

INSPECTION REPORT

GREAT GIDDING C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Huntingdon

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110813

Headteacher: Mrs H Westcott

Lead inspector: Sue Cosson

Dates of inspection: 28th - 30th September 2004

Inspection number: 266914

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	74
School address:	Main Street Great Gidding Huntingdon Cambridgeshire
Postcode:	PE28 5NX
Telephone number:	(01832) 293 466
Fax number:	(01832) 293 521
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Peter Blundell
Date of previous inspection:	11 th January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Great Gidding Primary is a small rural primary school, with 74 children on roll. There are rather more boys than girls. The children come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds and overall their circumstances are about average. A very small proportion are from minority ethnic families. About five per cent of children come from homes where English is not the first language but, at present, there are no children in the school who are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of children eligible for free school meals is about average. The children's attainment on entry varies from year to year and includes a wide ability range. On the whole, it is about average. Twenty-six per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is a little above average. About two thirds of these are a little behind their peers. The others have more significant learning or communication difficulties. Two children have a statement of special educational need. Very few children leave the school other than at the normal time but a considerable number of children join the school part way through because parents feel the school is able to meet their children's needs. The school has recently received a 'Health Promoting School' award and is currently awaiting accreditation for the 'Investors in People' award. There are strong partnerships with the local playgroup, community college, after school club, initial teacher training institution and the church. The school aims to provide 'high quality primary education with Christian values at its heart'.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11265	Sue Cosson	Lead inspector	English Science Art and design Geography History
19578	Ted Worby	Lay inspector	
30782	Sue Crawford-Condie	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology Music Physical education Religious education Special educational needs English as an additional language

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
Barley House
Oakfield Grove
Clifton
Bristol
BS8 2BN

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Great Gidding Primary School is a very good school. It is rightly held in high regard by the community it serves. The commitment by the headteacher, staff and governors to providing the best possible education for every child is a key to its success. The children have very good attitudes to school. Children progress at a good rate and standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average by the end of Year 6. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher provides dedicated, sensitive and supportive leadership to a team where all feel valued.
- The school is determined that every child will succeed and is very successful at meeting individual needs.
- Children achieve well because the teaching is good.
- Parents feel welcome and appreciate the efforts that the school makes for their children.
- The governors' commitment and expertise are of great benefit to the school.
- The children like school, enjoy learning and take part enthusiastically in all activities.
- The school takes excellent care of the children's welfare, health and safety.
- The curriculum is broad and rich with an unusually high number of extra-curricular activities.
- Teachers' marking does not give the children sufficient guidance for improvement.
- Currently, there is no one else on the staff who shares whole-school management responsibility with the headteacher.

The school has improved substantially since the last inspection. All the strengths listed in the 1999 report still apply, albeit with a different headteacher and almost entirely different staff and governing body. The accommodation and resources for the Foundation Stage are now excellent. The new equipment and increased staff expertise have resulted in improved standards in information and communication technology (ICT). The school has established systems for detailed tracking of children's progress in English, mathematics and science. However, these need further refinement. Well-targeted expenditure on books, artefacts and other equipment means that the curriculum is now well resourced. Investigative skills in mathematics and science are planned and taught systematically and standards are now in line with the other aspects of the subjects.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	A	C	A*	C
mathematics	A*	C	A	D
science	A*	E	A	D

Key: A - very high; 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.*

Children generally achieve well throughout the school. By the end of the Reception Year, most children are likely to meet or go beyond the goals they are expected to reach by the end

of their first year in school. Standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6. They vary from year to year because of the small number of children in each year group and the varying proportions of children with learning difficulties. The table above shows that in some years, the school's results have been among the top five per cent in the country (A*). Although not shown in the table, this is also the case in 2004.

Children's personal development is very good. This is because of the high quality provision the school makes for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The children like coming to school, enjoy learning and work hard. They almost always behave well and are friendly, polite and helpful. They are very keen to participate in all the school has to offer and enjoy taking responsibilities. Attendance is well above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a very good education. Teaching is **good** overall, a quarter of it is **very good** and some of it **excellent**, particularly in Years 3 - 6. This is an even better picture than at the time of the last inspection. There were no lessons in which the teaching was unsatisfactory. The children are very willing learners and apply themselves well. They make good progress because teachers, ably helped by teaching assistants, make learning interesting and relevant, insist on high standards of behaviour, give good support to children with special educational needs and extend the more able. Occasionally, children in Year 2 do not learn as well as they could because their accommodation in the school hall does not provide a sufficiently supportive and relaxed environment for learning. The school is already taking action to remedy this. Feedback and marking are not used enough to help children understand how they can improve.

The school provides a very good curriculum that is carefully planned and fosters both the academic achievement and the personal development of all the children. It caters very well for children of all abilities and aptitudes and makes sure that all children have full access to all that the school offers. It is brought to life by an unusually wide range of high quality after-school activities and visits out of school. Teachers are adept at planning lessons where children apply their skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening, mathematics and ICT to realistic contexts across the curriculum. The school takes great care to ensure the children are safe and secure in school. The partnership with parents is very strong and the school could not do more to involve parents in their children's learning. There are mutually beneficial links with other schools and the wider community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good** with some features that are very strong indeed. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Her philosophy and principles are evident in all aspects of the school's work. All staff, through appropriate support and training, are being empowered to take on leadership roles and the impact of this is increasingly evident. Governors are skilled, knowledgeable and committed. They monitor progress carefully, exercise effective oversight of planning and policies and ensure that all statutory requirements are met. There is a very strong sense of common purpose in the school and a commitment to continuous improvement. However, there is no one else on the staff who shares whole school management responsibility.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with the school and have no significant concerns. They are complimentary about their children's progress, the quality of education, the school's approachability and the way it is led and managed. **Pupils**, whose opinions were sought, like school and think their teachers are fair.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Use feedback and marking more systematically to involve children in their learning and move them on.
- Widen the management structure of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

The children generally achieve well throughout the school. Standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6. They vary from year to year because of the small number of children in each year group and the varying proportions of children with learning difficulties.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Virtually all children achieve well, although children in Year 2 are not currently achieving as well as they could in writing and mathematics.
- Standards by the end of Year 6 are usually well above average in national tests. A high proportion of children achieve beyond the expected level for their age.
- Children with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well in reading and writing.
- Achievement in speaking and listening is high.

Commentary

Foundation Stage

1. When children start school in the Reception class, the teacher's assessments show a wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding. In 2002-3, although the attainment profile on entry was below average, the children made good progress and most reached the early learning goals in all areas of learning. Similarly in 2003-4, the Reception children made good progress in all areas of learning and almost all reached the early learning goals. This year the group are average overall. At the time of the inspection, the children had been at school full time for only four days, having attended mornings only for the previous three weeks. They have already settled very well into school and are achieving well. There is every indication that most will reach or exceed the goals expected for their age in all areas of learning by the end of Reception Year, because of the good provision for their learning.

Years 1 and 2

2. Year 2 test results have fluctuated over the past few years. In 2003 results were well below average in reading and writing and a little below in mathematics. However, the previous year's results were above average. Year 2 results in 2004 were also higher than in 2003 and the school's tracking data shows that most children achieved well and reached average standards. In view of the small number of children in each year group and the fact that, in some year groups, a high proportion of them have learning difficulties, the apparently low test results in some years must be treated with caution. However, very few Year 2 children achieve beyond the expectations for their age. The school is conscious of this and there are sound plans in place to redress this. Able readers in Year 2, for example, have regular reading sessions with older children.

3. Inspectors found that children in Year 1 achieve well because of the good provision made for their development. It was evident in the work seen that children in Year 1 last year achieved well. They made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The current Year 1 children are also making good progress. In reading and writing, standards are above those expected for their age. In mathematics, standards are average. Standards were high in religious education (RE) in Year 1 and in line with expectations in the few lessons seen in other subjects.
4. At this stage in the school year, standards in Year 2 are about average in reading, writing and mathematics but most children are not currently achieving as well as they could in writing and mathematics. The new arrangements for teaching Year 2 separately in the school hall for English and mathematics do not provide a sufficiently supportive and relaxed environment for learning. This results in poor concentration, particularly of those with learning difficulties. This is a very new problem early in the school year, resulting from a change in accommodation and the school is already working to deal with the difficulty. Most Year 2 children are achieving well in science, because of the challenge of the work they do with Years 3 and 4 children.

Years 3 - 6

5. The table below refers to 2003 tests because national comparative data is not yet available for 2004. It shows that standards in the Year 6 tests in 2003 were well above average in English, mathematics and science. Year 6 results, again, were well above average in 2004, with a very high proportion of children achieving beyond the expectations for their age. What the table does not indicate is that the children, in good contrast to the national picture, did almost as well in writing as they did in reading. School tracking indicates that all children made good progress and, for some, it was exceptional.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.3 (27.0)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	29.2 (27.0)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.3 (27.0)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 11 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. Inspectors found that children achieve well in Years 3 - 6. All are suitably challenged, including those with special educational needs. Flexible grouping in English and mathematics has enabled children to work at appropriate tasks with more support available for those who need it. This enables children of all abilities in Years 3 - 6 to work to their capabilities and make good progress in all aspects of English, mathematics and science. Some children make exceptional progress and achieve very well indeed. Standards were high in the physical education (PE) and music lessons seen and in line with expectations in information and communication technology (ICT) and in the few lessons seen in other subjects.

Whole school matters

7. High-quality provision, well tailored to their needs, helps children with special educational needs and, where appropriate, some for whom English is not their first language, to make good progress in reading and writing.

8. The children's speaking and listening skills are well developed. Frequent opportunities for thoughtful discussion have developed their capacity to put forward a point of view, listen to and consider others' opinions and use the language of persuasion. They use their speaking and listening skills very well in other subjects. They also apply their skills in literacy and mathematics well in other areas of the curriculum. Their skills in ICT are sufficient to enable them to use them productively in other subjects, such as science, history and art and design.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes and behaviour are very good. The children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also very good. Attendance is well above average and arrangements for following up absence are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children are very keen to participate in all the school has to offer and to take on responsibilities.
- Children are happy in school and are willing learners. They form very good relationships with others.
- The school sets and achieves high standards for behaviour.
- Attendance is well above average.
- School deals very effectively with rare incidents of bullying or bad behaviour.
- The children respond very well to the school's high quality provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

Attitudes and behaviour

9. The school provides a very happy environment with the result that children like coming to school and enjoy their lessons. They work hard and want to succeed. Staff develop very good relationships with the children so that they clearly understand what is expected of them. Children, almost always, listen carefully in class and set to work willingly, without any fuss. They take an interest in their work and learn to concentrate on the task and persevere with it. They work constructively in pairs or groups, for example, when investigating the properties of magnets or collecting information about labels and captions around the school. Behaviour is almost always very good, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. Particularly noticeable is the way boys and girls work and play together harmoniously. There have never been any exclusions.
10. Children with special educational needs respond well in lessons and group activities. Their behaviour is good. The support from teaching assistants enables them to take part productively in lessons. The commitment of the headteacher and staff to creating an ethos where all children are included in all that the school offers, enables all children with special educational needs to achieve good progress in this area.

Taking responsibility

11. Children are very keen to join in school activities. After-school clubs are well attended and children willingly take on responsibilities, for example, self-registering in the

Reception and Year 1 class, returning the registers to the office, doing jobs within the classroom and looking after younger children. The school council is a very good example of the children's willingness to take responsibilities very seriously and has had a significant impact on school life. The introduction of 'Golden Time', much valued by all, better lunchtime arrangements and involvement in the community 'Eco Project' are just a few examples of the results of their work. A particularly telling example of the way the school seeks to give children a real voice in the running of the school happened recently when lunchtime supervisors took members of the school council to visit another school to see 'playground buddies' in action. The children returned full of ideas about how they would adapt this practice to their own school.

Personal development

12. Children's personal development is very strong because of the importance the school gives to it and the high quality provision it makes. Through example, the staff encourage children to recognise one another's strengths and unique characteristics. There are effective arrangements for all aspects of personal development, including sex and drugs education, to be taught as lessons in their own right or as part of other subjects. Staff foster confidence and self-esteem by listening to children with respect and treating their opinions seriously. The children reciprocate this with courtesy. Moral development is promoted explicitly in the curriculum, in the rules and expectations in classes and around the school. Children develop their understanding of right and wrong from the time they join the school. They appreciate what it means to live in a community by their involvement in establishing the school rules. There are many occasions for children to develop their social skills. They expand their horizons beyond the school by fundraising for charities, distributing harvest gifts and carol singing at a local retirement home. 'Circle time' and personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons are powerful tools for enabling children to express their views on a wide range of issues. In discussions with children and parents there appears to be very little bullying but, what there is, is dealt with effectively. There is a high expectation, strongly promoted throughout the school, that children should be tolerant and respectful of others.
13. Spiritual and cultural development are good and have improved since the last inspection. Again, this is because the school values these aspects and plans carefully. The choice of literature and materials within the curriculum reflects different cultures well. The children's own culture is celebrated and learned about through educational visits and special events, for example, a Viking study day. The school provides opportunities to explore the major faiths in religious education. Drawing on people from different cultures to share their values, beliefs and experiences with the children further enriches this area. Spiritual development is promoted successfully through collective worship and religious education lessons. Regular visits to the school by the vicar and representatives of the local community church contribute to this focus on spiritual development. Children are given the opportunity to reflect and consider their own thoughts and feelings as well as those of others, for example when music is played at the beginning and end of assembly and at other times during the school day. The school garden provides a particularly tranquil setting for quiet reflection. The children are encouraged to make choices, value themselves and to be proud of their achievements.

Attendance

14. Attendance is well above average and the school has very good systems for following up absence. There is no unauthorised absence. Parents make sure their children arrive punctually at school and lessons begin on time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.2
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides very good education. Children learn well because the teaching is good, close attention is given to meeting the needs of individuals and the curriculum is broad, rich and stimulating.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. A quarter of it is very good and some of it is excellent, particularly in Years 3 - 6. This is an even better picture than at the time of the last inspection. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff are committed to ensuring every child succeeds.
- Children are very willing and conscientious learners and achieve well.
- Teachers make good use of their expertise to make learning interesting, relevant and successful.
- Almost all lessons are characterised by high expectations and good relationships which create a good climate for learning.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Lessons are planned carefully to ensure children with special educational needs are given strong support and are included in all activities and that able children's learning is extended.
- Teachers usually find out in broad terms, through questioning and marking, which children have succeeded but do not give sufficient specific guidance on improvement.

Commentary

Common strengths

15. Throughout the school lessons are carefully and thoroughly planned and are usually lively and interesting. Teachers take trouble to plan enjoyable activities, often based on first-hand experience. In a science lesson, for example, the teacher had amassed a wide variety of different types of magnets and gave children time to explore their properties, thus generating much curiosity and interest. Teachers, across the school, build on previous work, usually making sure they explain what the lesson is about and keeping it moving so children do not get bored. Children are expected to behave well and they almost always do. Teachers give pertinent praise, encouragement and reassurance, thus

motivating the children to concentrate hard, work productively and not be afraid to make mistakes. In Years 3 - 6 in particular, the children are good at working together fruitfully without direct supervision by an adult.

Exemplary teaching

16. The headteacher provides a strong lead through the excellence of her own teaching and there is much very good teaching which is worthy of being emulated throughout the school. The most successful lessons are characterised by high quality questioning, the teacher's good subject knowledge and effective use of day-to-day assessment. Children are given time to experiment, investigate, practise and evaluate. In a science lesson, for example, the teacher used her informal assessments very effectively to group children and plan work at the appropriate level. As a result, all children had work well matched to their current level of understanding, as well as having a lot of fun experimenting with magnets. In PE and history lessons, questioning was focused and probing and children were expected to justify their answers thus further extending their thinking. In a music lesson, the teacher successfully used a child's comment to show clearly how artists and musicians build on each other's work. Her good knowledge of the subject and how the curriculum fits together enabled her to make meaningful links and help the children to understand a complex concept. In all of these lessons, children worked to capacity and achieved high standards.
17. The teaching of mathematics in Years 5 and 6 is particularly strong. In one excellent mathematics lesson on fractions, decimals and percentages, the teacher:
 - Made the purpose of the lesson very clear and made it relevant to real life.
 - Used resources, which enabled all types of learners to make progress.
 - Deepened children's understanding by ensuring all children were included in the questioning and had to think.
 - Used individual whiteboards well to assess understanding and give the children instant feedback.
18. As a result, all the children worked hard with enjoyment and made discernible progress in their understanding.

Inclusion

19. The school is very committed to meeting the learning needs of every child. The very good partnership between teachers and teaching assistants helps children with special educational needs, some of whom's home language is not English, make good progress. This support has a significant impact on the children's behaviour, concentration and productivity. The flexible groupings for literacy and mathematics ensure that the work for able children is suitably challenging.

Areas for development

20. In some lessons even though teaching and learning were satisfactory, the children were not sure what they were aiming for, other than the completion of the task. This was because the intended learning was not made clear to the children or the language used was too vague. In a few lessons where children found it difficult to concentrate, this was because the task was not well matched to their needs, they were given no opportunities to discuss or collaborate or because the learning environment was not comfortable and relaxed. Occasionally, the flow of a lesson was interrupted for some children when they were taken from the group for extra reading practice.
21. Day-to-day assessment and use of pupil targets is inconsistent. Teachers usually find out in broad terms which children have succeeded and there are good examples of teachers using the information to fine tune subsequent plans but this is not universal. All children have

individual targets for learning but they do not always understand how they can achieve them or how to move on once they have been achieved. All teachers mark conscientiously. The marking is usually encouraging, occasionally recognises whether the child has achieved the intended learning but only very rarely gives specific suggestions for improvement or development. Although some very good practice was seen in a PE lesson, children are not yet routinely involved in evaluating their own or their classmates' learning against specific criteria in other areas of the curriculum.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 20 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2	3	7	8	0	0	0

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

The curriculum

The curriculum meets the children's needs very well. It is broad and rich with an unusually wide range of extra-curricular activities. Accommodation is spacious, pleasant and well maintained. There are sufficient teachers and teaching assistants to provide good support for children. Resources for all subjects are adequate and these have been recently improved.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's aim of fostering life-long learning is at the heart of the curriculum.
- The school is determined that every child will succeed and is very successful at meeting individual needs.
- Teachers put a great deal of effort into making the curriculum meaningful and relevant by organising many first-hand learning experiences for the children.
- Since the last inspection, accommodation, resources and the curriculum at the Foundation Stage have improved significantly.
- Resources for each area of the curriculum are good. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
- Access to the site is difficult for those with physical disabilities.

Commentary

Planning and links between subjects

22. The school provides a rich curriculum that is carefully planned and fosters both the academic achievement and the personal development of all children. The teachers have developed programmes for all age groups, based on either local or national schemes of work. These programmes are carefully constructed to ensure that children progressively cover knowledge, skills and understanding in each subject. There are relevant and well planned links between subjects. Teachers put a great deal of effort into making the study units rich, meaningful and enjoyable. The National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies have been successfully adapted to meet the needs of the mixed-age classes in the school. Thus, children achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are adept at planning purposeful opportunities to use reading, writing, speaking and listening, mathematics and ICT in other subjects, thus enabling children to apply the skills they have learned in a range of realistic contexts.

Curriculum enrichment

23. The headteacher, staff and governors at Great Gidding School provide a stimulating curriculum that fosters a real enjoyment of learning. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of activities beyond the school day - far more extensive than is usually found in a small school. This allows children access to coaching and the experience of joining with other schools for football, cricket and netball activities. Internet, sewing, gymnastics and French clubs are run by staff and volunteers for different age groups at lunchtimes and after school. These are popular with the children and are often run on a rota so that as many children as want to can take part in them. All children in Years 3 - 6 have the opportunity to learn to play the recorder. Many visits and visitors further enliven the curriculum. The school buys the skills of professional actors and musicians to work with the children, often leading to performances for parents. The school benefits from a musician who works weekly with the children to create and compose music. Children are regularly taken out to museums and galleries as part of topics in history, geography and art and design. As a result they are able to talk about the links between these subjects with confidence and understanding. Each year, all children from Years 2 - 6 have the opportunity to take part in a residential visit for environmental and adventure activities. Teachers of the younger children make full use of local opportunities, for example, by taking classes to visit a nearby farm at calving time.

Inclusion

24. The school is totally committed to inclusion. Adults know each individual child very well, recognise their worth and ensure all children have access to every aspect of school life. This results in very good provision overall for all children of all abilities. Teachers plan carefully to ensure able children are extended and challenged. Catch-up programmes are well in place for children who are just a little behind their peers. All children with special educational needs have individual education plans with targets that relate to their lessons. At Foundation Stage, children with special educational needs are well provided for by teachers and teaching assistants and they make good progress. For Years 3 - 6 there is very good provision for children with special educational needs. Arrangements for them to receive focused attention in appropriate groups are well planned and result in very good progress. Children are helped to work with other children as much as possible and are able to explain what they are doing and what they are learning.

Staffing and resources

25. The staff are appropriately qualified and experienced and there are enough teachers and teaching assistants to teach the curriculum competently. Teachers and support staff work together as a very effective team, understanding each other's roles as well as their own.
26. The accommodation is very pleasant and well maintained. The extension for the main infant classroom is excellent, as are the resources for the reception children; this is a significant improvement since the last inspection. However, when Year 2 children have their lessons in the school hall, they do not have a sufficiently supportive and relaxed environment for learning, with access to all the resources they need. This is a very new problem early in the school year, resulting from the change in accommodation. The co-ordinator for special educational needs and the class teacher were becoming aware of this as the inspection began and they are already working to address the difficulty.

27. Resource shortages in ICT, English, design and technology, music, history and religious education at the time of the last inspection have all been addressed. Resources for all subjects in the school are good overall. At present, access to the site is difficult for those with physical disabilities. However, there are firm plans and financial resources from the local education authority (LEA) to remedy this.

Care, guidance and support

The care, guidance and support for children are **very good** overall. The school's attention to children's health and safety is excellent. Children are known well to all staff and good, trusting relationships are well established.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's security arrangements are excellent.
- The school council is very effective in seeking and acting upon children's views.
- The school meets the needs of individuals very well.
- The tracking systems are not yet used to full effect to set individual targets.

Commentary

Care, welfare and safety

28. The school takes very good care of the children and places great store on helping all of them benefit from what the school has to offer. All staff know the children very well and have a good understanding of their individual needs. Trusting relationships throughout the school mean that children know who they can go to with a problem. The children are well supervised and are happy and secure during their time at school.
29. There are excellent arrangements for the children's health, safety and welfare. The school has a wide range of policies that give comprehensive coverage to health, safety and welfare issues. Provision for child protection is effective and staff know the procedures. There are very effective routines to ensure that health and safety policies are implemented. For example, children with medical conditions are well known to staff, there are clear first aid procedures, health and safety checks are carried out termly and there are regular fire practices. The school site is very secure. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

Support and advice

30. The strong links with the playgroup and the school's policy of welcoming parents and carers into the classroom mean children settle quickly and happily into school life.
31. All children benefit from well-focused support to meet their learning needs. Children with special educational needs receive good guidance through their individual education plans and those who are falling behind in mathematics and literacy are being helped to catch up. Since the last inspection, the school has set up thorough systems to track children's standards and progress in the core subjects. This is helping to raise awareness about areas where children's learning is not secure. However, the systems are rather unwieldy and are not yet used to their fullest effect when setting children's targets.

Involving children

32. Children are very much involved in the work and development of the school. They make a key contribution to decisions about rules and staff listen to their views and welcome their comments and ideas. The school successfully seeks children's views through 'circle time' and the school council. This is a body taken very seriously by staff and children and has been instrumental in effecting a number of changes to school routines, in accordance with the considered wishes of the children.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents have very positive views of the school and the education it provides. The partnership with parents is **excellent**. Links are very good with other schools and good with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very happy with what the school provides for their children.
- Information to parents about the school, their children's progress and how they can help their children at home is of very high quality indeed.
- The home-school agreement is known and understood by all parties.
- There are very strong mutually beneficial links with the local community college and transition arrangements are excellent.
- Parents appreciate the way the school seeks and acts on their views and deals with their concerns very promptly and effectively.
- Links with the community enrich learning experiences for children and provide good opportunities for their social development.

Commentary

Links with parents

33. The very positive views of parents reflect a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the school's provision. Parents are satisfied with the way their children are taught. They approve strongly of all that the school does for the children and of the hard work of the headteacher and staff. Parents of children with physical disabilities or learning or social difficulties are particularly appreciative. A very small minority of parents expressed some concerns about day-to-day information and about bullying. Inspectors support the positive views of parents and were unable to support parents' concerns about the distribution of information or about bullying. They found that the school's practice in informing parents about school events, their children's progress and how they can help their children at home is exemplary. On the very few occasions where bullying is identified, it is quickly and effectively dealt with.
34. The school has very good arrangements to survey parents and gain their views. The headteacher has daily informal contact with parents in the playground before and after school and she and her staff deal fairly and promptly with any concerns and listen to their views. Parents feel welcome in school and are confident that they can approach it with any problem. There are very good systems gathering parents' views on issues such as homework and parents were involved in rewriting the school's homework policy. It is a tribute to the success of this consultation that, at the pre- inspection meeting, parents

almost unanimously approved of the homework arrangements. Each child's record of achievement contains every annual report as well as the home-school agreement. This is taken home and updated annually and helps parents celebrate their children's achievements as well as ensuring a common understanding of rights and responsibilities.

35. Many parents support their children well at home by sharing books with them and helping with homework. Meetings to inform parents about new developments in teaching literacy and mathematics, so they can help their children at home, have been much appreciated. Several parents help in school on a regular basis.

Links with the community

36. Links with the community and a wide range of visits and visitors provide good enrichment to the curriculum and support children's personal and social development as well as widening their experiences and giving them opportunities to learn about the needs of others. Involvement in the community 'Eco Project' is an excellent example of how the children are being helped to see themselves as part of the community beyond the school and in the wider world and to know they can play a role in improving the environment. Links with the local church are very strong. As well as the local vicar visiting the school regularly, children use the church and churchyard as a rich resource for their lessons.

Links with other schools

37. Links with other schools are very good. Children participate enthusiastically in inter-school sporting and music events. The school works actively with the playgroup to ensure a smooth transfer when children start school. Similarly, links with the community college to which most children transfer at the age of 11 are very strong and mutually beneficial. College staff have given a lot of support to the development of the design and technology curriculum and Great Gidding School welcomes work experience students. Arrangements to help the children get to know the college so that they will settle quickly are excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are very effective. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. She is well supported by the rest of the staff. Governance is very good. The school meets its statement of purpose to 'provide high quality primary education with Christian values at its heart' very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's dedication, strong sense of purpose, high aspirations for every child in the school and support and encouragement for staff have created an ethos where all feel valued and work together for the benefit of the children.
- Governors are well organised and extremely well informed. They are actively involved in the school and are ambitious for its success.
- The school has clear priorities for improvement and the headteacher knows how to make them happen.
- Staff training and performance management are used effectively to ensure that all staff develop the skills they need to move forward.
- While much informal evaluation takes place, there is no systematic process in place for whole school self-review.

- Currently, there is no one else on the staff who shares whole school management responsibility with the headteacher.

Commentary

Leadership

38. The headteacher's strong sense of purpose, high aspirations for every child and determination to provide a rich, stimulating and inclusive curriculum inspire all staff to constantly strive to further improve the quality of education. She is an exemplary teacher. Her sensitivity, encouragement and practical support have built staff confidence and expertise so that now virtually all members of staff have a leadership role within the team. As a result, all feel valued, that their role is important and they are able to see the impact their work is having in improving the school. The improvements in ICT, for example, are a result of the work of the subject leader who, following the training and support she has received has been able to develop staff confidence in teaching the subject. The children are now achieving more and standards have already improved. Similarly, the midday supervisors have been empowered to improve lunchtime arrangements. They have taken children to another school to see good practice and now, with the children, are implementing a system of 'playground friends'. Because this is a small school and most teaching staff have several subject responsibilities, the school sensibly gives precedence for the commitment of resources to current priority areas, such as ICT and writing. Subject leadership is developing well in these areas and the monitoring is increasingly effective in identifying strengths and areas for development.

Governance

39. The governing body is well organised and very well informed about how the school is doing. Governors are aware of their responsibilities and carry them out conscientiously, for example, by checking for themselves how things are going and by applying the principles of best value when making decisions. The chair is particularly knowledgeable and he works very productively in partnership with the headteacher to both support and challenge the school. The governors' commitment and expertise are of great benefit to the school. At the heart of all their work are the interests of the children.

Management

40. The headteacher, in consultation with staff and governors, draws up a clear plan for the actions to be carried out to manage school improvement. This is based on her analysis of what needs to be done and her vision of what she wants ultimately to achieve. The analysis is increasingly based on a close scrutiny of how well children achieve in specific aspects of the curriculum. For example, the school is now focusing on the use of number lines in mathematics because assessment data indicated this was a weakness. The monitoring of academic achievement and target setting for individual children is established but the system is not yet fully responsive to new data about progress. Staff and governors take part in much informal evaluation of how well things are going but their involvement is not yet based on a planned, regular cycle. Established policies and procedures and efficient administrative support from the administrator ensure the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.
41. For the most part, the staff are deployed well, with special attention given to the support needed by children with particular needs. Teaching assistants, for example, work successfully with small groups of children to help improve their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. All staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and the school makes good use of performance management to ensure that targets, training and support for all staff are linked to both individual professional development and the improvements needed in the school. However, there is no named teacher who is part of the senior management team, sharing whole school management responsibility with the headteacher, developing management skills or deputising if the headteacher is absent for more than a day.

42. Throughout the school, adults provide excellent role models for children. They are always polite and treat the children with respect. In turn, the children treat each other very well. The school is regularly used for initial teacher training and students quickly feel at ease because of the good day to day arrangements and the support they receive.
43. Financial planning is secure, spending is prudent and school spending decisions relate to priorities for improvement. Spending over the past few years has been well targeted at improving resources throughout the school and the accommodation for the youngest children. There are careful plans to use the current high surplus, such as to retain current staffing when projected pupil numbers fluctuate in future years and to furnish and equip the imminent new accommodation. Governors keep a close watch on the budget and check the impact of major spending decisions. In all respects, the school meets its statutory responsibilities very well.

Future development

44. The school is very well placed for further improvement. The school has a good knowledge of its own strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher has a clear view of the improvements she wants to effect and is developing leadership roles to ensure they happen. Staff share the understanding of what is to be done and are committed to carrying it out.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	304,311
Total expenditure	261,981
Expenditure per pupil	3,156

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	14,637
Balance carried forward to the next year	42,330

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

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

Main strengths and weakness across the areas of learning

- Accommodation and resources are excellent; this is an improvement since the last inspection.
- Positive and supportive relationships enhance the good development of children's confidence and self-esteem.
- The children learn well because they engage with and enjoy a wide range of practical activities.
- Full use is made of the safe outside area, giving children many opportunities for physical development.

Commentary

45. Children enter the Reception class on a part-time basis at the beginning of the school year. The school is very effective in welcoming children and their parents. At the time of the inspection, the children in the Reception Year had been in school for only four full days. These children are taught as part of a class with Year 1. The Foundation Stage leader is developing the curriculum well and has established good liaison with the pre-school setting in the village.
46. The teaching is shared between two teachers and is good. Planning is done jointly and is specific and thorough, with the result that all staff are clear about their roles and the learning objectives to be taught. Teaching assistants and other adults know teachers' expectations from the planning and they are given written guidance about the kind of questions to ask to extend children's thinking. Activities are stimulating and well matched to each child's ability and level of maturity. Consequently, children enjoy learning. Teachers and teaching assistants monitor and record significant steps in each child's progress and personal development, using a manageable and effective system linked to the Foundation Stage profile. By doing so they are able to design activities to fill any

gaps in experiences for the children. By the end of the Reception Year, most children are likely to reach and go beyond the early learning goals.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

47. Although this is only their first term in school, reception children move confidently between activities and around the rest of the school. They behave well. They are friendly, polite and show consideration to others. They work alongside their friends sharing activities and ideas, or alone with a minimum of adult help. This was particularly noticeable in a lesson about shape, when children were fitting small cardboard boxes inside larger ones. They did so happily and responsibly, showing a good level of concentration and independence. Children are encouraged to take responsibility. They run simple errands and help to tidy away after activities, carrying out these tasks briskly and confidently. By the end of the Foundation Stage, children are confident about being members of both a class and of the school community.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

48. From their earliest days in school, children make a good start in developing all aspects of their language skills. They speak with growing confidence and as they do so, teachers ensure that they pronounce words correctly. Children concentrate when listening to others. The majority of children express their thoughts and feelings clearly, using words that are more sophisticated than those usually heard in a Reception class during the first full week in school. Children enjoy hearing stories and looking at books. They read regularly to an adult and take books home so that parents can support this important part of children's learning. Many children start school able to make recognisable marks relating to their own name. From the outset, children are taught the single letter sounds and how to write them and they are encouraged to write whenever the opportunity arises, for example, writing labels for their models.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

49. Children experience a range of mathematical activities, including counting, matching, comparing and shape work and make steady progress in developing their understanding. As well as activities focused specifically on mathematics, the teachers make the most of opportunities in the everyday routines of the class to extend children's knowledge, such as at register time, counting how many children are at school and how many are absent. Children can recognise and count numbers up to ten and some can go on to 20. They are able to use correct mathematical words confidently, for example, when talking about three-dimensional shapes, some could use the terms 'edges' and 'corners'.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

50. ACROSS THIS WIDE CURRICULUM AREA, CHILDREN EXPERIENCE ACTIVITIES THAT ENCOURAGE THEM TO QUESTION WHY THINGS HAPPEN, SO LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENQUIRY SKILLS. THE CHILDREN SHOW GREAT INTEREST IN NEW EXPERIENCES ASKING HOW THINGS WORK AND SHOWING ONE ANOTHER HOW TO DO THINGS. THERE IS SAFE, DIRECT ACCESS TO THE PLAYGROUND/GARDEN AREA, WHICH ENABLES THE CHILDREN TO EXTEND THEIR LEARNING OUTDOORS. DURING THE INSPECTION, MANY ACTIVITIES TOOK PLACE OUTSIDE AND VERY EFFECTIVE USE WAS MADE OF LARGE WHEELED VEHICLES IN STRUCTURED PLAY. ADULTS JOINED IN THE PLAY, TALKING AND ASKING QUESTIONS AND, AS A RESULT, CHILDREN MODELLED THEIR LANGUAGE AND BECAME FAMILIAR

WITH APPROPRIATE WORDS. CHILDREN ARE CONFIDENT IN USING SIMPLE COMPUTER PROGRAMS TO MAKE PICTURES AND ARE DEVELOPING CONTROL OF THE MOUSE. CONSTRUCTIONAL TOYS, SAND AND WATER AND MANY EVERYDAY ITEMS ARE ALL USED TO BROADEN CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE OF THE WORLD AROUND THEM. CHILDREN TRY OUT NEW IDEAS ENTHUSIASTICALLY AND TALK ABOUT THEIR PREFERENCES.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

51. Although no specific lessons for physical development were seen during the inspection, it was clear from teachers' planning that this area of learning is well structured. When playing outdoors, children show good control when throwing beanbags and running to collect them. They have ready access to a range of building materials and equipment to develop control of their hands. They can use tools such as scissors and brushes safely and they are able to trace and copy with good levels of accuracy.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

52. There is a rich and wide range of activities on offer to the children and they are encouraged to make independent choices and to express themselves. There are many opportunities for the children to explore different media to draw, paint and make models. During the inspection the focus was on textures and children could talk about making rubbings using appropriate words like 'rough' and 'smooth'. No music lessons were seen during the inspection. However, from teachers' planning and talking to the children, it is clear that they are making steady progress in music. Some of the reception children sang for joy, quite unselfconsciously, as they played, showing how relaxed and assured they feel at school.

OTHER ASPECTS

53. The school has good liaison with the pre-school setting in the village. Useful records about what the children are able to do by the time they start reception are passed on. Teachers welcome parents' involvement with their children's learning. They have developed a good induction programme, visits to the school before the children start and information sessions about learning in the Foundation Stage and early literacy and numeracy. Parents are kept well informed about their children's learning. Many parents visit the classroom on a daily basis. Children take home relevant activities including reading books and parents can communicate through the home-school record book.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in reading and in speaking and listening throughout the school.
- Standards by the end of Year 6 are well above average.
- Most teaching is very effective and suitable work planned for all ability groups.
- Guided reading sessions are well planned and taught.

- Good provision for children with special educational needs helps them make good progress.
- Marking does not give children a clear picture of how well they are doing or what they have to do to improve.

Commentary

54. Standards in English are high because the school gives a strong focus to this subject. The results of the national tests have fluctuated over the past few years as is to be expected when the number of children in each year group is low. However, in most years, results for Year 6 have been well above average, with girls and boys doing equally well. The 2004 results were outstanding with all the children achieving the nationally expected level and half of them achieving beyond it. In good contrast to the national picture, writing results were almost as high as reading. This represents very good progress, resulting in good achievement, for this group of children from the start of Year 3.
55. National test results for Year 2 have been more variable, with results in 2004 considerably higher than in previous years and similar to the national picture. Although very few children achieved beyond the expected level in reading and none in writing, these results represent good progress and good achievement from entry for this group of children. The school recognises that some able Year 2 children could do better in writing and is taking steps to redress this by focusing on writing as a priority.
56. The inspection found that the children make at least sound and often good progress through Years 1 and 2 to attain the expected level. From work seen at this stage in the year, it appears that progress in writing in Year 2 will not be as rapid as in other classes in the school and that the children will have difficulty reaching the high targets that have been set. This is mainly because the current accommodation arrangements for Year 2 lessons do not provide a comfortable and relaxed learning environment and this is adversely affecting their concentration and learning. This is a very new problem early in the school year and the school is already working to deal with the difficulty. It is evident that strong teaching in Years 3 - 6 has enabled children of all abilities to make good and often very good progress, resulting in high standards by the time they leave the school.

Speaking and listening

57. Standards in speaking and listening are high throughout the school and children achieve well. Younger children have no difficulty in expressing their ideas and the older ones have the confidence and the ability to justify their opinions. Throughout the school, children listen attentively to their teachers and contribute readily to discussions of all kinds, particularly when given opportunities to talk in pairs. Teachers are good at helping children extend their vocabulary by modelling and explaining unfamiliar words. During lively discussions, particularly in Years 5 and 6, teachers challenge children by asking stimulating questions and ensure that they give reasons for their responses.

Reading

58. The children achieve well in reading. Standards are average in Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6. Children are taught sound strategies for decoding unfamiliar words with due attention being given to phonics in Years 1 and 2. There are

good opportunities during the school day for children to engage in group and individual reading and they are encouraged to read with parents or carers at home. Guided reading sessions are particularly well structured to enable sharply focused teaching, pertinent to each group's needs and the school is very flexible about assigning children to the group that best meets their needs. Very able readers in Years 1 and 2, for example, are challenged and extended because they have their reading sessions with older children. The published scheme gives a firm structure as children are learning to read and weaker readers have daily opportunities to read to adults. Alongside the development of reading skills, the children are also getting to know about and enjoy books.

59. Seven-year-olds read familiar texts accurately and show they have understood the main points. They remember details about the plot and predict what might happen. The majority of eight and nine year-olds are beginning to read expressively, with fluency and understanding. The more able, older children are frequently avid readers, with a wide range of reading tastes ranging from children's classics such as 'Heidi' and 'Alice through the looking glass' to high quality modern fiction by writers such as Isabel Allende. They spontaneously make connections and comment on an author's style, as well as thoroughly enjoying the content. The children understand the way the library is organised and how to find the information they require. They scan and skim texts to locate information quickly.

Writing

60. The children achieve well in writing. Standards are average in Years 2 and 3 and above average in Years 4-6. The children generally write neatly and present their work well. Spelling and punctuation are usually accurate in accordance with the age of the children. They develop the ability to manipulate language and write successfully in different genres. Factors, which contribute to the good achievement in writing composition, are:
- There are well structured, clear and detailed planning arrangements.
 - Teachers model the process of writing well.
 - Work is challenging and interesting.
61. The school is continuing to target writing for improvement. Additional factors, which would contribute to this improvement, are:
- More focused marking so that children are quite clear about what they have to do to improve.
 - Involving children in the assessment of their work by providing criteria so that they can recognise success.

Teaching, learning and assessment

62. In the lessons seen, teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory. It was good overall. It is evident from lessons and from work last year that teaching is effective. There is an emphasis on helping children develop their literacy skills through purposeful and enjoyable activities and this helps them achieve well. Children have good attitudes to learning and they work productively both with an adult and independently. Skilled support from teaching assistants ensures all children are included in lessons. In lessons where the teaching was satisfactory it would have been stronger if the aim of the lesson had been made very clear to the children, children had been given clearer guidance on how to complete their task independently or activities for children with learning difficulties had been more closely matched to their needs.

63. Assessment systems in English have improved considerably since the last inspection. They are now good. Teachers carry out a regular writing assessment and analyse what each pupil has achieved and the progress made. They use their assessments to decide on individual targets for improvement. Some of the targets, however, are not well understood by the children, particularly for reading. Records are very detailed but rather cumbersome to maintain.
64. The quality, range and quantity of resources for teaching English are good overall. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection.
65. Leadership and management in English are good. The subject leader for English is newly in post and she is given good support by the headteacher to develop her role. She has already had an impact on the quality of planning, carried out analysis of recent tests and contributed towards the monitoring and evaluation of lessons, providing points for development for other staff.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. The very good speaking and listening skills shown in literacy work are supported and developed well across the whole curriculum, with well managed discussion, extended responses to questions and drama activities as the norm. Children use their reading and writing skills effectively to carry out research and record their findings in subjects such as history. There is scope to further link subjects together by building in more opportunities for children to apply their writing skills imaginatively in other subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The National Numeracy Strategy is implemented consistently in all classes.
- Children's achievement in Years 3 - 6 is very good because of the effective teaching.
- Homework is relevant and closely related to lessons.
- The school is flexible in the groupings for mathematics; thus the needs of most of the less able and more able children are met.

Commentary

67. In the Year 2 national tests in 2004, results were average. The results for Year 6 children were well above average. In neither age group was there any difference between the performance of boys and girls.
68. Most children start Year 1 with average levels of mathematical knowledge and understanding. They make steady progress through Years 1 and 2, achieve well and attain the level expected. From work seen at this stage in the year, it appears that progress in Year 2 will not be as rapid as in other classes in the school and that the children will have difficulty reaching the ambitious targets that have been set. This is due to the accommodation, which gives these children no sense of their own place. It is evident that the dynamic teaching in Years 3 - 6 has enabled children of all abilities to make very good progress and to achieve very well, resulting in the high standards by the time children leave the school.

69. Year 1 children can describe the properties of three-dimensional shapes using mathematical words including 'rectangular', 'faces', 'straight edges' and 'corners'. They engaged in lots of talking about the properties of cones as they made them using paper. Children in Years 3 and 4 have a consistent approach to estimating and then measuring length accurately and some are able to convert centimetres to metres. Years 5 and 6 children have a very good understanding of percentages and are able to make links with equivalent fractions and decimals, for example, 4 tenths = 0.4 = 40 per cent. It is clear that these children are used to explaining their thinking and are not afraid of being wrong. There are many examples in past work of children carrying out investigations and solving problems in mathematics and this is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Computers are used well to support learning in some mathematics lessons.
70. Teaching and learning are good. The quality of teaching ranged from satisfactory to excellent, with good teaching of mathematics observed in both infant and junior classes. Excellent teaching was seen with groups of Years 4, 5 and 6 children.
71. Where teaching and learning were at their best:
- Teachers and children talked about what they were going to learn in the lesson and assessed their progress during the lesson.
 - Teachers used questions skilfully to challenge and extend the children's thinking and understanding.
 - Good links were made to previous learning.
 - All children made progress because the different levels of activity were based on their prior learning.
 - Children's contributions were listened to, valued and built on by teachers and each other.
72. In some lessons where the teaching was satisfactory, children did not make as much progress as they could have because teachers did not give enough opportunities for children to explain their thinking or provide clear enough explanations so that all of them were absolutely sure about what to do.
73. Assessment in mathematics has improved considerably and arrangements are now satisfactory. The Year 2 tests and optional tests for children in Years 3, 4 and 5 are now being analysed in detail to identify group strengths and areas to improve. For example, teachers now understand that children in Years 1 and 2 need to make much greater use of number lines to help them calculate accurately. This is now a focus for improvement throughout the school. Since the last inspection, the school has set up a system to track children's standards and progress in mathematics. This is helping to raise awareness about areas where learning is not secure. However, this is not yet used to its fullest effect when setting children's targets. Teachers are very good at knowing where their children are in their learning, but written comments in their marking do not tell the children what they need to do to improve. In most classes, marking is cursory and is not useful to children.
74. Subject leadership in mathematics is good. It is one of the many responsibilities of the headteacher. She is an excellent teacher of mathematics herself and is a good exemplar for her colleagues. She has done the analysis work and now needs to involve all the teachers in drawing the conclusions, so that all staff understand the relevance of this important exercise. Monitoring and evaluation of lessons takes place and teachers have clear points for development.

Mathematics across the curriculum

75. Teachers plan for children to use mathematics as part of their work in other subjects. There are several examples of the effective use of charts and graphs in science. In literacy and design and technology, children use tables and data handling well as part of their work.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children achieve well because of the good teaching arrangements.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about teaching science and plan interesting activities which are relevant to everyday life.
- All children are supported well so that they can cope with the work.
- The science programme is thorough and clearly identifies how investigative skills will be taught.
- Marking does not show children how they can improve their work.

Commentary

76. Standards in science are high by the end of Year 6. In the most recent national tests in science all children reached the expected level and almost all achieved beyond it. This is far higher than in most schools and represents very high achievement, particularly as some of these children had learning difficulties. This achievement is reflected in the work seen in the one lesson observed and in children's written work. In each year group, children are making good progress in gaining scientific knowledge through well planned, enjoyable activities, such as studying the properties of magnets or classifying a wide variety of animals. Standards at the end of Year 2 in 2004 were broadly average in that virtually all children reached the level expected and a few achieved beyond it. The children in Year 2 are currently achieving well in science because of the challenge of the work they do with Years 3 and 4.
77. The effective learning is due to detailed planning and competent teaching. The science programme is thorough and clearly identifies how scientific skills will be taught. Plans are monitored to check that investigative work is given due attention. It is clear from plans and children's work that teachers are enthusiastic about science and are confident to teach the scientific content and skills the curriculum requires. They take care to plan interesting activities and relate them to everyday life, for example, by investigating how long it takes food to go mouldy. Teaching assistants are effective in helping children with special educational needs to understand and complete their work. Teachers ensure that the higher attaining children are given suitably challenging work. The lesson observed was a lively, practical session, where the teacher used her assessment well to group the children and provide suitable tasks for all. The children experimented enthusiastically with the magnets, worked well together and were very clear about what they were learning. Year 6 children benefit from additional focused teaching to ensure that they have consolidated the knowledge and skills required to attain well.
78. Science is well led and managed. The subject leader has led a number of improvements to the science curriculum since the last inspection.
79. Provision for the development of children's investigative skills has improved considerably since the last inspection. They are systematically acquiring scientific expertise in observing and recording, how to carry out fair tests and how to explain their results. By

- Year 6 they make sensible predictions, record a series of measurements and can manipulate variables in an experiment. There is some further scope for extending their skills in making decisions about how to record their work and using graphs to plot data.
80. Assessment in science is beginning to be used in planning work. The system for tracking attainment in science is detailed and yields useful information about progress in key skills and essential knowledge. However, marking in science is not yet used to make helpful suggestions for improvement.
81. Well-targeted purchase of equipment means that the science curriculum is now well resourced.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been a substantial improvement in resources, their organisation and the expertise and confidence of staff since the last inspection.
- The subject leadership of ICT is strong and is proving effective in improving standards.
- Children have very positive attitudes to ICT.
- ICT is used increasingly to support learning in other subjects.

Commentary

82. Raising standards was an issue at the time of the last inspection. Good progress has been made and now standards are in line to meet national expectations by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
83. The main reason why standards are rising is because the school's provision for ICT has greatly improved. Resources are now good. There is a computer suite with ten computers, plus one in each classroom. These are all networked and have Internet access. Children in the school use ICT, including the digital camera, effectively to enhance their learning. Teaching and learning are also good. All classes have dedicated time with their teachers and support staff in the ICT suite and are taught the skills of the subject well. They are given time and opportunity to practise these skills and to use them across other subjects.
84. Children throughout the school are achieving well and doing work at the level expected for their age. Children in Years 1 and 2 use computers confidently and purposefully. They know how to save and retrieve their work and control the mouse accurately to move the cursor on the screen. They can use different applications, such as a drawing program to create monsters. They can change the positions of objects, such as trees or houses in a landscape on the screen. Whilst visiting a wildlife park, children took digital photographs of birds and animals to classify as part of science work. At school, with support, they were able to import the photographs onto the screen and write some words in text to go with their picture. Children in Years 3 and 4 know how to format text, changing its size and colour. They can demonstrate how the use of ICT can enhance the presentation of their work, for example, by designing the advertising on their packaging for breakfast cereals as part of a design and technology project. Years 5 and 6 children are able to present data in a variety of charts and graphs and interpret findings as part of their

mathematics work. They import images from a digital camera and modify them to give the effect they require.

85. Computers are used well to support children with special educational needs. For example, in a literacy lesson focusing on punctuation, for children who find writing difficult, sentences were put onto the computer and the children were quickly able to add correct punctuation marks, making best use of learning time.
86. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader is enthusiastic and has a good understanding of what needs to be done to develop this area and to raise standards further. She has designed a skill-based tracking system for all children, which is starting this academic year. A challenging and effective scheme of work supports all staff well. There is a well defined action plan, which sets out the steps by which further improvements will be achieved. This is linked to the school development plan where funds have been identified to support the initiative. A governor with interest and expertise in ICT gives valuable support to the subject leader. There is a clear commitment on the part of the subject leader, headteacher and governors to further improvement in ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

87. Children enjoy using ICT across the curriculum and often become deeply engrossed in what they are doing. As well as in science and design and technology, they also use computers to enhance their work in art and design and history. Children in all classes talk knowledgeably about their intentions, share their skills and help one another when problems arise. The sense of excitement and pride in personal achievement is high.

HUMANITIES

88. In humanities, the work sampled in **history** and **geography** included two lessons in history and none in geography. It was, therefore, not possible to form an overall judgement about provision in these subjects. Inspectors looked at a sample of children's work in history but there was little work available in geography as almost all children are studying history at this time of the year.
89. In both subjects, teachers bring the work to life by making use of experts and by arranging relevant visits out of school. For example, children in Years 2, 3 and 4 dressed in Viking costume, were hosts to a 'Viking couple' who had brought a veritable treasure trove of artefacts for the children to handle and who were able to answer the children's enthusiastic barrage of questions about Viking life. The impact of this was apparent when they used their knowledge to add detail to their work about Viking raids on Lindisfarne. Similarly, children in Years 5 and 6 had recently thoroughly enjoyed a visit to the Anglo-Saxon village at West Stowe and were able to appreciate how difficult it is to be certain about what happened in the past.
90. There are, likewise, many opportunities for children to learn how to be geographers through practical activities in the field, for example, by visiting local gravel pits to explore environmental change, or by comparing parking issues in the village and a nearby town. The school makes good use of the local area and, through the community 'Eco Project', is encouraging children to take on some responsibility for the quality of their environment.
91. Teachers make good links with other areas of the curriculum, for example, by children using pencil skills to produce some carefully detailed drawings of Viking ship prows or by using ICT skills to integrate pictures and text in work on the Tudors. Speaking and listening skills are well developed in history lessons with opportunities for drama and thoughtful responses to the

teacher's probing questions. Children communicate their historical and geographical understanding in a variety of ways, through charts, diagrams and descriptions. They take care to present their work neatly. There is, at times, however, a heavy reliance on photocopied worksheets, particularly in geography, which limits opportunities for children to select their own methods of recording and to apply their writing skills imaginatively.

92. The range of resources has improved since the last inspection in that there are now adequate supplies of books, maps and artefacts for teachers to use in their lessons. The school makes good use of national schemes of work, which are adapted to meet the needs of the children and locality of the school. At present, however, the requirements for the range of history topics to be taught is not fully met in Years 3 - 6.
93. Teachers have a broad view of how well the children have achieved in history and geography and often involve the children in assessment by asking them to reflect on their learning at the end of a topic. However, the current systems are not useful for improving learning or planning and development of the subjects.
94. Subject leaders support colleagues well with their subject knowledge and suggestions about using resources.

Religious education

Provision in religious education (RE) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is well led and managed.
- Religious education and personal development are well linked.
- Resources are easily accessible, well organised and of good quality.

Commentary

95. From looking at work and classroom displays and discussion with children, it is clear that children make good progress. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 children reach standards that meet those specified by the locally agreed syllabus for RE.
96. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned from a comprehensive local authority scheme of work that the subject leader has adapted to meet the needs of all the children at Great Gidding School. Teachers are successful at finding starting points for the teaching of RE so as to make the subject meaningful to the children. They recognise the importance of understanding other beliefs and customs in order to promote tolerance and they emphasise this to the children. Lessons sometimes take place in the church and teachers use this as a readily available resource. The vicar is a regular visitor to the school and she makes a valuable contribution to the RE curriculum. Children enjoy their learning and are keen to ask questions.
97. Children in Years 1 and 2 learn about family celebrations that they might have experienced, such as christenings and birthdays, as part of their study of Christianity. They begin to understand what it means to belong to a church community and they are introduced to a simple understanding of other major world religions. Older children consider human qualities such as courage and commitment when talking about the lives of Martin Luther King and Anne Frank and explain their views well. Throughout the school, children are given experiences that allow them to gain some understanding of the beliefs

and customs of other world faith communities. Talking with a Hindu visitor and handling clothes and artefacts is a good example of enrichment for the RE curriculum that this school engages in and values.

98. RE is well led and managed. The subject leader is enthusiastic, has a good understanding of the curriculum and supports her colleagues well. An improvement since the last inspection has been the school's investment in a range of artefacts from world faiths other than Christianity. These are very well organised and planned into the scheme of work by the subject leader and, as a result, are used well throughout the school to support teaching and learning.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

99. One lesson was seen in **music**, one in **physical education** and none in **art and design** or **design and technology**. It is not therefore possible to make judgements about overall provision. Based on the evidence from work in books and folders, work on display, from talking with children and subject leaders, as well as from teachers' plans, it is clear that children enjoy these subjects and that the school provides worthwhile opportunities for learning.
100. The arrangements for teaching **design and technology** are good because enough time is given to projects so that they include all aspects of the subject, including children evaluating the products they make. As a result, the children produce finished work of good quality. The school has benefited from the support and guidance of a specialist design and technology teacher at the community college who has spent time in school working with staff and children. Resources are plentiful; this is an improvement since the last inspection.
101. In **music**, teachers are supported by a good scheme of work, which builds skills year on year in all aspects of music. Children enjoy making and listening to music and reach standards above those expected for their age in aspects seen. In assembly all children join in the singing willingly, in time and in tune. All children in Years 3 - 6 are given the opportunity to learn to play the recorder. Children use a good range of tuned and untuned instruments to play and create music. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
102. The **physical education** curriculum offers a broad range of activities for each year group. All children take part in gymnastics, swimming, games, athletics and dance. After school clubs for gymnastics, cricket and football further develop children's skills and extend opportunities to take part in sport. The lesson seen was very well planned and delivered. Children made evident progress in designing sequences to show a flow of curling and stretching movements. They followed instructions, worked impressively in pairs without any fuss and offered specific comments to praise and suggest improvement to other pairs.
103. It is evident from work around the school and discussion with children that they enjoy **art and design**. They work confidently with a variety of materials and make good use of the recently introduced sketchbooks. The children talk knowledgeably about their work, some of the difficulties they have encountered and how they overcame them. Under the skilled guidance of the subject leader, teachers are systematically developing the children's skills in drawing and painting and giving them opportunities to apply the skills in other contexts. Teachers are beginning to make good use of ICT in art and design and this practice is becoming increasingly widespread as teachers develop confidence with the

new computers. The subject leader has a clear view of further improvements she wants to make.

104. There are structured schemes of work that support the teaching of a progression of skills through the school in music, art and design, design and technology and physical education. These meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and set out what needs to be taught each term. Teachers find the frameworks helpful when planning lessons and report that they have gained confidence since their introduction.
105. Subject leaders are gaining confidence in leading their subjects and are starting to implement monitoring and evaluation of their curriculum areas by planning to observe lessons and checking plans. They support colleagues well with their subject knowledge and suggestions about using resources.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

106. Only one lesson in this area of the school's work was seen so no judgements are made about overall provision.
107. The school sees children's personal development as an important part of its work. The staff, through example, encourage the children to recognise one another's strengths and unique characteristics.
108. There is a good programme of activities that cover work on diet, health, sex, drugs and personal safety. These are taught through discrete lessons as well as through many other school activities. This programme helps children to know about safe and healthy life styles, to gain confidence and interact with others. It is well supported by visits from outside agencies and visits out of school. Through 'circle time' and the school council, children are being given a voice in the development of the school and a good sense of citizenship. As a result, children now have a very good understanding of the responsibilities of living in a community and show very good respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Bullying very rarely occurs and the children behave very well.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	3
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).