

INSPECTION REPORT

ALPHINGTON COMBINED SCHOOL

Alphington, Exeter

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113073

Headteacher: Dr S Shorman

Lead inspector: Mr P Kemble

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 25th September 2003

Inspection number: 260660

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First and middle
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 12 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	395
School address:	Wheatsheaf Way Alphington Exeter
Postcode:	EX2 8RQ
Telephone number:	01392 254291
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr I Guy
Date of previous inspection:	28 th September 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Alphington Combined School is a larger than average primary school catering for pupils aged 4 to 12 years. There are 395 pupils on roll. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds. Levels of attainment on entry into reception are about average. Four per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, a below average figure. Seventy-six pupils (19.2 per cent) are on the register of special educational needs, slightly below the national average. Nine pupils (2.2 per cent) have statements of special educational need, which is above the national average. Virtually all pupils are from white British ethnic backgrounds. Two pupils have English as an additional language. Since the previous inspection, the leadership of the school has been significantly affected by illness but the school has experienced stability in its leadership over the last twelve months.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7269	Mr P Kemble	Lead inspector	Science Information and communication technology Geography Physical education Citizenship
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8056	Mr H Probert	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Art and design Music
19302	Ms C Perrett	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Design and technology History Religious education
21090	Mr D Manuel	Team inspector	French

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Alphington Combined School is a good school and provides good value for money. The headteacher has very effectively managed significant changes in the school's priorities since her appointment two years ago. Staff work very well together as a team to provide a wide range of academic and social opportunities for all pupils. Standards vary from year to year, but pupils make good progress and achieve well from their levels of attainment on entry into school.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in speaking and listening, art and design and physical education are above average in Years 1 to 7 and are above average in French in Years 5 to 7.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership and management.
- The quality of teaching is good and leads to pupils achieving well.
- Pupils' learning is extended by a very effective programme of visits, residential experiences and visitors to school.
- It is a very caring school in which all pupils are well supported and included by all adults.
- Pupils' interest in school life and relationships with each other are very good.

- Assessment information in subjects other than English and mathematics is not used well enough to consistently match work to pupils' different capabilities, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Opportunities are missed to use other subjects of the curriculum to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills.
- The role of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning is not sufficiently well developed.

The school was previously inspected in September 1998. Since then, improvement has been satisfactory overall in the areas identified as weaknesses, but significant developments have taken place since the appointment of the current headteacher. Management of pupils' behaviour by teachers is now good. The quality of teaching has improved, with higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and more effective use of time, although there is still work to be done in providing consistently challenging tasks for higher attaining pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics. All members of staff are now involved in the monitoring and support of teaching. The strategic planning of the school by staff and governors is now very good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	B	B	C	A
mathematics	A	A	C	A
science	A	C	C	A

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

By the end of Year 6 and Year 7, all pupils achieve well and attain above average levels in speaking and listening, art and design and physical education. Standards in French are above average in Year 7. In all other subjects, standards are at average levels. The above table shows that pupils' achievements by the end of Year 6 are well above average when compared with those of pupils in

similar schools. By the end of Year 2, results in tests for seven-year-olds were average in reading and writing and below average in mathematics. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress towards the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception and achieve well.

The quality of pupils' moral and social development is very good, and the quality of pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and attendance is good. Pupils co-operate very well together when working in pairs or in group activities.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching is good. Improved curriculum planning and knowledge and understanding of individual pupils' strengths and areas for improvement have resulted in good quality learning by pupils in lessons. Pupils enjoy their work and achieve well in most subjects. In geography, history and religious education, where achievement is satisfactory, whole-class lessons predominate. As a result, higher attaining pupils are not always challenged by their tasks. Teaching in reception classes is good. Teaching in Years 1 to 7 is good overall, but there is a need for teachers to make more effective use of other subjects to extend pupils' skills learned in English, mathematics and information and communication technology lessons, especially in Years 3 to 6.

Pupils acknowledge that staff are very caring and supportive. In addition to a good quality curriculum, pupils in Years 3 to 7 benefit from a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Links with the local community and parents are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher provides very good leadership and management. Her clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations are excellent and are successfully conveyed to all staff. Governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively. All staff, including subject leaders, carry out duties conscientiously and contribute well to pupils' personal and social development. The headteacher has promoted the implementation of very good procedures for governors and staff to review the work of the school which has led to strong team commitment.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is good. Parents value highly the work of the headteacher, governors and staff. Pupils are very positive and enjoy the wide range of opportunities available to them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Use assessment information more effectively in subjects other than English and mathematics to match activities to pupils' capabilities and consistently challenge higher attaining pupils.
- Use other subjects of the curriculum, such as geography, history and religious education, more effectively to promote and extend the skills pupils learn in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology lessons.
- Continue to develop the roles of subject leaders so that they regularly observe their colleagues teach and analyse more critically what teachers plan to teach each term.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 7 is **good** for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. Standards in all the core subjects are **average**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in speaking and listening, art and design and physical education are above those expected in Years 1 to 7.
- Pupils' standards in French are above average in Year 7.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans and achieve well.
- Higher attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as might be expected in mathematics, science and some foundation subjects.

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.7 (27.8)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	27.3 (28.2)	26.7 (26.6)
science	29.1 (28.5)	28.3 (28.3)

There were 47 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. In the 2002 end of Year 6 national tests, pupils' standards were average in English, mathematics and science. When these results are compared with those of similar schools nationally, pupils' progress since their end of Year 2 national tests in 1998 is well above average. Although no national comparisons are currently available, results of the 2003 national tests indicate that standards in mathematics and science are similar to those of 2003, but in English standards are lower. However, targets set by the school for the 2003 pupils in English and mathematics have been met, and a significant number of pupils have exceeded them.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.2 (17.3)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	14.4 (15.4)	14.4 (14.3)
mathematics	15.9 (17.6)	16.5 (16.2)

There were 49 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In the 2002 end of Year 2 national tests and assessments, standards were average in reading and writing and below average in mathematics. When compared with similar schools, standards were below average in reading and well below average in writing and mathematics.

3. Pupils in Year 7 achieve well in French, English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education as a result of teachers' high expectations.
4. Foundation Stage children make good progress and achieve well in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development and are likely to attain the national standards by the time they enter Year 1.
5. School assessment information shows that pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make good progress and achieve well in English and mathematics when compared with their levels of attainment on entry into reception, a fact recognised by a national Schools' Achievement Award. Good achievement is the result of good teaching throughout the school and a strong emphasis in recent years on improvements to the quality of planning in literacy and numeracy lessons. Analysis of national and school test and assessment information has been used well to target staffing and resources in areas where improvement has been identified such as speaking and listening skills and mental mathematics skills, where standards have risen.
6. In other subjects of the curriculum, achievement is more variable. It is good in information and communication technology, art and design and physical education, where pupils benefit from step-by-step development of skills between year groups and key stages and a good range of equipment and resources with which to practise and refine skills. In geography, history and religious education, achievement is satisfactory. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, lessons tend to be whole-class in character with all pupils tackling similar tasks. As a result, certain groups of pupils, and higher attainers in particular, do not receive enough challenge in order to extend their learning. Secondly, teachers have until recently not used these subjects well enough to promote skills pupils learn in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology lessons. The outcome is that there are fewer pupils working at higher National Curriculum levels in these subjects than might be expected.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance, punctuality, behaviour, attitudes to their work and their personal, spiritual, moral and cultural development are all **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' relationships with each other and adults are very good.
- Pupils' attitudes to school are good, they are happy and confident and interested in their work and play.

Commentary

7. Pupils' good relationships, satisfactory personal development and behaviour found at the time of the previous report have all improved. Good attendance, punctuality, attitudes to learning and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have been maintained.
8. Staff work hard to plan interesting and motivating activities for pupils throughout the school year. The success of their careful planning is seen in the way pupils very much enjoy coming to school and are happy and cheerful when they arrive in the morning. They show interest in the work provided for them and the vast majority concentrate well throughout the school day. At break-times, they play energetically and happily together.
9. Standards of behaviour are good. Staff have established clear codes of conduct in conjunction with pupils and this democratic process results in polite pupils who show respect for each other and especially for the adults in the school. This is the result of the very good

relationships developed by all staff throughout the school. Older pupils look out for and help the younger ones as 'buddies' in the playground, looking out for children who are lonely or having problems and sometimes resolving conflicts. New pupils are warmly welcomed when they first arrive in the school. Consequently, there are very few instances of bullying or other forms of harassment. Pupils report that, on the occasions when this does occur, it is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff.

10. Pupils are successfully encouraged to take responsibility and are keen to do so. For instance, the school council of elected representatives, two from each class, meets regularly with the headteacher in attendance to discuss issues raised by their classmates and to consider ways in which they can contribute to school life, for example formulating and promoting agreed rules of conduct for playtimes in the playground and on the sports field.
11. Staff place a high priority on promoting pupils' personal development. This is reflected in the high expectations of pupils' moral and social development in the Foundation Stage onwards and whole-school and class assemblies are used very effectively to promote respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs. The results of this provision are seen in pupils' good levels of co-operation in lessons and willingness to offer help to adults and to each other. Assemblies are also used well to give pupils opportunities to reflect on their own and the actions of others. Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development in the Foundation Stage is good and children are on course to achieve the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.
12. Pupils' spiritual development is fostered well in creative activities and in the way teachers convey their own enthusiasm for learning and share in pupils' experiences, for instance when making discoveries in science lessons. Pupils have a good awareness of their own culture through art, drama and music, but opportunities are missed in lessons and other aspects of school life to raise pupils' awareness of life in a multicultural society. Significant benefits to pupils' personal development are derived from their involvement in education for sustainable development activities, visits, residential experiences and taking part in school performances.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.3	School data	0.1
National data	5.4	National data	0.5

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

13. Levels of attendance overall are in line with the national average. The attendance and punctuality of virtually all pupils are good and parents ensure that they arrive on time. However, there is a very small number of pupils whose attendance and punctuality are irregular, requiring frequent intervention from school staff and, in the worst cases, the education welfare service.

Exclusions

14. No pupils were excluded during the previous academic year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good overall** in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 7.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils benefit from very good teamwork amongst all staff.
- Teachers manage and organise lessons well.
- Relationships are good and help pupils to develop good attitudes to their work.
- Levels of expectation and challenge are very good in Year 7.
- Assessment information is not always used well enough to match activities to pupils' differing capabilities.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 49 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	19 (39%)	22 (45%)	8 (16%)	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

15. In the Foundation Stage, the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Teachers' planning is based firmly on national guidelines and results in good quality learning activities. Teachers assess children's achievements very carefully and use the information to match tasks closely to needs. This means that children of different capabilities receive good levels of challenge and make good progress in their learning.
16. In Years 1 and 2, very good lessons are characterised by good management and organisation of pupils' learning and behaviour, effective teaching of basic skills and activities that motivate and stimulate pupils' interest. For instance, pupils made good progress in literacy lessons because teachers had planned a wide range of tasks to be completed in the lesson time. Pupils moved on in their learning at a good pace as a result. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to work in small groups with adult guidance and this leads to good levels of concentration and effort. For example, Year 2 pupils made good gains in their knowledge and understanding of control technology skills because of the teacher's effective use of two other adults to focus pupils' attention on particular aspects of their learning.
17. In Years 3 to 6, classrooms are well prepared beforehand so that resources required for a lesson are in place and ready to use, helping to maintain pupils' concentration and interest. For example, in a Year 3 science lesson about solids and liquids, the quality of learning was very good because materials, equipment and worksheets were readily available at appropriate times in the lesson for pupils to move on to the next stage in their learning.
18. In Year 7, teachers' expectations are high and make a significant contribution to pupils' achievements in French and the core subjects. Teaching is enthusiastic and confident and,

because of the very good relationships that exists between teachers and pupils, these qualities are conveyed to pupils so that they participate with interest and concentration. For instance, pupils in a mathematics lesson made good gains in their knowledge and understanding of algebra because of the teacher's very good subject knowledge and awareness of individual pupils' capabilities. Pupils clearly understood what they were expected to do and worked hard to achieve the targets set.

19. All staff work well as a team. Teachers plan lessons together, basing activities well on national subject guidelines and school schemes of work. Shared planning leads to good quality of learning for pupils, in English and mathematics lessons in particular. In some other subjects, such as science, geography, history and information and communication technology, it is evident that teachers try to fit the expectations and content of the national guidelines or schemes of work to pupils' differing needs rather than clearly assessing pupils' needs and then using and adapting relevant parts of the guidelines to meet those needs. As a result, higher attaining pupils in particular are not provided often enough with challenging tasks to extend their learning.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is **good** and provides a broad and balanced range of worthwhile curricular opportunities which successfully support the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum provides very good opportunities for enrichment through an extensive range of after-school clubs, visits, visitors and residential experiences.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they are fully included in all activities.
- Provision for higher attaining pupils is not as effective in foundation subjects as it is in core subjects.

Commentary

20. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is good. It has good breadth, is well balanced and is relevant to the needs of children as they enter school for the first time. For pupils in Years 1 to 7, the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls in the core and foundation subjects.
21. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum offered, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. All pupils are well integrated into school life. An example of the inclusive nature of the curriculum is the composition of the school's council, which includes pupils from reception to Year 7.
22. The school provides an effective personal, social and health education programme. Before they leave the school in Year 7, pupils experience programmes which ensure that they are fully aware of the issues related to sex education, alcohol and drug misuse. On a wider basis, the school is participating in the Healthy Schools' Initiative.
23. Provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs and those with other special needs is good and there is evidence it impacts well upon the quality of their learning and progress. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early in their school lives.

Targets for learning are set and a tracking system ensures that their progress is regularly reviewed and updated. A particular strength is that parents and pupils are involved in the process.

24. The curriculum has a very good range of opportunities for enrichment, both within the core curriculum and the wide range of activities that occur before and after the school day. This provision makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievements in the creative arts and to pupils' personal development. Examples include the way classes make good use of the school environment, regular visitors to address curriculum topics, the use of a wide range of artists-in-residence, and in addition to the environment and sports, clubs like ICT, martial arts and engineering. Pupils gain particular benefit from an excellent range of activities throughout the year related to education for sustainable development, the quality of this provision recognised by the national ECO Schools Award in 1999.
25. The study of French in Years 5, 6 and 7 is a strength of the school. It makes particular contributions to the use of pupils' speaking and listening skills as well as contributing to their knowledge and understanding of life in another culture.
26. The headteacher provides very good leadership in the evaluation of the curriculum, its effects on teaching and learning and ways to improve provision. All staff are involved in the process through curriculum monitoring groups. In addition, there is a range of new, imaginative developments which have gained the support of the staff. These initiatives are starting to make an impact upon the quality of learning and standards in the school. These activities, for example the accelerated learning programme, are at an early stage of implementation but reflect staff's commitment to raising standards.
27. Curriculum evaluation has led to identification of the need to provide more challenge for more able pupils. As a result, staff are implementing programmes for gifted and talented pupils. Evaluation has also identified the need to widen this provision to include all subjects of the curriculum and it is acknowledged that there is work to be done in strengthening provision for higher attaining pupils, particularly in foundation subjects.
28. The quality of the accommodation and resources available to support the curriculum is very good. Pupils benefit from the use of separate rooms for some subjects such as music and information and communication technology, and there are teaching spaces for groups of pupils withdrawn from the classroom. The school grounds are used very well to promote learning in several subjects such as art and design, science and geography, and the environmental area is used extensively to develop pupils' environmental awareness.
29. Staff are deployed well and the headteacher and governors have made some significant appointments to promote particular aspects of the curriculum. For instance, a full-time librarian has helped to promote learning skills in a range of subjects and the school library itself is a strength of curriculum provision. Pupils from across the school use this resource extensively, not only for reading, but in the development of their knowledge and research skills.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety are **very good**. Provision of support, advice and guidance, based on monitoring and the involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views, are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of pastoral care are good.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff are readily available to help and support pupils and show sensitivity in dealing with their personal problems and concerns.
- Pupils' personal development is not monitored in a systematic or formal way.

Commentary

30. At the time of the previous inspection, provision for pupils' support, guidance and welfare was reported to be good and these standards have been successfully maintained and improved.
31. A friendly and welcoming atmosphere pervades the school which helps pupils to feel safe and secure. As a result, pupils readily go to teachers if they need help, seeing teachers and other adults as friends. The very good relationships between all adults in the school set a compelling role model for pupils and make a significant contribution to their own personal development as they move up through the school. In addition to the good levels of support and guidance provided by teachers and other staff, pupils have access to a trained confidential counsellor if they feel the need. Both pupils and parents report that they are pleased with the work of the counsellor. Pupils new to the school in reception or other year groups are helped to settle quickly by staff and parents report that they are pleased with induction procedures.
32. Monitoring of pupils' academic achievement is based effectively on formal procedures that indicate to staff when a pupil needs support and help. Monitoring of personal development is largely informal. Teachers know their pupils very well and this generally helps them to judge when advice or guidance might be appropriate or when to discuss an individual pupil with other staff. However, there is no systematic way that each teacher's notes and observations about their pupils' personal development are brought together and evaluated.
33. Governors give a high priority to pupils' health and safety and procedures are very good as a result. Formal health and safety inspections take place regularly with expert governors involved and the appropriate actions taken. Pupils are involved in some health and safety matters and this helps to raise their awareness of their own personal safety and that of others. For instance, co-operation with members of the school council resulted in a school decision that it was considered unsafe for pupils to come to school on skateboards. Child protection procedures are good and reflect the locally agreed guidelines; staff awareness is high. Co-operation with other agencies is well established. Fire evacuation procedures are regularly practised.
34. Staff, including the well-trained mealtime assistants, are vigilant when supervising pupils' play in the extensive grounds, which have separate areas designated for the younger children. In addition to this arrangement, some of the older pupils help guide the play of the younger ones.
35. A questionnaire, completed by all the pupils in the school, revealed that almost all felt that the school is very caring and that they are made welcome. Some children commented about unkind name-calling and some said they had been bullied. These issues were discussed by the school council and jointly addressed with staff. Parents and pupils commented that bullying, when it occurs, is well handled by staff.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **good** links with parents, the local community, partner schools and playgroups which make a significant contribution to pupils' academic and social achievements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents highly value the school and their help makes a good contribution to the work of the school.
- Parents' views are regularly sought about the life and work of the school.

Commentary

36. At the time of the last inspection, the school's relationships with parents and the local community was judged to be very good. It is not quite as strong now as then, largely due to some parents having concerns during the period when leadership was disrupted through illness. However, relationships are at least good and the headteacher is working successfully to regain the confidence of the very few disaffected parents. One method employed by the headteacher is to regularly seek parents' views, through questionnaires, informal discussions in the playground or by inviting parents into school to talk about new initiatives and projects and to hear their views.
37. Comments made at the parents' meeting prior to the inspection, and the results of the parents' questionnaire, show that parents value the school highly and are pleased with the education and care provided for their children, and with the arrangements for settling their children into school. Most parents consider the school to be well led and managed and that teachers and other staff are easily approached. Suggestions from parents are welcomed and concerns are sympathetically dealt with. They are pleased that their children like going to school, and that they make good progress, behave well, are taught 'old fashioned values' and are helped to become mature and responsible. Most parents are pleased with the information they receive about their children's progress, particularly at the interviews on parents' evenings, but some would like more formal discussion opportunities. They are pleased with the quality of teaching and like the fact that teachers have high expectations of their children. Parents are generally satisfied that their children get the right amount of homework. Inspectors endorse the positive views expressed by parents.
38. Pupils benefit well from parents' contribution to their learning at home and at school. Many parents encourage their children to read at home and support the homework programme in each year group. A number of parents, with advice and training from the police, instruct pupils in cycling safely to school. Several parents help teachers in classrooms, run after-school clubs and accompany pupils on educational visits in the local area. Grandparents and some other members of the local community come into school on an organised basis and contribute their knowledge and experience, adding significantly to the quality of pupils' learning, for instance in history lessons.
39. The formal association of parents, teachers and friends of the school plays a major role in maintaining the covered swimming pool, and this very good facility makes a significant contribution to the good standards pupils achieve in swimming as part of the physical education curriculum. The association also helps to promote good relationships between parents, the local community and the school.
40. Staff have established good relationships with the local playgroups and secondary school which help children and pupils transfer successfully to the next stage of their education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and the management of the school are **good**. The headteacher's leadership is **very good**. The effectiveness of management and the governance of the school are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations are excellent.
- The quality of strategic planning is very good.
- Procedures for evaluating the success of initiatives in the school improvement plan are very effective.
- Subject leaders, other than English and mathematics, do not regularly observe their colleagues teach or analyse critically enough what teachers plan to teach each term.

Commentary

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	891,503	Balance from previous year	29,585
Total expenditure	863,907	Balance carried forward to the next	27,596
Expenditure per pupil	2,187		

41. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well. Governors work co-operatively with the headteacher, based on an open exchange of views and opinions. They ask pertinent questions about, and look closely at, the rationale behind policy changes such as the decision not to appoint a deputy headteacher and to create three assistant headteacher posts as an alternative. They monitor and evaluate priorities in the school improvement plan effectively through visits to school and their links with classes and subject leaders. These arrangements mean that they have a good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and contribute ways to improve the school's effectiveness.
42. The headteacher's leadership qualities are very good. Over the last two years, she has provided clear educational direction for the school and shown total commitment to the school's aims of developing learning skills, educational inclusion and raising standards. The headteacher has a very good knowledge and understanding of national projects and initiatives and uses information from these to promote innovation in several aspects of school life. For example, a focus on accelerated learning principles is proving to be effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
43. The headteacher leads by example in the development of many initiatives such as the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, and this is useful in helping members of staff to carry out their responsibilities more effectively. Pupils benefit from the respect with which the headteacher treats them and the way their views and opinions about the life and work of the school are valued. As a result, the headteacher is successful in promoting and sustaining a compassionate, democratic and inclusive ethos in which staff and pupils feel involved. Teamwork amongst all staff is very good. Standards of care are high.
44. Staff and governors are involved well in identifying priorities for development. Responsibilities for achieving current aims are delegated to members of the senior management team and subject leaders. Together with the headteacher, senior staff analyse national and school test

and assessment data on a regular basis to identify areas for improvement and action is then taken. For example, gifted and talented pupils are benefiting from a programme of special activities as part of an identified need to improve levels of challenge for more able pupils. The deployment of staff and the allocation of finances to support school priorities are very effective and are helping to raise achievement throughout the school.

45. Performance management procedures are well established and teaching and non-teaching staff contribute information about the effectiveness of the school as they carry out their roles and responsibilities. Staff development is given a high priority by the headteacher and governors. For instance, pupils' standards in speaking and listening have improved over the last twelve months as a result of staff training and a whole-school focus on this aspect of pupils' learning.
46. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is well managed by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Liaison with all staff is effective and efficient. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and are fully involved in the review process. Parents are aware of their children's individual education plans detailing needs and the proposed action to address them. The school makes good arrangements for the transfer of pupils and effective links are made with their partnership schools.
47. The leadership of the curriculum and teaching by subject leaders are satisfactory overall. The impact that subject leaders have on standards varies, depending on how critically they analyse the quality of teaching and learning, teachers' planning and pupils' standards. Where subject leaders have the opportunity to regularly observe colleagues teach, for instance in English and mathematics, good practice is identified and standards raised. Governors and the headteacher are, however, aware that the role of subject leaders requires further development and have identified action to be implemented during the forthcoming academic year.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good**, and pupils are well prepared for transfer to Year 1.

48. Older children enter reception in the September before they are five, while younger ones enter the following January. The majority of children are taught in a single age group, but a few of the children are taught with Year 1 pupils. The vast majority of children have attended some form of pre-school provision. There are thorough induction procedures, including home visits, so the children are well prepared to start school.
49. Children enter reception with a wide range of abilities, which are average overall for this age. All children achieve well because the teaching is consistently good and often very good, and the curriculum is appropriately planned to provide a wide range of interesting and relevant activities which are well matched to their needs. A particular strength of the teaching is that all areas of learning are continuously developed alongside each other, with adults using every opportunity to further learning. All adults set excellent role models for the children and manage them well. There is a good ratio of adults to children, ensuring that the needs of all are met well.
50. The provision is well managed, and all staff work very well as a cohesive team, carefully monitoring all children's progress. The accommodation is very good with ample-sized classrooms, a large shared practical area, and a small outside yard that is used effectively throughout the day. There are good links with parents, and the teachers use every opportunity to involve parents in the learning of their children, so forging a good home-school partnership.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of the good teaching and the high expectations set by all the adults.
- Supportive relationships are being established where children feel confident and happy.

Commentary

51. Even at this early stage in the term, the clear boundaries and the consistent role models set by the adults in the reception ensure that children know what is expected of them, so that they quickly learn the correct way to behave. Children already know the routines well, settle to tasks with a minimum of fuss, and their behaviour is good. The majority of children show interest in what they are doing, concentrate well, even when not directly supervised, and are eager to learn. Children are continually encouraged to feel confident about what they achieve, and reminded of the high standards that the adults expect.
52. Children are friendly and take a pride in their work. They are encouraged to share and take turns amicably, and put up their hands when answering a question. When children do not conform, they are dealt with firmly but fairly, so that they learn how to appreciate the needs of others within the group. Children are expected to clear up after themselves, which they do without much prompting.

53. The very supportive relationships ensure children feel secure and confident in seeking help when required. The gains in learning already evident in this area are as a result of the continual reinforcement of rules by the adults, and treating each other and the children with courtesy and respect. This leads to trusting relationships, and helps the children succeed. By the time children leave reception, indications are that their personal and social skills will be well developed.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Teachers and support staff are skilled in promoting children's language skills in all areas of required learning.

Commentary

54. Early indications are that the majority of children are on course to meet the expectations in this area of learning, with a few children exceeding them. Already, children are making good progress in speaking and listening because all staff take many opportunities during all activities to develop the children's vocabulary through probing questioning and consistent insistence that children listen to the contributions of others. Very good relationships mean that children talk confidently, and all adults appear to be genuinely interested in what the children have to say.
55. Children enjoy books, and listen attentively when a story is read to them. Children are encouraged to share books with adults at home, and there are many opportunities when children can look at books themselves. They handle these with care, appreciating that text is read from left to right. Examination of current planning and children's work completed last year indicate that there is a good emphasis on the recognition of sounds to help children learn to read and write. All children are encouraged to hold pencils correctly, and higher attaining children are already beginning to form letters, with a few able to write their names. Indications are that, by the end of reception, most children will have reached the expected standard, with some children working within the early stages of the National Curriculum.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan a wide range of activities to support learning which help children to achieve well.
- Teachers and support staff are successful at promoting children's mathematical skills in all areas of required learning.

Commentary

56. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan a range of interesting activities to promote mathematical understanding. Examination of children's work from last year shows that they make good progress, with higher attaining children understanding numbers to at least ten. During one well-planned activity, where teaching was very good, children were encouraged to look at the properties of two-dimensional shapes as well as identify them. They also reinforced their colours, and learning to take turns enhanced their personal and social skills. These practical activities prepare the way well for future learning and are very appropriate for this stage of development, ensuring that children sustain interest and do not become bored. By the end of reception, children are likely to have attained the early learning goals for this area of learning.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A range of interesting and inter-related activities is planned which promote good quality of learning.
- Staff use questioning very effectively to enhance children's knowledge and understanding of the world about them.

Commentary

57. Children enter reception having had a wide range of experiences and, as a result of the variety of appropriate, interesting activities planned to stimulate curiosity and enhance their understanding, they achieve well. The activities and the good teaching emphasise the way that all areas of learning are developed effectively alongside each other. For example, children used their sense of smell to identify which soap they liked best. Then, they went on to construct a boat to make the soap float, enhancing their physical skills while manipulating scissors and glue sticks. During this activity, language and mathematical abilities were also developed well, as children described the smell and used a pictogram to show their favourite soap. Their personal and social skills were developed well as they were expected to take turns and listen carefully to the contributions of others. The learning in this lesson was consequently good, as the teacher used probing questions very effectively, helping children attain the expected goals by the end of the reception year.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and effective use is made of the hall and outside areas to develop physical skills.

Commentary

58. Children have regular access to the hall for physical education lessons, where they explore the space around them and learn to be aware of others. Children are well co-ordinated, as they run and jump, and some skip with ease. They pay prompt attention to commands, and

are beginning to appreciate the need for control, so that accidents are prevented. Children develop their manipulative skills well by handling dough, scissors and brushes, and manipulate small construction equipment with dexterity. The children are on line to at least meet the expected goals by the end of the year, with many children working at the early stages of the National Curriculum.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good.
- An exciting range of creative experiences is provided for children which contribute significantly to the good progress they make.

Commentary

59. During the inspection, a 'playdough' extravaganza was observed where all children had access to a variety of different coloured dough to mould into a range of shapes. The exciting nature of the activities resulted in all children being thoroughly involved, and the stimulating and colourful materials meant that children were able to create imaginative models of which they were very proud. A real sense of wonder was apparent for some children when they squeezed the dough through different 'machines', and watched the resulting shapes appear. Many parents supported their children in this activity, so promoting good home-school links. Opportunities are also given for children to use role-play in 'Mr Ben's Shop' to further their creative development. By the end of the reception year, standards are in line to meet the expected levels.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2 AND 3

ENGLISH AND FRENCH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Speaking and listening skills are promoted effectively by all staff and pupils achieve very well as a result.
- Pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils benefit from activities matched closely to their capabilities.
- Reference and research skills are promoted very well because of pupils' effective use of the central library.

Commentary

60. Pupils achieve well in the development of their speaking and listening, and reading and writing skills as they progress from Year 1 to Year 7. Pupils' attainment upon entry to the school is average. By the time they reach Years 6 and 7, pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, have made good progress through the school. Standards are in line with national standards and compare favourably with similar schools. The standards in speaking and listening and reading achieved at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.
61. The majority of pupils display average speaking and listening skills when they arrive in Year 1. They listen with interest to their teachers and friends and are keen to make active contributions to oral activities. Teachers use good questioning skills and give pupils the chance to talk about activities in which they are involved. As a result of this good provision, by Year 2, nearly all pupils' oral skills are at the expected level.
62. Pupils continue to make good progress in their oral skills as they move from Years 3 to 7. Teachers challenge their initial responses and encourage them to think in more depth and explain themselves in greater detail. The school provides a wide range of activities and clubs which enable pupils to share their ideas and practise their communication skills. For example, in Year 6, they discuss topics like 'Should children be allowed mobile phones?' By Years 6 and 7, pupils' oral skills are in line with expectations for their age and with a good number of higher attaining pupils confidently expressing their ideas and opinions.
63. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have responded well to the National Literacy Strategy and implemented the literacy hour in an effective manner. Teachers' use of the school library and the very good support provided by the school librarian make a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning. Discussion with pupils during the inspection made it clear that they access the library, not only for their reading books, but also to develop their reference and research skills related to other subjects in the curriculum. The close links made between the library and class work have a good impact upon the development of reading, writing and research skills.
64. The subject leader provides effective, enthusiastic leadership and has worked hard with the curriculum monitoring group to develop good quality planning, monitoring and assessment procedures. Teachers provide a good range of activities and strategies to support the learning of pupils with additional needs in language and literature. From Year 1, provision is made for in-class and withdrawal support to develop speaking and listening, reading and writing skills. Early learning and additional support groups provide well for the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils identified as gifted and talented are brought together to develop their thinking skills as part of an accelerated learning programme. For example, pupils were observed having a 'balloon debate' to decide which of ten rights they would

jettison in order to avoid the balloon crashing. They made good progress in the development of their debating, language and thinking skills through their enthusiasm and decision-making.

65. Teachers make effective use of assessment information and procedures to follow, or track, progress to set pupils' individual targets based upon National Curriculum levels. The English curriculum monitoring group has developed a portfolio of pupils' work to illustrate the standards required to meet the National Curriculum levels and this helps teachers to match targets closely to pupils' capabilities. Targets are shared with pupils and they have a clear understanding of what they are required to learn.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. Pupils' literacy and language skills are promoted well overall in literacy lessons as a result of a strong emphasis over time on initiatives to maintain pupils' good levels of achievement. Regular opportunities exist for pupils to speak, listen, read and write in other subjects of the curriculum. However, teachers' planning shows that the link between skills learned in literacy lessons and work planned in subjects such as science, information and communication technology, geography, history and religious education is not always as close as might be expected, particularly in Years 3 to 7. Pupils do not write in sufficient quantity or for a wide enough range of specific purposes in these subjects mainly because teachers tend to focus more on the content of the lessons rather than the skills to be developed.

French

Provision for the teaching and learning of French is **very good** and, as a result, standards by the end of Year 6 and Year 7 are above expected levels.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Pupils show high levels of interest.

Commentary

67. In addition to meeting the statutory requirements of teaching French in Year 7, the school chooses to teach French in Years 5 and 6, and does so very well. Detailed planning provides a well-sequenced programme of learning for the teaching of knowledge and new skills. The subject is very well led and managed by the part-time specialist teacher. Evidence gathered from lesson observations during the inspection and from completed written work at the end of Year 6 and Year 7, shows that standards are above expected levels. This is an improvement from the previous inspection.
68. The very good teaching provides stimulating and challenging activities for all pupils and creates very good relationships throughout all French lessons, which are conducted almost entirely in French. As a result, all pupils are very interested and motivated, achieve well and are enthusiastic to use their knowledge of the language to contribute answers.
69. Listening and responding skills are developed effectively when pupils first learn the language in Year 5. The teaching provides a good range of oral strategies, visual prompts and games that reinforce the learning of numbers from one to ten in French. Pupils have a good understanding of simple commands and questions. In Year 6, knowledge is extended to enable pupils to learn alphabet sounds and to develop their conversational skills progressively. All pupils are confident when responding with short phrases with correct pronunciation and clear meaning.

70. By Year 7, pupils' skills are further extended by the very good teaching to incorporate more reading and writing. They demonstrate good understanding of longer phrases and use them well to communicate to others in small groups and whole-class activities. Writing skills of a high standard were observed in tasks completed at the end of Year 7 when pupils completed assignment tasks ready for transfer to secondary schools. All pupils had written separate paragraphs to describe themselves, their families and their likes and dislikes. The quality of grammar and use of vocabulary was above expected levels for this age.
71. Boys and girls achieve equally well because of the carefully considered strategies used by the teacher to encourage participation by both genders. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress, responding well to challenges which are matched sensitively to their particular needs. Resources are good and used effectively. Provision is further enhanced by visiting French speakers and an annual residential visit to France which increases fluency and understanding of the language and effectively promotes an appreciation of the French culture.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.
- The curriculum is appropriately adjusted as a result of thorough assessment of test results.
- Insufficient emphasis in planning is given to the using and applying aspect of the subject.
- Not enough account is taken of the different capabilities of pupils within the ability sets in Years 3 to 7.

Commentary

72. Standards of attainment throughout the school are in line to meet national averages as they were at the time of the last inspection, although standards have varied considerably from year to year. However, pupils generally achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. The numeracy strategy is embedded into current practice, and pupils are developing different mental strategies for mental calculations well.
73. Mathematics is taught in ability sets in Years 3 to 7, based on thorough analysis of test results. However, activities are not always planned with enough attention to the differing needs within the sets, particularly in the sets for average attainers and higher attainers. This results in the more able pupils in a set having to wait for slower pupils to finish, and work is not always challenging enough for them. This lack of challenge, and insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and understanding by solving problems, reduce the number of pupils that achieve the higher levels of attainment.
74. Lack of ability to apply knowledge was evident in a Year 6 middle ability set. Pupils were able to do simple calculations competently, such as doubling and halving, but were unable to identify which procedure was necessary to solve a problem. Insufficient emphasis has been placed on applying knowledge and understanding in previous years. The subject leader and staff are aware of this shortcoming in provision and have implemented procedures for the present academic year to improve pupils' standards in this area of their learning.
75. Teaching was generally good throughout the school in the lessons seen. In a few lessons, it was very good, characterised by brisk pace, high expectations and continuous challenge. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on algebra, as soon as pupils completed one task, another more

challenging one was provided. The teacher was very aware of the differing needs within the group, constantly assessing their answers so that he could give extra help where it was needed. As a consequence, learning in this lesson was very good. In less successful lessons, the pace was slow so that some pupils had to wait before moving on to the next task. This resulted in inefficient use of time, with an adverse effect on learning.

76. The subject was under temporary leadership during the inspection. However, a study of the manager's file indicates that a rigorous analysis of results provides a very clear picture of standards throughout the school. The curriculum is adjusted in the light of analysis to address weaknesses. Group targets are set to improve standards, but pupils are not sufficiently involved in setting their own targets, and do not always know what they have to do to improve. Pupils' individual progress is carefully monitored to check that they are reaching predicted outcomes. The school is very aware of the performances of girls and boys, although no significant differences were apparent during the inspection. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are generally well supported to allow them to reach their potential and achieve well.

Mathematics across the curriculum

77. There is some use of numeracy skills in other subjects such as science, when pupils use charts, graphs, and tables to record their results, and read different scales when they use equipment such as thermometers. In design and technology, measuring skills are used when it is important to measure accurately. In geography, the use of scale is used to interpret distances on maps. However, these opportunities are not rigorously planned and there is insufficient use of information and communication technology to support the subject.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good** and pupils benefit from teachers' good subject knowledge.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in all classes are acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding across a broad range of scientific study.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and promotes interest and enjoyment amongst pupils.
- Pupils generally record results of investigations neatly and carefully.
- There are not enough activities planned to extend the learning of higher attaining pupils.

Commentary

78. Standards of attainment throughout the school are in line with the national average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Standards are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection.
79. School and national test and assessment data shows that there are fewer pupils working at higher levels than might be expected. This is mainly because whole-class teaching predominates over time, especially in investigative and experimental sessions, with too few chances for higher attaining pupils to tackle challenging work.
80. Curriculum provision is good. Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities based on the required areas of learning. Provision is enhanced by the way teachers link science activities with classroom projects and themes. This method of planning is successful in making

activities relevant to pupils. For instance, Year 1 pupils enjoyed activities in a literacy lesson which included learning the names of parts of the human body.

81. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers make satisfactory use of national and school curriculum guidance to plan lessons that contain interesting and motivating activities and these lead to the promotion of good attitudes to science amongst all pupils. In the lessons seen, pupils achieved well partly because of their good levels of concentration and effort. For example, Year 7 pupils showed evident enjoyment and enthusiasm as they investigated how some acids and alkalis can change the colour of some dyes. The systematic and careful way that they handled test tubes, pipettes and liquids and their high levels of co-operation and behaviour meant that the quality of learning was very good and they made good gains in their knowledge and understanding as a result.
82. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of life processes, materials and their properties and physical processes as a result of teachers' high expectations. Examples of past work show neat and careful recording of activities. Some pupils find difficulty in making predictions and drawing conclusions from results, especially lower attaining pupils. Higher attaining pupils make reasonable and thoughtful attempts and try hard to interpret results.
83. In Years 3 to 7, pupils are given effective opportunities to think about and suggest ways of carrying out investigations and experiments. For instance, Year 5 pupils showed good levels of discussion and exchange of ideas when, in groups, they thought of ways to see how solids could be made to dissolve more quickly. This teaching method successfully encouraged pupils to use previous learning to inform their thinking. It gave opportunities for teachers to form mixed-ability groups with the purpose of helping lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs to learn from their more able peers.
84. The subject leader has very good subject knowledge and uses this well in his own teaching and in helping colleagues to plan their lessons. He has introduced an effective system for assessing pupils' attainments at the end of each unit of study and this is helping teachers to match work more closely to pupils' capabilities. He is developing a good understanding of pupils' strengths and areas for improvement and is benefiting from increased time and opportunities to observe his colleagues teach or analyse sufficiently critically teachers' planning. This limits the impact that his work has on pupils' standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory** and pupils become confident and competent users of computers from an early age.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning in the computer suite is good.
- Pupils in each year group have access to a good range of hardware and software to support their learning.
- Skills learned in the computer suite are not always used well enough to promote pupils' learning in other subjects of the curriculum.

Commentary

85. At the last inspection, pupils' standards were above average at the end of both key stages. Standards in this inspection are average but pupils make good progress and achieve well when judged against their levels of attainment when they first entered school.

86. The development of pupils' skills is well supported by a good quantity of software linked to classroom projects and themes. This good provision is helpful in promoting the progressive development of skills between year groups and key stages and is one of the main reasons why pupils achieve well throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs benefit significantly from regular access to software which supports the development of literacy skills very well. In all the lessons seen during the inspection, teachers were teaching skills recommended in national guidelines for pupils of their ages and it was evident that pupils were building successfully on previous learning. For instance, Years 3 and 4 pupils extended their knowledge and understanding well of how information can be presented in the form of graphs and charts by using data and learning from a previous lesson to focus on producing pie charts.
87. The quality of teaching and learning in the computer suite is mostly good. Teachers successfully combine whole-class instruction with individual or paired work at computers to practise and refine skills. The suite's use makes a significant contribution to pupils' standards because of the regular access each class has to this facility. The suite has been in use for some years and it is evident that its original layout and basic furniture does have some drawbacks in hindering progress. Pupils' chairs are too wide to enable two pupils to sit comfortably in front of a screen and whole-class sessions involve pupils in much turning round and adjusting their position to give teachers their attention. The result is that there is sometimes more restlessness and inattention in lessons than is necessary when a full class is present and there are interruptions to the pace of pupils' learning. When a small group of pupils is present, the quality of learning is much better, and eight Year 2 pupils were observed making good progress in their learning because they were not distracted by other pupils and received close attention from a teaching assistant.
88. Pupils' use of the Internet to search for information is good and pupils in Years 3 to 7 do this confidently. Standards of control technology are good in Years 1 to 7 and pupils skilfully program the movements of toy robots and on-screen turtles to follow specific routes and draw mathematical shapes. These good achievements are the result of good teaching and pupils' high levels of interest and enjoyment in using ICT equipment. In addition, the work of the ICT technician makes a significant contribution to pupils' and teachers' access to suitable hardware and software.
89. The subject leader is experienced and has a good knowledge and understanding of the required curriculum. She has had a significant impact on standards achieved over time through her work in maintaining and improving the range of hardware and software and in the good support she gives her colleagues when they plan their lessons. She recently introduced assessment procedures to improve the match of work to pupils' capabilities, but these have not had time to significantly raise standards. The subject leader has useful plans to introduce a suite of laptop computers to improve pupils' accessibility to computers in classrooms.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

90. ICT skills are generally used well by teachers to support pupils' learning in aspects of literacy and numeracy such as work on spelling, number facts and data handling. However, overall, pupils' skills are not used as well as might be expected to support learning in other subjects. Wordprocessing skills are not used often enough and opportunities are missed to provide higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils in particular with special projects based on the use of ICT skills and equipment. This is partly due to the fact that pupils do not have as much access to computers in their classrooms as they do in their weekly sessions in the computer suite. It is also partly due to missed opportunities in class lessons for pupils to use computers to aid or complete their tasks as an alternative to pencil and paper.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**. Pupils' learning is supported by effective use of field studies, visits and visitors to school to make lessons interesting and motivating.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of the local area to promote a range of geographical skills.
- The subject is linked closely to Education for Sustainable Development initiatives.
- Assessment information is not used well enough to match tasks to pupils' differing capabilities.

Commentary

91. Teachers' planning provides good coverage of the required curriculum with considerable thought given to first-hand experiences. Pupils in Years 1 to 7 benefit from regular visits to the local area and beyond. For instance, Years 3 and 4 pupils study physical features and practise mapping skills during a residential visit to Dartmoor. Year 5 pupils build on these experiences during visits to farms and coastal areas. As a result, most pupils use suitable geographical terminology, make effective use of maps and plans and pupils in Years 5, 6 and 7 talk knowledgeably about how Alphington has changed over time and how it compares with life in some other parts of the world.
92. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that, despite the quality and extent of first-hand experiences, only a limited amount of work is recorded. This is partly due to a strong emphasis over the last twelve months on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. While this has been beneficial in raising standards and encouraging pupils to express views and opinions confidently, it has meant that skills associated with writing, numeracy and information and communication technology have not been used as well as they might be. Standards by the end of Year 2, Year 6 and Year 7 are consequently satisfactory overall, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, including that of pupils with special educational needs, but with opportunities missed over time for higher attaining pupils to be regularly challenged by their work.
93. The subject leader is knowledgeable and enthusiastic. She uses her good subject knowledge well to support colleagues as they plan their lessons and to organise the very good range of trips and visits for each year group. However, she has few opportunities to observe her colleagues teach and does not critically analyse lesson plans and this limits the impact that her work has on raising standards. She is aware that tasks would be matched more closely to pupils' differing capabilities if assessment procedures were more firmly established, but

although formal procedures are satisfactory, they are relatively new and their use has not had time to have a significant impact on pupils' standards.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**. The curriculum is planned to include numerous visits so that pupils can learn from first-hand evidence.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide programme of visits and visitors to school enhances the curriculum and makes history lively and interesting.
- There is insufficient emphasis on the progressive development of pupils' skills.

Commentary

94. Only two lessons were observed during the inspection, but examination of a portfolio of pupils' work and talking to pupils indicate that standards are as expected and pupils' achievement throughout the school is satisfactory. Standards are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. Examination of planning shows that there is sufficient coverage of the subject, and a wide programme of trips and visitors to school enhances the curriculum and makes history lively and interesting. In Year 7, pupils use their research skills well to further their understanding of why the army was important to the maintenance of the Roman Empire. The good teaching in this year group was characterised by the very effective use of drama and role-play to make pupils aware of the importance of the army.
95. The subject leader has a good overview of the subject and recognises that there is a need to place more emphasis on the progressive development of skills throughout the school. Assessment procedures do not focus enough on the skill element of each topic in order to help teachers recognise pupils' level of attainment. Computers are used for research, sometimes at home, but the use of information and communication technology is not regularly planned into lessons. Good opportunities are provided for the development of speaking and listening skills through discussion, the posing of questions and the use of role-play, but there are limited opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills through extended pieces of work.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory** and meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils benefit from good resources to support teaching of the world's main religions.
- Assessment procedures are not used well enough to indicate to teachers how their pupils are achieving.

Commentary

96. There were few examples of pupils' work to scrutinise, as much work covered in lessons is oral. However, lesson plans and talking to pupils indicate that standards of attainment throughout the school are in line with expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, and pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection.

97. In the lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good overall. Lessons are well planned, and a range of methods is used. For example, there was good use of role-play in Year 2 when a visitor played the part of Noah to explain the happenings surrounding the Flood. In this lesson, pupils asked relevant questions and extended their understanding of why the Flood happened. In Year 7, good use was made of a range of artefacts from different religions to enable pupils to pose questions about different faiths and the significance of religious symbols and artefacts. It was clear that pupils had a satisfactory knowledge of religions such as Islam, Hinduism, as well as Christianity. In one upper school assembly, very good use was made of a Muslim visitor who gave pupils further insights into his faith.
98. The subject is led by an enthusiastic leader, but she has had no opportunities to monitor teaching and learning. She has assembled a portfolio of pupils' work to show that all areas of the syllabus are covered and this gives helpful guidance to teachers when they plan their lessons. Teachers use a general assessment sheet at the end of units of work, but assessments are not rigorous enough to enable teachers to be sure of standards. Resources are good, and are used well to illustrate the differing practices in the main world faiths. As a lot of lesson time is spent in discussion, speaking and listening skills are developed well, but there are few opportunities for pupils to enhance their other literacy skills through extended pieces of writing. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology to support the subject.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils benefit from teachers' good subject knowledge and that of visiting specialists.

Commentary

99. It is not possible to make an overall judgement of the provision of teaching and learning in art and design because only one lesson was observed during the inspection. However, discussions with pupils, scrutiny of work in sketchbooks and evidence of pupils' work on display around the school indicate that standards in art and design are good and are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection.
100. Staff place considerable emphasis upon the subject and have arranged for artists in residence to work across the school. Sketchbooks in Years 1 and 2 reveal sensitive work, with pencils used effectively for light shading and experimenting to make a range of patterns. They also use watercolour well to paint in the style of Kandinsky and paint a harlequin animal in the style of Picasso. Sketchbooks in Year 6 contain detailed drawings related to the design and decoration of an Egyptian Mummy and drawings illustrating stories from the 'Lord of the Rings'.
101. The one lesson observed involved Year 7 pupils working upon a self-portrait project. The quality of teaching and learning was very good. Detailed work on the study of the technical details of the head and its features had been completed in a previous lesson. Pupils considered the concept of 'self' and 'mood'. A very good range of artists' paintings, including the 'Mona Lisa', was examined to help their understanding of how mood is portrayed. Pupils worked enthusiastically, achieved very well and made good progress with their thinking and planning skills.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils benefit from a good quantity and quality of resources.
- Formal assessment procedures are underdeveloped.

Commentary

102. The subject was not being taught in the majority of classes during the inspection as curriculum time is blocked with art and design, so only one lesson was observed. Therefore, there was insufficient evidence available to make judgments on the quality of teaching, current standards or pupils' achievement. However, examination of photographic evidence from the past indicates that standards are broadly in line with national expectations, and that pupils complete a range of tasks that develop skills satisfactorily. Pupils design and make a range of items, and then evaluate them at the end, identifying improvements. However, formal assessment procedures are not embedded into current practice to ensure that pupils are achieving at the appropriate National Curriculum level.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils benefit from specialist teaching and a good quality and quantity of resources.

Commentary

103. Two lessons in Years 6 and 7 indicate that pupils benefit from the good subject knowledge and teaching skills of the specialist music teacher. In the lessons, pupils made good progress with their understanding of pitch, tempo, timbre, dynamics, volume and rhythm as a result of a varied range of activities planned and effective use of some good quality resources. Most pupils were able to compare different kinds of music using appropriate musical vocabulary.

104. The subject leader, who has been in post for a year, provides good leadership and has a clear idea about the development needs of the subject. She has successfully increased the stock of resources to fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. She has established two choirs and the pupils who attend these, and after-school music clubs, benefit from skilled tuition.

105. Pupils' performance skills are developed well through a broad programme of school and community concerts. For example, Year 5 pupils performed their own composition at a concert in Exeter. Some pupils benefit from instrumental teaching provision. The subject leader receives good co-operation from her colleagues in promoting the musical life of the

school. For example, one member of staff teaches the senior recorder group and another teaches the double bass. Staff also contribute significantly towards preparation and rehearsals for school musical productions.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good** because teachers develop pupils' skills step by step.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils throughout the school make good progress and attain standards above those expected for their ages.
- Pupils' benefit from teachers' good subject knowledge and effective use of accommodation and resources.

Commentary

106. Pupils make good progress because of good quality teaching and learning. Teachers know their pupils well and plan lessons that take account of pupils' different capabilities so that levels of challenge are matched well to pupils' needs. Lessons are characterised by effective demonstrations by teachers and pupils of particular skills and this teaching method plays a significant part in the quality of pupils' learning. For instance, Years 1 and 2 pupils made good gains in their skills of throwing, catching and moving with a ball because of the teacher's clear explanations about, and helpful demonstrations of, ways to control a ball. After each of her direct teaching sessions, pupils worked hard to practise and refine their skills based on their new learning and made good progress as a result.
107. Pupils show good control of their bodies and their hand-eye co-ordination is generally well developed. The vast majority of Years 3 and 4 pupils controlled tennis rackets well as they learned to control a ball by striking it gently to a partner. In this lesson, pupils benefited from the good range and quality of resources which meant that all pupils had access to appropriate equipment at each stage of the lesson and the pace of their learning was maintained.
108. In all the lessons seen, pupils' attitudes were good and contributed significantly to their achievements. Year 7 boys and girls showed maturity and confidence in a dance lesson as they worked in groups to plan a sequence of movements. They responded well to the rhythm and mood of the music and their enjoyment and full participation was evident in their efforts to achieve well.
109. No lessons were seen in gymnastics or swimming during the inspection, but school records and discussions with staff and pupils indicate that pupils achieve well in these aspects of their learning.
110. The subject leader is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. He is providing good support for teachers as they plan their lessons and has been effective in maintaining and building upon the good standards reported at the time of the previous inspection. He has helped to establish a wide range of seasonal after-school clubs and extra-curricular activities to extend pupils' learning, and has broadened the range of competitive team games with other schools. He is aware that the majority of these activities are for older pupils but has plans to develop more opportunities for pupils in Years 1 and 2.
111. Assessment procedures are largely informal and dependent on individual teacher's knowledge of their pupils' capabilities, but the subject leader has useful plans for the implementation of more formal and effective ways of assessing pupils' achievements during the current academic year. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make effective use of other subjects of the curriculum to promote personal, social and health education and citizenship.

Commentary

112. There is a strong and effective emphasis on the provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. PSHE lessons are a regular part of the weekly timetable. Sex education is taught well to older pupils as part of the programme. The dangers of drug misuse are explained and discussed as part of the health education programme. In discussion with pupils, it was clear that, from an early age, they are developing a good knowledge and understanding of how to care for themselves. For example, Year 2 pupils are familiar with the ingredients of a healthy diet as a result of a science-based project. The good quality of teaching and learning has led to the school receiving a Healthy Schools award.
113. Citizenship is addressed well through the school council. During the inspection, Year 7 pupils were observed informing their representatives of views that they wished to be presented at the school council meeting that day. The school's very good provision for moral and social education plays a significant part in promoting pupils' knowledge and understanding of becoming a good and helpful citizen.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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