and health education to discuss issues of personal rights and responsibilities. The school's whole ethos is a very positive one in which all adults try to accentuate the positive in every situation. Rules focus on positive statements and when teachers seek quiet in their classes, they focus on those who are quiet and ready to work, giving them due praise so that others can see what they should do.

37. Pupils' social development is very good. There are a number of places around the school where rules for agreed conduct appear. These are always written in a positive way. The strategy is very effective and behaviour in lessons and around the school is now very good. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good, sometimes excellent. This in itself plays an important part in raising standards in classrooms, when one considers that in one class there is a three year age range and in the other a four year age range. Lessons are harmonious with no apparent barriers between any age groups. At lunchtimes older pupils were seen playing with younger ones. The school has recently instigated a school council, to which pupils were voted in by their classmates. Although early days, this can only increase social understanding and promote a feeling of togetherness within the school. A negative issue for the school to consider is the lack of opportunities for pupils to play team games and gain in social development. With very small year groups and few opportunities to compete in sporting events against other schools, this does go against the very positive position established in pupils' social development.

38. Pupils' cultural development is good. The planned curriculum in art, English and religious education extends pupils' cultural awareness, knowledge and understanding. For example, pupils were seen studying aspects of Judaism. Not simply the religion, but how it affects people and families. Rather than take pupils on expensive and time consuming visits, the school has decided to try to bring multicultural activities to the school. This has been effective. An archaeologist visited the school, bringing Roman artefacts, dressing as a centurion and bringing to life pupils' studies of that period of history. The school organised an 'Indian experience' providing pupils with food tasting, original ethnic clothes and opportunities

to explore the spices of that country. At another time pupils experienced an African dance day. Closer to home, local studies are carried out on the village and other local towns, exploring their geographical position and the local history and culture. However, the current geography curriculum does not yet give sufficient opportunities for pupils to explore and gain information about countries beyond their own.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

39. Very high priority is placed on the care, support and welfare of pupils. Practice matches written procedures closely. All staff know pupils very well and give them very good support and guidance whatever their individual needs. This aspect was reported on positively at the time of the last inspection, it has been strengthened further and is yet another strength of the school. Parents appreciate that their children are well cared for and cite the family atmosphere as being one of the most significant factors in the school's success. Monitoring and tracking of pupils' academic and personal development is very good.

40. The school actively promotes healthy living. Pupils are encouraged to drink fresh water throughout the day and this is readily available to them. Healthy snacks are encouraged at breaktime. Infant pupils enjoyed fresh fruit and vegetables grown in the school gardens during the inspection.

41. Matters of health and safety are taken very seriously and thorough procedures are in place to ensure the school environment is safe. Some risk assessment procedures have been identified as exemplary by a recent local education authority audit. A number of staff hold first aid qualifications and pupils are well cared for if they have a minor accident. Appropriate records are maintained. The school's child protection procedures are fully explained in a detailed policy, which gives plenty of guidance to support staff. All requirements are met. The school has appropriate procedures in place to ensure safe use of the Internet.

42. Procedures to encourage regular attendance are good. Parents fully understand the need for regular attendance and ensure their children arrive in school in good time. Good liaison with the education welfare officer ensures correct recording of all types of absence.

43. Very good procedures are consistently applied to promote appropriate behaviour. High expectations are the key to the school's success in this area. It is very impressive how teachers continually reinforce the right behaviour by positive praise and encouragement. Pupils respond to the appropriate incentives available for good work and good behaviour but equally enjoy the verbal praise they receive from their teachers. Bullying is taken seriously and agreed procedures are followed should there be any concerns.

44. Assessment of attainment and monitoring of pupils' progress is very good for the Foundation Stage, pupils with special educational needs, and good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Procedures and portfolios of work are being developed for other subjects and pupils' standards are compared with national benchmarks. Close analysis of test results and careful tracking of pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy are helping to ensure that previous gaps in learning are identified. Curriculum planning is constantly being adjusted and refined to ensure gaps in knowledge and skills are covered and as a result better progress is being made. There is a constant cycle of target setting and review which is helping to raise standards, particularly in the core subjects. Personal development is monitored effectively and a good overview is provided for parents in their child's annual report.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

45. The school's partnership with parents is a significant strength. Parents are very supportive and recognise the improvements that have been made recently. They feel the school is now making rapid progress both in its educational provision and standards and in

the physical environment and facilities. Parents' response to the Ofsted questionnaire and their comments at the pre-inspection meeting illustrate the high regard in which they hold the school. They feel teaching is good, they are well informed and can approach the school for information or if they have concerns. They feel encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school.

46. Parents receive weekly newsletters which keep them well informed of school events and activities. The prospectus and governors' annual report fully meet requirements and give parents a good overview of the life of the school. Parents enjoy plenty of opportunities to find out about their child's progress both formally and informally. The school's open door policy is very genuine. Formal consultations are arranged at appropriate times. Parents are very happy with the information provided in annual reports which is detailed and informs parents well of their child's achievements and progress. They especially appreciate the self-evaluation made by their own child and the photographs and samples of work included. It is a very complete and informative record. The school regularly seeks parents' views through its own questionnaires in its efforts to ensure it meets parents' expectations where possible.

47. Parents appreciate all the information they receive about what and how their child will be taught. Homework expectations are clear. The school expects parents to share a book with their child regularly and their support and help with reading at the earliest stages helps ensure good progress is made. The reading record book is a useful means of communication. Parents give their support in many other ways. There is an active parent-teacher association and funds raised are used to enhance learning opportunities and improve resources. A good number of parents help in class and with extracurricular activities, others accompany swimming. The school has received very good support from a number of parents to cover the absence of a classroom assistant.

48. The very effective partnership with parents has a positive impact on pupils' learning experiences.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

49. The head gives the school excellent educational direction and together with the governors and staff ensures that the work of the school truly reflects its stated aims and values. As a result of the head's excellent leadership the school is very well run. Over the last two years with a stable group of staff she has created a very good team. Very good relationships and a very professional commitment by all concerned to raising and maintaining standards have established the school's very good ethos.

50. The head, staff and governors have worked very closely to create a very effective school improvement plan. This forms an excellent basis for continued development and reflects contributions from everyone. It is derived from high quality monitoring, much improved assessment of pupils' performance, and analysis of strengths and weaknesses. It makes very good use of subject action plans to ensure the school uses finance wisely. Governors are well informed and confirm that the plan is very effectively prioritised. This joint effort has resulted in very good progress against not only all of the key issues raised in the last report, but against the causes for concern identified by the head and local education authority four years ago, many of which had their roots in weaknesses in management. The very successful management of change and very clear understanding of what needs to be done to make improvements are strengths.

51. Significant improvements in management since the last inspection are in:

- Establishing a stable staff;
- Developments in, and use of, staff professional development and appraisal to recognise strengths and set targets for training:

- Much better management of subject planning for mixed age classes: for example significantly improving schemes of work and teaching for design and technology to take standards from unsatisfactory to above expectations. All statutory requirements are met;
- Special educational needs very effectively planned for and supported. Provision is now judged very good compared with unsatisfactory;
- Assessment is better used to analyse success and identify areas for development;
- The successful introduction of National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy;
- Improved communication with parents and a closer working relationship between home, school and the community;
- Much better financial control and clear links between spending and educational priorities;
- Better levels and the quality of resources: for example for ICT;
- Considerable improvements to accommodation to provide better teaching areas and increased administrative and storage space.

52. Aspects which could be improved still further in terms of management are in: reviewing the balance of time spent on swimming to provide greater opportunities for other aspects of physical education, and raising the profile of geography and history, especially for the junior age group.

53. A strong feature of the family atmosphere of the school is that pupils are very well managed. The very consistent management of behaviour through the school's commitment to recognising the positive is very effective and even those pupils who can, and sometimes do, present problems respond well. The outcome is that behaviour is very good and that the tolerance, consideration and turn taking and sharing encouraged in Year R are sustained throughout.

54. Currently the school appears to have no contingency fund. Governors and head are careful to spend all money generated by the children on roll on those children, preferring to use fund raising to cover large items of expenditure. It is normal in a small school for staffing and accommodation costs to be high on a per pupil basis. Forward planning has already taken into account the rise in numbers and the additional income this will generate to balance the books. Financial control is judged very good, both on a day to day level (with the school's office staff playing a crucial role) and in long term, strategic planning driven by the head in conjunction with governors and local education authority.

55. The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is good. There are sufficient experienced and well qualified staff to meet the demands of the National Curriculum and Foundation Stage. Staff are encouraged to be involved in further training and as leading mathematics teachers two staff are providing such opportunities for teachers in other schools. Teachers receive good support from classroom assistants who are deployed well to provide good quality support for pupils' learning. Teamwork between teachers and support staff is of a high standard. Experienced administrative and supervisory staff make a valuable contribution to the life of the school.

56. The accommodation provides a good environment for learning and is improved by the inclusion of the school house since the last inspection. Office, staffroom and ICT suite have all benefited, as has much needed provision for storage. During the last inspection the hall was used as a classroom denying pupils opportunities for physical education and drama. This is no longer the case and the addition of new indoor climbing apparatus has added to the quality of provision. The school is aware that it does not provide accommodation for disabled persons and is working with the local education authority to remedy this and to address the ongoing problem of damp in the Oaks' classroom. This spoils displays which otherwise are considered good throughout. The school is kept clean and generally well maintained. There are separate safe play areas shared by the Foundation Stage and the nursery, and very good garden areas maintained by pupils as part of environmental science. There is a good sized grass area surrounded by trees and hedges and the grounds are well maintained with no litter or graffiti.

57. Learning resources are generally sufficient to support learning in each subject, personal, social and health education and special educational needs. Resources for physical education are good and recently improved to provide for the teaching of basketball from September 2003. The school has the use of the nearby village recreation ground for games. A good area to act as a well organised library has been created in the hall. As a result of wise spending the school has a good stock of books, fiction and non fiction, and makes good use of the support of the local library service. The school is aware that the absence of large 'climb on' equipment outdoors for the Foundation Stage is a weakness and is currently working with parents to raise money for this purpose.

58. On the basis of good and very good quality provision (especially in teaching and support which is particularly well managed) and in the light of a strong commitment to improving standards, the school now gives good value for money. This represents a considerable improvement from the 'sound' judgement of the last inspection.

### WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59. In the context of very good analysis and understanding of its own strengths and areas for further development (already considered in the school improvement plan) the school should continue to seek to:

- **Raise** standards in mathematics and science for pupils aged eleven, by ensuring that all elements of the curriculum have been covered in sufficient depth with particular reference to experimental and investigative work;

*Paragraphs: 1,3,17,26,91,92,93,100,102,107.*

- **Develop** work in geography and history throughout the school to raise standards by the end of Year 6, creating more opportunities for pupils to research for information, and make more use of their writing skills;

*Paragraphs: 4,24,38,52,86,90,122,124,125,126,128,130.*

- **Review** the balance of time spent on physical education activities to develop opportunities to improve pupils' skills in gymnastics, dance, athletics and games, reducing the time allocated to swimming.

*Paragraphs: 5,24,26,37,52,141.*

In addition the following minor issues should be considered as part of the governors' action plan:

- Improving, as planned, outdoor provision for the Foundation Stage with large 'climb on' equipment;

*Paragraphs: 25,26,57,61,73.*

- Continuing to work with the local education authority to overcome the problem of damp in the Oaks' classroom.

*Paragraphs: 56,113.*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	19
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	8	11	0	0	0	0
Percentage	0	42	58	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents almost five percentage points.

### 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)	58
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	14

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	5

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	5.6

#### 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 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	7	5	12

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	92 (70)	92 (90)	92 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Total	11	11	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (90)	92 (100)	92 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

In 2002 due to the small numbers of boys and girls in Year 2 only totals are reported above

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	5	5	10

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (86)	40 (57)	80 (86)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (71)	70 (100)	80 (100)
	National	72 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

In 2002 due to the very small numbers of boys and girls in Year 6 only percentages are reported above



Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	58
Number of questionnaires returned	25

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	40	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	44	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	52	4	4	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	52	12	0	4
The teaching is good.	76	24	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	52	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	32	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	40	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	60	36	4	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	56	32	4	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	36	4	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	40	16	4	4

*Due to rounding percentages do not total 100.*

## **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**

60. Children enter reception in the year they are five. There is evidence of improving liaison between the school and the on-site independent nursery and children have a smooth introduction to school life. Year R children are taught with Years 1 and 2 pupils although for about a quarter of the week they form a separate group sometimes with the teacher and sometimes with a classroom assistant. Children's attainment levels on entry to the school vary widely year on year but for 2003 standards were broadly average. Children make good progress in all areas and provision is very well managed.

61. The quality of teaching for the Foundation Stage was observed as very good from teachers and classroom support assistants. How the school is developing planning and structured play opportunities for reception age children as distinct from those in Years 1 and 2 was tracked during the inspection and provision in planning and practice was found to be very good. The school is aware that there is still more to do to introduce large 'climb on' equipment outdoors, but in general resources are good. Overall the school is judged as making very good provision for the Foundation Stage and this is much improved since the 'mainly satisfactory' judgement of the last inspection.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

62. Children all reach the expected Early Learning Goals in this aspect before they enter Year 1 and are making good progress against the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Successful provision in this area means that many of the year group achieve better than this. Children make very good progress in maturing. They share, take turns, and show much consideration for each other's feelings. On a variety of occasions children were observed showing independence and taking responsibility. For example getting themselves organised for lunch and choosing activities without direct supervision.

63. A very good feature of reception activities is the consistently good behaviour of children who are already aware of the routines and rules of the school. Children clearly have regard for the effect of their actions on others and respond very well to the teacher and classroom assistant. They show confidence when meeting new adults and are keen to talk about what they are doing. This has a very positive impact on relationships, which are consistently very good. Children respond very positively to circle time and demonstrate their growing awareness of other people's points of view. They show above average listening skills and show very good respect for adults and each other.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

64. Children make good progress in this area of learning benefiting significantly from very good teaching and being in a class with older children, and the vast majority will reach the desired Early Learning Goals before Year 1. Often average and more able children do better than this. All children are emerging as readers and writers at least as well as is expected of this age, as well as showing that they can communicate very effectively orally. Higher attaining children are already reading at Level 1 of the National Curriculum, which is better than is expected, and are able to write simple sentences in the correct sequence. Children use a good level of vocabulary and most can express themselves well. A good feature of Year R is that children are prepared to listen to each other and their teachers with good effects on the quality of discussion as well as on personal development.

65. Very good teaching means that children learn from their mistakes and have already begun to establish strategies to help them read new words and expressions from a mixture of phonics (sounding out) and using picture and contextual clues. Good opportunities are

made for role play: for example in the 'shop', where children and staff spontaneously explore dialogue which matches everyday situations and complements work in mathematics. Children are encouraged to interact with each other and talk has a high priority: for example even in more formal science lessons the teacher allows time for children to say what they did and comment on the work of other children.

66. All efforts at early writing skills are strongly encouraged. Staff make a point of valuing all attempts to record on paper and from the outset children are taught the skills that will lead to cursive (joined) handwriting.

### **Mathematical development**

67. Children achieve nearly all the Early Learning Goals for mathematical development before they are six. They enjoy sorting and classifying and generally playing with, and in the case of more able children naming, different colours and shapes.

68. Very good teaching provides opportunities for first hand experience and as a result children have a good appreciation of comparisons by size and weight and are beginning to use terms such as smaller than and greater than. Average and more able children are beginning to add and subtract and all are able to recognise and sequence numbers up to ten, and some beyond. There is a clear advantage in being with older children, especially in terms of experiencing an introduction to numeracy time earlier in their school career than if they were in a class of only reception. This is of most benefit to more able children who frequently work with those of similar ability from higher year groups using a range of strategies and correct mathematical vocabulary.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

69. Good opportunities are provided for children to explore their world and very good use is made of the school site as a logical extension to the classroom. First hand use of the senses is encouraged with good effects, on not only greater awareness of objects and materials, but literacy skills of describing and expressing opinions. Most children in Year R are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area before they join Year 1.

70. Children are encouraged to build using a variety of construction kits and to select simple tools to cut, shape and join. A good example was seen at the play dough table where children used rolling pins, scissors and pastry cutters to form different shapes from identical amounts of dough. A good start is made to ICT with children showing good awareness of the potential of computer, mouse and keyboard skills to drag and drop articles of clothing to dress teddy on screen and to give instructions to the school's programmable toy. Children can load tapes into players for story time using the listening station, successfully controlling volume, start and stop keys. Good use of the digital camera by the teacher to enhance displays sets children a good example of the value of technology.

71. As part of topic work with Years 1 and 2, children make good progress in identifying significant features of holiday destinations and work on houses and homes develops children's observation skills. Early work towards the locally agreed religious education syllabus starts children off in learning about beliefs and customs: for example thinking about special places and visiting the church.

### **Physical development**

72. Although it was not possible to observe formal physical education lessons observation of children at play outdoors both in structured play and at break shows children are on line to meet the learning goals in this aspect by the time they join Year 1. They move with confidence and are making good progress in controlling their bodies and in awareness of their own potential. Children are enthusiastic to play with equipment and apparatus and follow

safety rules: for example joining in with older children at lunch times sharing bats, balls and ropes.

73. There are good opportunities provided for children to use tools such as scissors and glue sticks and fine movements are practised which will develop into other skills, such as writing. Children benefit from the sand and water tray apparatus and there is a developing range of outdoor activities. A review of planning shows a very good commitment to making full use of such facilities for play and improving outdoor large apparatus.

74. Whilst involved in physical activity children do so safely and with good regard to each other. Behaviour is usually very good. Children are already beginning to understand what it is to be part of a team (for example as part of a hunt for minibeasts!) and to be members of the school, with very positive effects on personal as well as physical development.

### **Creative development**

75. Children's creative development is good. Children have a good awareness of colour and shape and are being introduced to texture: for example by making clay tile buildings and mixing different paints together. Children's self portraits and attempts at drawing animals show that their observation skills are appropriately developed. Very good teaching has helped children to a good awareness of proportion.

76. Children are encouraged to express themselves in art and music activities such as joining in 'Drum crazy' with a visiting musician. All efforts are valued: for example in good display of children's pictures. Children respond well to suggestions and were seen to modify their techniques and try harder as a result of listening to adults. Planning, and the teacher's very good records, show that in music children sing rhymes, explore different rhythms and use simple instruments to make sounds.

77. Although no dance activities were observed planning shows that they are to be part of physical education. Children's role play sometimes stimulated by stories they have heard and by the dressing up clothes laid out shows imagination and makes good links with communication, language, literacy and numeracy skills.

### **ENGLISH**

78. Results of the 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the age of seven and eleven show standards to be well above national expectations for pupils aged seven and even very high by the age of eleven. However, due to the very small number of pupils in the Year 6 group it is dangerous to read too much into these figures.

79. The inspection finds that standards of attainment for pupils aged seven are above average especially in speaking, listening and reading, and average in writing. This above average level of attainment is evident to the end of Year 4. In that year group, this is in spite of a very large percentage of pupils with special educational needs. In Years 5 and 6 standards are not quite as high but are at least satisfactory. This is due in no small part to gaps in knowledge, understanding and skills, which occurred as a result of staffing problems in the past. More recently, the school has begun to make good use of the National Literacy Strategy in order to support teachers' planning and to deliver lessons in a more effective way. Equally, staffing is now more stable and teachers are making inroads in recouping lost ground. As a result, since 2001 results have risen and pupils are now achieving much better than in preceding years.

80. The levels of pupils' English skills on entry to the school are generally average, but with a wide range of ability, the proportions of which often change from year to year. The school makes best use of opportunities for discussion in English lessons and in other subjects in order to offer pupils good opportunities for speaking and listening. As a result, the majority of

pupils, including those with special needs, make good progress and contribute well in class discussions. This would suggest an improvement since the last inspection. This was noted prior to the minibeast hunt in the class for the youngest pupils and in the class for older pupils as they were discussing the purpose of report writing. In the latter pupils were given time to respond and questions were firmly targeted to challenge individuals. Pupils from Year 5 were eager to talk to an inspector about their work, adapting well to questions and giving accurate answers. A recently formed school council will give further good opportunities for pupils to extend their speaking and listening skills.

81. The school teaches reading well through a mixture of graded reading books and a good collection of children's fiction. Children in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 were observed in a reading lesson. The groups were carefully organised with one group reading with the teacher, while another group was reading independently using an on-screen book on the computer. There was a good level of challenge in all activities and pupils were confident in their own abilities to make sense of their various texts.

82. Pupils aged seven read well and have been well trained in sounding out unfamiliar words, and so progress well when trying to read independently. This leads to them having a good level of interest in books and a willingness to share their reading with parents on a regular basis. This gives good support to progress in reading. Pupils with special educational needs often make equally good progress as their reading programme is often carefully planned and monitored. By Years 5 and 6, pupils' reading is still above expectations for their ages. Pupils show a good use of a variety of strategies for decoding difficult words. They are generally keen on reading and can discuss their favourite books and authors, making reference to other books they have read. Record keeping of progress made in reading is very good. Whilst many pupils use their reading skills in research based on books, there is not yet enough evidence of the same amount of research being carried out using ICT.

83. Pupils' handwriting skills develop satisfactorily through the school. It would be difficult for these to develop at a faster rate, as much handwriting practice is carried out on whiteboards with felt pens. As this does not replicate the usual writing materials, it is not surprising that some pupils find it difficult to make the change back to writing with pencil or pen on paper. Whilst there is no harm in practising the formation of letters in sand, in the air or on whiteboards the school needs to look closely at how it then ensures the smooth progression to improvements in handwriting on paper.

84. Standards of spelling and punctuation remain around the expected levels for pupils both in Year 2 and in Year 6. Whilst pupils often learn spellings and can show that they get them correct when tested, too often pupils forget the rules they have learned when writing freely. More opportunities for drafting work, checking partners' work and checking spellings with dictionaries might well serve to support further improvements in this part of pupils' work in literacy.

85. Pupils aged seven write for a variety of purposes, including news items, stories, poems and instructional text. The scrutiny of previously completed work shows that some pupils write extended stories, trying to use speech for dramatic effect, and showing a good grasp of story conventions such as a happy ending. Stories of Hansel and Gretel or of Goldilocks give good examples of this. However, some pupils need more support in the spelling and punctuation elements of writing in order to increase their confidence in this activity.

86. The previous slow start that older pupils made in literacy, when the school had staffing problems, has now been largely overcome. Pupils have individual targets set in their literacy books and most pupils are making at least satisfactory progress, with some making good progress. They write in persuasive text about why they should have a swimming pool at school, using formal language. They write carefully crafted narrative text based on 'The long walk' by George Layton. Pupils have opportunities to write letters about new playground equipment. These are all carried out to standards which match those achieved nationally for

pupils of their age. However, there is still some work to be done by the school to ensure that other subjects in the curriculum all play their part in providing pupils with other meaningful opportunities to write in an extended way: for example in geography and history.

87. Pupils with special educational needs often receive the same work as other pupils, but receive individual support in order to progress with the work they are given. Occasionally, when this support is not available, their progress is limited.

88. In the seven English lessons seen, teaching was never less than good. It was very good in two. In all lessons the management of pupils was particularly noteworthy of praise. A span of three years in one class, and four in the other, provides the class teachers with many organisational problems. They cope with this in an exemplary way and neither behaviour nor the quality of work suffers. The teaching of basic skills, especially in relation to the use of the National Literacy Strategy, is very good. Teachers are confident in their use of the strategy and customise it to suit their purposes. As a result, different groups of pupils achieve well and make good progress in their learning. The standard of questioning is equally very good. Teachers adapt their questioning to suit the age and ability of the pupils. In this way all pupils feel they have something to contribute, have their self esteem raised, and want to achieve well.

89. Resources for English are satisfactory, including the reasonably well stocked library, which is classified on the Dewey system. Classes themselves are bright and encouraging, with many good displays of writing in evidence in order to stimulate further work. Animal poems in the class for the youngest pupils are very well presented, whilst book reviews on books by Anne Fine show that older pupils understand the setting, characters and plots of her books.

90. Assessment procedures are good in English. Reading records are well kept and notes on what pupils can do, lead to sensible targets for improvement being set for them. The subject has a strong presence in the school. A good allocation of time has been given to English and standards have been rising. Other subjects could play a larger part in developing pupils' literacy skills if the literacy provision was more clearly mapped across the curriculum especially in geography and history.

## **MATHEMATICS**

91. Standards of pupils' attainment in mathematics are broadly average at the end of Year 2 when pupils are seven, but below average at the end of Year 6 aged eleven. These judgements do not match the results of 2002 assessments where pupils in Year 2 performed very well and were well above average, and where Year 6 results were very low. Taking Year 6 results at face value would put the school in the bottom five per cent of all schools nationally and for similar schools and this represents a decline since the previous inspection. However, although the school is aware that weaknesses in teaching early in the last three years left significant gaps in pupils' learning which are in urgent need of filling, statistics based on a sample of only ten pupils can be misleading. In the small year group tested in 2002 the performance of one pupil counts for ten per cent of the total and the above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs at the school means great care should be taken when interpreting data. With only four pupils in the current Year 6 statistical comparisons will be meaningless.

92. Inspectors find that most current Year 2 pupils are on line to reach levels expected of seven year olds with higher attainers doing better than this. Work in hand for older pupils is satisfactory, but what they are capable of is restricted by what they have not been taught lower down the school. For example too little work in terms of investigations and problem solving, and very little experience of data handling, leaves pupils unsure of what strategies to use to follow work through and they need a lot more help than normally would be expected. It is promising that pupils in Year 3, who have had a much better grounding, are already

outperforming some of the older pupils in the mixed age class and this bodes well for the future. The school has recognised this and groups pupils by ability for mathematics for some sessions during the week.

93. Throughout the school the effect of now very good teaching (both class teachers are leading mathematics teachers) and the full introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy are having a very good impact on the subject. Staff enthusiasm for mathematics is infectious, especially for more able pupils and, although some pupils lack confidence feeling insecure in their previous learning, their response in attitudes and behaviour is good and for younger pupils, frequently very good.

94. Compared with other aspects of the subject pupils' skills and competence in numeracy are strengths. The school sets great store by the traditions of knowing tables and there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their recall to work things out mentally. Most pupils show appropriate accuracy and speed for their ages and systematic work on place value supports addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

95. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are able to make good use of number lines and have a good knowledge of how number bonds can make calculations easier. They are given good opportunities to estimate and check their answers and time spent in grouping objects and numbers together by considering their properties has positive effects on pupils' understanding. From the limited evidence available it appears that pupils have a satisfactory awareness of different shapes, being able to name and describe basic two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms. A variety of counting and sorting games both practically and using the computer serve to reinforce pupils' learning. Pupils are making at least satisfactory progress.

96. In Years 3 to 6 pupils' progress is varied. Those younger pupils who have a more secure basis do well, whilst for older pupils progress is more limited. There are good examples of pupils making use of numeracy to solve problems, such as changing miles into kilometres and vice versa, and recognising different numbers in weighing scales when making bread as part of design and technology. Work on number lines started in Year 2 is extended in history in considering times and significant dates. There is evidence of good work on shapes and symmetry which is linked to art and appreciation of the work of artists such as Mondrian. As part of work in ICT pupils have entered data into spreadsheets.

97. Characteristics of very good teaching in mathematics at this school include:

- Very good planning and preparation;
- Making learning objectives very clear and referring back to them during and at the end of lessons;
- Good and regular use of homework;
- Very good questioning techniques which involve all pupils in discussion and probe for pupils' understanding;
- Very good levels of challenge, whereby pupils of different abilities and ages in the same class have work set at appropriate levels;
- High levels of teacher knowledge, understanding and competence in the subject;
- Good use of assessment to verify the success of teaching and set targets for development;
- Good record keeping, recently being developed in a portfolio to match pupils' performance against national expectations and averages;
- Very good liaison with classroom assistants to ensure that they fully understand objectives and use the correct mathematical vocabulary with pupils.

98. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. Work is well matched to their ability. This results in good, and for some very good, progress with such pupils achieving well. For example in 2002 nearly all Year 2 special needs pupils reached the national average

level in mathematics, and although there are plausible reasons why older pupils as a group may not have done well in 2003 assessments pupils with special needs have achieved more than the school expected of them. This is a credit to the school's support and to very good teaching.

99. There are sufficient resources to teach mathematics with very recently improved storage and accessibility. The subject is well managed in a very successful joint arrangement where all three teachers take a share in responsibility for planning and evaluation. There is excellent communication over objectives and assessment and between them staff know pupils and their capabilities well. There is a clear awareness of the problems previous staffing difficulties have caused and a very strong commitment to raising standards. This is proving effective and although it is unlikely that results will appear substantially better this year or next, there is evidence of improvements in pupils' achievement.

## **SCIENCE**

100. Long term staff absences and staffing instability have had a significant effect on standards attained in science, since the last inspection, when standards were noted as being satisfactory at both Year 2 and Year 6. Staffing problems have been overcome and standards are now beginning to rise. However, gaps in pupils' previous knowledge and understanding still mean that standards achieved by the end of Year 6 are below those achieved nationally. Standards achieved in Years 1 to 4 are closer to the average as there have been fewer gaps to fill in pupils' previous knowledge base.

101. The school has made efforts to improve pupils' access to investigational science. In workbooks and in planning files there are examples of investigations and experiments taken on by pupils in Year 2. Pupils sort materials which they find in the playground. They plant seeds in different places, noting how different environments affect their growth. The whole class often takes on these investigations rather than individual ones which would be more keenly related to pupils' abilities in order to challenge them more. For example, pupils in the younger class use a writing frame for their investigations. Very few examples were seen of pupils with a better command of language being given far less pre-written information on these frames. If this were to happen, more able pupils could be challenged to a higher level, having to write more, consider where their information should be placed, and then draw conclusions about their work.

102. Pupils in Year 6, for whom many more gaps in their previous knowledge and understanding are noted, struggle to complete all the work prescribed by the National Curriculum, to an appropriate level. This is not the fault of current teaching, neither is it a fault of the pupils' attitudes to the work, it is simply a result of the school's previous problems.

103. Pupils understand how water evaporates and how rust might be caused. They can separate materials using a magnet or when in water using a sieve. They know how to use a Newtonmeter to measure mass and during a science week pupils learnt about how plants flourish and the effects of photosynthesis.

104. The school's own action plan for science illustrates that it is aware of the shortcomings in the subject and is trying to address the issues. It is using a better tracking system which was put into place recently. This shows coverage of elements of the National Curriculum at the various levels and notes targets which pupils may be given in order to encourage them to make further progress. This has not yet been carried out, but the school is aware of what it needs to do next. It understands that the work in investigational science is not yet good enough, but through consistent use of its two year and four year rolling programmes of work, standards are expected to rise over the next three years.

105. The need for further work on the vocabulary of science was well illustrated in the two science lessons seen during the inspection. In the class of the youngest pupils, the teacher

had organised a minibeast walk around the grounds. The lesson was introduced through the reading of 'The little snail's big surprise'. This led to a series of very well targeted questions, which centred on names of minibeasts and words relating to habitats and food. All of which reminded pupils of previous vocabulary and new words, in connection with their minibeast project. This very good lesson then moved into the school grounds where small groups of pupils with adult helpers, explored a wide variety of locations to find their minibeasts. Older pupils had been given the task of scribes, thus enhancing their literacy skills, whilst all pupils were seen treating the creatures with respect and care, showing that their spiritual development, in recognising and caring for God's smallest creatures, was well developed.

106. In the good lesson seen in the class for the oldest pupils, planning was very full and showed the class teacher's high level of subject knowledge. This was further illustrated in the range of questions she used to recap on previous work on the subject of bones and skeletons. Bearing in mind the gaps in pupils' previous knowledge, this was time well spent and did serve to illustrate that whilst some could remember cranium and patella, others showed they had remembered very little. In setting the task for the lesson, the teacher carefully explained what pupils had to do and gave them good opportunities to discuss issues of measuring and comparing parts of their skeletons. Quite a number of pupils responded well to this by trying to use technical vocabulary in their discussions, showing their development in using speaking and listening skills.

107. The school's awareness of its current weak position in science is noted against the fact that the current Year 6 group is very small and its results, just like the results from the previous year, are difficult to compare against national figures, due to the small number of pupils involved. However the time is now appropriate for the school to focus on further improvements in the use of writing skills, relating more directly to the ability of individual pupils. At the same time the school must make better use of its assessment procedures to target work more accurately to the differing abilities of pupils in a variety of age groups. In particular this would apply to its work in experimental and investigative science.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

108. Pupils' attainment in art is above what is expected nationally at ages seven and eleven. This is an improvement over the last report in 1997 and is a testament to good teaching and much improved planning and record keeping. There is now a good scheme of work which guarantees that pupils will experience all required elements of the art curriculum and that skills will be taught in ways which build on previous learning. The subject is well resourced and complemented by visits and visitors who bring their expertise to demonstrate and inspire pupils: for example excellent work on stained glass windows, and opportunities to try Indian art.

109. Pupils throughout the school demonstrate good painting techniques, using colour, tone, line and texture. They are developing their appreciation of the work of other artists appropriately. In all years, work in two-dimensions is extended into collage and model making: for example in Years 1 and 2 clay house tiles, and Years 3 to 6 photo frames linked very effectively to design and technology. Pupils' art is used well to support other subjects such as science in observational drawings of animals, and geography and history with work to illustrate topics: for example designs for Roman shields.

110. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 show good skills in observational drawing, developing work in line and proportion in their self-portraits and in sketches made whilst visiting the church as a special place. Years 3 to 6 pupils demonstrate a good appreciation of the work of artists such as Mondrian, Monet and Manet. In a very good Years 3 to 6 lesson pupils showed how they could develop drawings from sketches to demonstrate movement. There were excellent links with the previous week's drum workshop and very good use of the digital camera to freeze frame hand movements. Pupils responded very well to the challenge to make their drawings 'move'.

111. Throughout the school pupils of all abilities make appropriate progress in mixing and using colours when painting, and their brushwork is satisfactory. Good exercises in shape and symmetry linking art with mathematics are extended in tie-dyeing with excellent effects. Those pupils who attend the very popular Batik club helped produce an outstanding 'altar cloth' for use in assembly, and their own efforts in creating Batik pictures are very good. Pupils can describe the process very clearly and this extends their speaking skills developed in literacy.

112. Pupils' attitudes to art are consistently good. Very good co-operation in groups of all abilities makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development, in addition to making good use of literacy skills in evaluation.

113. The quality of art teaching in the one lesson which could be observed was very good. The mixed age class, time and resources were all very well managed and pupils were very successfully encouraged to make progress with good advice about technique. In both classes and around the school teachers make very good use of pupils' work in good, attractive displays (occasionally spoilt by the damp!). This complements examples of famous artists which are displayed in Oaks' classroom to illustrate movement. Good work in analysis and levelling pupils' work against National Curriculum expectations, particularly well recorded in portfolios for each class, is influencing future planning and used to gauge progress.

114. All pupils are fully included in art activities whatever their ability and there is a thriving art (Batik) club, supported very effectively by teachers and parents.

115. Art is managed effectively by all three teachers working together. They have done well to improve standards, maintain resources and create a plan for continued development at a time when art has not been one of the school's main priorities.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

116. The school has made rapid and very good improvements to the subject over the last two years. At the last inspection standards were noted as being unsatisfactory. Currently, standards of work by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above national expectations and pupils make at least good progress in their learning. Work by pupils who have special educational needs is equally good.

117. Although no lessons were observable, a good deal of evidence was available in displays, books and completed work, to support the judgements made. At the same time, planning of work shows that it systematically develops skills, knowledge and understanding. As a result, pupils' learning builds well on their previous work and prepares them well for the next stage of learning.

118. Pupils in the Foundation Stage and to the end of Year 2, carried out a topic based on The Three Pigs story. They examined three different types of materials and experimented with different ways of joining straw, for example. They used string and glue alongside simple tools such as scissors and snips. They made models of the pigs' houses and tested them using a hair dryer as the 'huffing and puffing' of the wolf. This then allowed pupils to evaluate their finished products to see how well they met the criteria set for them.

119. Food technology was exemplified by bread making during a design and technology week. Older pupils tested different types of commercial breads then designed their own to meet the design brief of having protein, nuts or cheese as ingredients. They drew pictures of how their bread might look, noted down ingredients and how the bread should be made. The end products were evaluated in the same way as the commercial products, noting how they cut, smelled, tasted and what the texture was like. This gave pupils sound opportunities to use their literacy skills.

120. Information and communication technology was used in a satisfactory way to support writing, with some good examples of pupils word processing their work. Others used ICT in order to illustrate data gathered through evaluations of the various breads in the form of graphs.

121. Although no direct teaching of design and technology was seen during the inspection, the quality of the planning and of the completed work gives a strong indication that it was at least good, with pupils enjoying their work and presenting it in a very positive way

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

122. It was not possible, during this inspection, nor at the last one, to observe lessons in either subject. At the last inspection, evidence suggested that standards were in line with national expectations. However, with the school's understandable emphasis on raising standards in the core subjects, standards in geography and history have suffered and are currently below national expectations by the end of Year 6.

123. One or two of the chosen topics for both subjects show elements of satisfactory work. However, the lack of a clear plan for the development of knowledge and understanding together with skills, hinders further progress being made.

124. Currently, progress in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory, whilst progress for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is unsatisfactory. This is especially true in the development of geographical and historical skills and their use in order to make best use of a range of first hand materials and the ability to investigate places. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to the rest of their classmates, especially when extra support is available. Their work is often not very different from others in the class and thus they sometimes lag behind in keeping pace with the progress of the rest of the class.

125. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 work on a topic about the seaside. They begin to gain a sense of chronology when they compare beach attire of children in 1900, 1950 and the present day. They write captions on drawings, noting that children in 1900 wore ordinary clothes on the beach. However, their opportunities for more extended writing are too limited.

126. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have a very good experience of examining Roman artefacts, brought in by a local expert. This brings to life the historical setting of their work and begins to encourage them to write in a number of different ways. However, in discussion with pupils in Years 5 and 6, this was the only area of history they remembered studying. The school should therefore seek to raise the standard of the rest of its work in history to this level.

127. Pupils in Year 6 have compared their own village with another local village and then with Taunton. They have looked at maps and noted facilities such as schools, churches and shops. They created a tally chart for Taunton, counting schools, hospitals and car parks. However, their mapping skills are very limited and have not been systematically developed over time, even though they are aware of eight compass points and are able to give simple map co-ordinates.

128. In discussion, pupils reveal poor understanding of countries beyond their own. This not only shows a lack of long term planning in the subject, but equally does not serve to add enough to pupils' cultural development and understanding.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

129. As a result of much improved planning and resources for ICT since the last inspection and primarily over the last two years, standards of ICT are improving. The performance of seven year olds now exceeds national expectations and although the judgement that eleven

year olds are in line with what is expected seems to be the same as at the last inspection requirements are now much more rigorous and the school has done well to get to this point. This is especially so considering the staffing problems and the negative effects these had on the quality of teaching in the last three years.

130. Pupils build successfully on the keyboard and mouse skills established in Year R and Year 1: for example where they learn to manipulate the mouse to dress teddy on the screen. Good listening skills are developed from hearing stories on tape and following simulation programs associated with the school's reading scheme. Years 1 and 2 pupils have experience of entering mathematical data to produce pictograms and graphs, and Years 3 to 6 have begun to use the Internet and make use of the digital camera. Older pupils show sound skills and can describe exporting text and pictures, and changing page layout whilst word processing, as well as researching using CD-Rom. This is an area which is still to be developed and is closely linked with reservations about the emphasis placed on geography and history detailed elsewhere in this report.

131. Pupils have very good attitudes and make good progress in ICT. They show growing confidence and are generally quick in performing features such as loading, saving and printing. This is associated with good hands on experience, which has much improved since the suite and new resources were set up.

132. Little direct teaching of ICT could be observed during the inspection, but the quality of support from teachers, assistants and parent helpers for individuals and small groups was good, especially for Years 1 and 2 using the programmable toy, and in word processing stories. Good teaching was seen for Years 1 and 2 with pupils being skilfully introduced to control techniques. Expectations were high, learning objectives clear and relationships very good. Consequently pupils' response was very good. The lesson was fun and learning was good.

133. There are very good comprehensive records of what each pupil has successfully covered against the requirements of the National Curriculum. These show that all pupils whatever their ability are fully included in all ICT activities and demonstrates that all are making at least satisfactory and usually good progress. With secure planning and good resourcing the subject is set fair for further development.

## **MUSIC**

134. The last report noted standards in music were 'satisfactory'. It was not possible to see any music lessons during this inspection and so no judgements could be made about teaching or pupils' attainment first hand. However, comments from parents and staff about school productions and class assemblies indicate that children sing well.

135. The school has identified improving music provision and raising the profile of performing arts as areas for development, and proposals already form part of the school improvement plan.

136. Good use is made of visiting performers such as a drummer and an African dancer to complement the more traditional trumpet lessons and introduce pupils to appreciation of different types of music. Appropriate use is made of music at the start and end of assemblies to introduce pupils to a variety of styles. There is satisfactory use of the Internet to research the lives of performers and details are well displayed in the hall to give background information.

137. Discussions with pupils show that there are links made between music and science in Years 3 to 6 where a study of sound leads to exploration of the kind of vibrations different instruments make. Pupils show an interest and this indicates a positive response to the

subject. However, such discussions confirm that the school's aim to raise the profile of the subject is well founded.

138. A review of planning and intentions shows that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met with suitable time set aside for all the various elements, and that all pupils are fully included in all activities.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

139. No physical education lessons could be observed for pupils in the Years 1, 2, 3, 4 or 6 so judgements about teaching and standards can only be deduced from school records and watching pupils at play. Such evidence points to standards being below expectations in gymnastics, dance, athletics and games, but above expectations in swimming. This represents a slightly different picture from the last inspection where pupils' attainment aged seven and eleven was 'good' in swimming and 'sound' in other aspects.

140. In the one lesson seen during the inspection which involved five Year 5 pupils, teaching was good extending pupils mentally as well as physically. Pupils made good progress in sending and receiving large balls and in developing their awareness of space. They showed good control in avoiding others whilst skipping and running. The teacher made very good use of child examples to get pupils to evaluate and improve their own techniques by watching others. This made a good contribution to pupils' literacy skills and to personal development in terms of social interaction. Pupils' attainment as evident in the lesson was consistent with what is expected of pupils of this age and pupils' response in attitudes and behaviour was good.

141. A review of school planning and the management of physical education shows there is an imbalance in time spent on various elements of the subject. Traditionally because of the proximity of the canal pupils have gone swimming in all year groups every other week throughout the school year. With travelling time this accounts for most of one afternoon. As a result all pupils are usually able to swim the required 25 metres before they are seven, well ahead of the national expectations. This is obviously a healthy situation. However, by continuing to use a disproportionate amount of time on this aspect over a further four year period this means there is too little time available for gymnastics, dance, athletics and games. This has a negative effect on standards.

142. The school is well resourced for physical education and continues to make improvements: for example using lottery funding to purchase basket balls and stands ready for September 2003. The playground gives sufficient space for outdoor activities and the school has access to the village recreation ground nearby. In a distinct improvement since the last inspection there is now a good scheme of work for physical education and no class is based permanently in the hall. Climbing apparatus has been installed and equipment is well stored and accessible to staff and pupils. The very good quantity and range of small equipment available to pupils for playtime use gives pupils good opportunities to practise their skills, follow rules and manage their own playing of games.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

143. Pupils' attainment is in line with what is expected both at the end of Years 2 and 6, with the work meeting the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. This was the case at the last inspection.

144. Although only one lesson was observable, that being in the class of the older pupils, a good range of work was available for scrutiny, and strongly suggests that pupils make sound

progress in their study of Christianity and other religions such as Judaism and Hinduism. Pupils with special educational needs make similar satisfactory progress in their learning and make better progress, as in the lesson observed, when they have more individual support.

145. Evidence from planning shows that pupils in Year 2 have had experience of looking at religious education through a number of well planned topics. The topic of 'light' for example, leads pupils to examine and compare the use of candles in religious ceremonies in three different faiths. Pupils examine the festival of Diwali, Hanukkah and Christingle. This gives good support to their multicultural development.

146. By the end of Year 6, pupils have learned a good deal about the three faiths studied. In a lesson observed pupils remembered that the Jewish scriptures were contained in the Torah. They had a copy in their classroom and treated it with great respect, a further example of their growing cultural awareness. The teacher drew very good comparisons between elements in the Torah and the Ten Commandments. This information built well on previous work about Moses and the flight from Egypt.

147. Information contained in work books shows that pupils have studied the Bible and understand that it was written in two parts and contains writing of different genres: for example letters, stories, poetry and proverbs. This relates well to pupils' work in literacy but deserves further extension to allow pupils more opportunities for they themselves to write in these styles.

148. Classwork on the subject of 'Signs and Symbols' shows that pupils have had access to the local church in order to look at banners, statues, stained glass windows and furniture at first hand. As a result, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the symbolism of elements of the Christian faith. Some useful links were made to literacy and art and some of the work had been word processed, showing links to ICT.

149. Teaching, in the single lesson seen, was very good. The teacher was very well prepared and structured the lesson to take account of pupils' previous work. The main part of the lesson, based on the Ten Commandments, was skilfully linked to pupils' own personal and social development as pupils were encouraged to discuss how rules affected their own lives. Questioning was a key feature of the lesson and showed the teacher being very adept in drawing in pupils from four different age groups into the discussion.

150. As a result of the high quality teaching, pupils were motivated to listen well and provide good answers to questions, showing they had remembered a good deal from previous work. They behaved very well during the lesson, reinforced by the class teacher's praise and positive encouragement. This all had a very positive effect on learning.

151. In line with other subjects on the school's curriculum, the promotion of pupils' speaking and listening skills is very good, whilst the promotion of their writing skills, through more and varied opportunities to write, could be further improved.