

INSPECTION REPORT

LIGHTWOODS JUNIOR AND INFANT SCHOOL

Oldbury, West Midlands

LEA area: Sandwell

Unique reference number: 103947

Headteacher: Mrs Elaine Bowen

Lead inspector: Mrs Barbara E Doughty

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th January 2005

Inspection number: 267207

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Lightwoods Junior and Infant School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	213
School address:	Castle Road East Oldbury West Midlands
Postcode:	B68 9BG
Telephone number:	0121 4292542
Fax number:	0121 4292542
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Dave Baldwin
Date of previous inspection:	26 th April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is an average size primary school with 213 full-time pupils. About three quarters of the pupils are from white British families and the remainder are from Asian or Black Caribbean backgrounds. Less than one per cent of the pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. The socio-economic backgrounds of the pupils are above average and there is a low take-up of free school meals – about four per cent. Pupils’ attainment on entry is better than in most other schools and there are just seven per cent with special educational needs, less than the national average; none has a statement of specific need. The school has gained several awards including Healthy Schools, Investor in People, a School Achievement Award, and for developing international policy and activities, a National Training Award, and a Basic Skills Quality Mark. It provides community use of its sports hall and before- and after-school care. It is also involved with the Creative Partnership and European Partnership projects. The school has had some extensive building work carried out over the last term, which is almost complete, giving them new offices, a new entrance hall, a large multi-functional sports hall, and additional meeting/teaching rooms.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22261	Mrs Barbara E Doughty	Lead inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language Science
14141	Mr Ernie Marshall	Lay inspector	
20010	Mr John Sangster	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology History Geography Religious education
30651	Mrs Margaret Entwistle	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage curriculum English Art and design Design technology Music Physical education

The inspection contractor was:

peakschoolhaus Ltd
BPS Business Centre
Brake Lane
Boughton
Nr Newark
Nottinghamshire
NG22 9HQ

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school with some outstanding features. It gives good value for money. Pupils achieve well and standards are high across a broad and exciting curriculum. Teaching and learning are good and leadership and management are very good. Pupils relate extremely well to each other and are keen to learn, and their behaviour is exemplary. The school is well liked and held in high esteem by pupils and parents.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well over time to reach well above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is very good.
- The school is highly inclusive and very successful in integrating everyone into its work.
- The curriculum is exciting and imaginative.
- Pupils' personal development is very good; behaviour is excellent and pupils have very positive attitudes to learning.
- The head teacher, senior managers and governors know the school well; they are focused on improvement and successful in their pursuit of high standards.
- Teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4 are not as effective as they could be.
- The accommodation for children in the Reception Year is inadequate.

The school has improved well since its last inspection. There has been a firm upward trend in performance and standards have risen faster than nationally. All but one of the key issues have been dealt with. The provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved, and there have been considerable developments to the curriculum. Changes to staffing have slowed the pace of change but, nevertheless, teaching has improved in much of the school. However, the inadequacy of a suitable area to promote outdoor learning for the Reception class children remains an issue.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	A*	A	A	B
Mathematics	A	A	B	C
Science	A*	A*	A	A

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.*

Achievement is good. Pupils do well in comparison with similar schools. Good progress from when they join the school leads to well above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave at the age of eleven. Standards in art and design and information and communication technology (ICT) exceed national expectations. Good gains are made in the Reception Year and children do well to exceed the goals they are expected to reach by the time they start in Year 1. They achieve very well in personal, social and emotional development, but their learning is slowed in some areas by the inadequate outdoor learning area. Pupils make further gains throughout Years 1 and 2 and by the end of Year 2, achieve well to reach standards that are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics and above average in science. Although progress slows to a satisfactory pace in Years 3 and 4, pupils go on to achieve very well in Years 5 and 6 and the gaps in their

learning that appear during Year 3 disappear by the end of Year 6. Pupils of different ethnic origins do as well as each other and because of early identification and effective intervention those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language often reach or exceed the nationally expected level. **Pupils' personal qualities are very good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.** Pupils have very positive attitudes towards school, reflected in the very good attendance rate and pupils' punctual arrival at school. Their behaviour is excellent.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils learn particularly well in Years 5 and 6 where they are taught within an atmosphere of high expectation. Here, inspirational, imaginative, and constantly changing teaching styles generate a high level of interest from the pupils, who are keen to do well because they understand what they are doing and need to learn next. In the Reception class learning is good because it is based on observation and exploration. Throughout the school adults relate very well to pupils in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect; pupils are productive and work hard because of this. Work is marked regularly and pupils are aware of the overall quality of what they have done. Teachers' comments do not always tell pupils what they can do to improve their work, although most staff understand what pupils need to learn next and most use this information effectively to plan the next steps. However, in Years 3 and 4 many pupils are capable of learning more. The school's curriculum is very good; learning opportunities are wide and varied and very good use is made of visits and visitors. Care, guidance and support are very good, as is the school's partnership with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. Leadership, management and governance are all very good and the governing body fulfils its statutory duties very well. This is because the head teacher, senior managers and governing body know the school well through their effective monitoring systems and procedures. They have a shared sense of purpose and a clear vision for the future, reflected in an effective and manageable school improvement plan. In their pursuit of high standards, the head teacher and senior management team face issues head on; they identify weaknesses, pursue them rigorously and usually tackle them successfully; for example, additional support is being provided in Years 3 and 4 to improve teaching. The leadership of the curriculum is innovative and through the school's work with national projects such as the Creative and European Partnership schemes, staff have widened the pupils' learning opportunities and secured additional funding to provide improved accommodation and more and better resources.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are very happy with the school. Pupils enjoy the harmonious relationships they have with staff and their schoolmates and know that there is someone they can go to if worried about anything. Parents appreciate in particular the friendliness and approachability of the staff.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4.
- Improve the accommodation for children in the Reception class.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Achievement is good and standards are well above the national average. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve very well and those in the Reception Year and Years 1 and 2 do well; pupils in Years 3 and 4 achieve satisfactorily.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well over time to reach well above average standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Rapid progress takes place in Years 5 and 6, but it slows to satisfactory in Years 3 and 4.
- Standards in art and design and ICT exceed national expectations.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language achieve well because of early identification and effective intervention.

Commentary

1. Standards have risen faster over time than they have in most other schools and pupils achieve well to increase their standards from above average on entry to the Reception class to well above average in English and mathematics by the end of Years 2 and 6 and to above average in science by the end of Year 2 and well above by the end of Year 6.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.7 (18.1)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	16.2 (16.9)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	17.7 (17.9)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 30 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.3 (28.6)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	28.6 (28.5)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	31.2 (32.1)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 34 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Children in the Reception Year achieve well in all areas of learning; a high percentage of them exceed the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Reception Year. Whilst they start in the class with standards that are better than those typically found in most other schools, they broaden their skills, knowledge and understanding and make good gains in all areas of learning. They make particularly good progress in their personal, social and emotional development to reach well above average standards in this area of learning. By the end of the Reception Year most of the children are confident speakers with good reading skills. They can recognise a range of words on sight, know the sounds of most letters and use this knowledge to read unknown

words and spell accurately. They write in well-constructed sentences and for different purposes. They can add and subtract numbers up to 10 quickly and easily. Their personal and social skills are very well developed and they enter Year 1 as confident and secure learners with an enthusiasm for learning and a thirst for new knowledge.

3. Achievement is good in Years 1 and 2 and by the time the pupils are ready to start in Year 3, their standards are well above average in reading, writing, and mathematics and above average in science. Equally as well maintained in these years are pupils' very positive attitudes to learning. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have particularly good ability at reading and writing and their mathematical ability is well advanced. They do well in science because much of their work is based on learning through first hand experience, adding excitement and a sense of purpose to their work.
4. Achievement in Years 3 to 6, however, is variable. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall in Years 3 and 4 but slowed due to some weaknesses in teaching. In these two classes, some ground is lost, pupils do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable and standards are broadly as expected for pupils' ages. This is because teaching makes insufficient use of what pupils already know, understand and can do to tailor the work to meet the needs of individual pupils, which slows learning. Some of the most able pupils tread water, going over learning they have covered before, such as ideas about magnetism which have already been taught in Year 2, and some of the least able need adult help to complete the work. There is some inaccurate teaching in Year 4, such as the importance of making scientific tests fair in order to make the results valid. All of these weaknesses have been identified by the senior managers and strategies are being put in place to deal with them.
5. As the pupils move into Year 5, however, they start to achieve very well and by the end of Year 6, the gaps in their learning have been made up and pupils do very well to regain well above average standards by the time they are ready to leave the school. This is due to exceptionally good teaching in these two years, which stimulates in pupils the desire to learn and do well. By the end of Year 6 a considerable proportion of the pupils, and significantly more than in most other schools, reach the higher level. Most pupils are confident readers and understand the subtleties of text. They organise their writing well and use lively, interesting, and precise vocabulary to capture and retain the attention of the reader. They plan and carry out their scientific experiments well and observe what happens in detail before drawing valid conclusions. Their written work in all subjects is meticulous and shows pride and excellent attention to detail.
6. Standards in art and design and ICT exceed national expectations and meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus in religious education. By the time they leave the school most pupils have good ICT skills. They use computers to store and organise information in different ways, such as through word-processing, on spreadsheets and in graphs. They have created effective multimedia presentations, incorporating text, sound and graphics. Their artwork is good. They have a good understanding of the different styles of famous artists and use this knowledge well to influence their own artwork. In religious education, standards fully meet the requirements of the agreed syllabus. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of different religions and appreciation for the way in which people celebrate different world faiths in different ways.
7. Pupils of different abilities, ethnic origin and backgrounds achieve equally well because of the school's approach to and success in identifying early any pupils with either academic or social and emotional problems. Intervention is well planned and as a result pupils' difficulties are soon

overcome. This is one of the reasons why there are fewer pupils with special educational needs at this school than at most other schools.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance is very good, reflecting their enthusiasm for school and their very good attitudes towards work. Their behaviour is excellent, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils develop into mature, caring, sensitive, confident youngsters, with firm beliefs of their own whilst accepting of others.
- Pupils are very keen to come to school; they consistently behave very well and support each other intuitively.
- Years 5 and 6 pupils take particular pride in their work, modelled by their teachers.
- An atmosphere of mutual trust and respect permeates the school.
- The school's involvement in the Creative and European Partnership projects gives pupils the opportunity to work with others in this country and abroad.

Commentary

8. Pupils are imaginative and intuitive, and have a good grasp of their own feelings and beliefs, as well as those of others. They show their schoolmates and adults great respect – modelled very effectively by the staff in the caring and compassionate way in which they relate to each other and the pupils. Pupils of all ages appreciate that people believe different things and that they choose to follow different traditions. Older pupils act as ‘buddies’ to younger ones and in many lessons pupils spontaneously help each other with their work. Classrooms buzz with amiable conversation, with pupils chatting purposefully to each other about their work and personal lives. Humour shows through in the form of quips and asides, which classmates respond to with a smile or a humorous remark back, reflecting the excellent relationships they enjoy with one another.
9. Pupils work together very well, such as in science lessons when carrying out investigations or in mathematics when solving problems. Their behaviour is excellent and there have been no recorded exclusions. This is mainly because the school sets clear parameters for behaviour and exciting work stimulates in them a desire to learn. Through the sharing of learning objectives with the pupils, teachers enable pupils to see the point in working hard and urge them to strive for excellence. This is reflected in the pride pupils take in setting out their work – particularly in Years 5 and 6 where the teachers model excellent practice. Pupils of all ages take on additional responsibilities, such as setting the hall out ready for assembly. The older pupils undertake independent research – using the computers at lunchtime to gain access to information on the Internet.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	147	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	45	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	6	0	0

Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
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The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

10. Relationships are excellent. Racism is something that Year 6 pupils say does not exist in this school – and there is no evidence of harassment or bullying. This is because the school has high standards of conduct, which staff make known to the pupils and which pupils rise to extremely well. Pupils understand right from wrong and have a very good understanding of living in a community, mostly through their work in personal, social and health education and citizenship lessons and their involvement in the Creative and European Partnership projects. Their work with visiting artists and authors, their e-mail communications with pupils in schools overseas, and their presentations (such as the one on the work of the school council) to pupils in schools in this country, along with the residential visits for pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 help pupils of all ages to develop excellent social skills and to appreciate the joy of living in harmony with others.
11. Attendance is well above the national average. Pupils are very keen to come to school and they join in lessons enthusiastically. They talk positively about their learning experiences, such as when describing how they have carried out experiments in science and found things out on the Internet. Most pupils have a very good understanding about what they already know – particularly in Years 5 and 6 – and show a mature outlook by taking responsibility for their own success or failure to improve, by assessing their own learning.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.8	School data	0.0
National data	5.1	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 quality of education provided by the school is good overall with some very good features. Good teaching and learning are boosted by very good and sometimes excellent teaching in Years 5 and 6, but weakened by satisfactory and sometimes unsatisfactory teaching in Years 3 and 4. Although these weaknesses have been identified and are currently being tackled, they have yet to be eradicated, reducing the standard of education overall to good rather than very good. On a more positive note, the curriculum is extremely exciting and enhanced very effectively through the school’s involvement with national and international projects; in addition, the way in which the school cares for pupils is very good and its partnership with parents is very effective.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and often better. They are very good in Years 5 and 6, good in the Reception Year and Years 1 and 2, and satisfactory overall in Years 3 and 4. Assessment is good overall, mirroring the judgements on teaching and learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is inspirational and pupils’ learning is very good.
- Learning slows in Years 3 and 4 due to some teaching weaknesses.

- Clear explanations mean that pupils understand what to do and personal targets and clear learning objectives mean they know why they are doing it.
- Good use is made of the computer interactive whiteboards to aid teaching and learning.
- Effective relationships built on trust and respect mean that pupils work hard to please their teachers.
- There is some good promotion of subject vocabulary.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported well.
- Marking is mainly celebratory and does not tell pupils how to improve their work next time.

Commentary

12. Most pupils learn well and make good progress over time. They make the most progress in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is consistently good or very good, and the least progress in Years 3 and 4, where the teaching is barely satisfactory at times and where two unsatisfactory lessons were seen.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1	6	12	8	2	0	0

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

13. What works so well in Years 5 and 6 is the way in which the teaching inspires pupils to work hard and achieve high standards. Exciting learning opportunities motivate pupils and promote a desire to learn. Lively teaching enthuses pupils to learn and different styles of teaching, intended to capture and hold pupils' attention, do just that. Accurate teaching means that pupils learn correct information and acquire useful skills that enable them to learn independently – such as when carrying out personal research on computers at lunchtime or at home. Teachers tailor the work to meet the needs of the differently attaining pupils and this means that pupils learn at the most suitable pace for their capabilities. Those who do not grasp an idea the first time it is presented revisit it and those who show a firm understanding go quickly on to the next step.
14. This does not happen, however, in Years 3 and 4, where evidence from completed work and the school's assessment records show that pupils make slower progress than they should. This is because lessons sometimes move at a slow pace and expectations are too low because teaching does not take enough account of the fact that, because many of these pupils start in Year 3 with above average standards, more can be expected of them than could usually be expected of most pupils of this age. In addition, there is some inaccurate and disjointed teaching, which leads to pupils becoming confused about what they are supposed to be doing and what they are meant to achieve. Although pupils in both years behave extremely well and work hard at what they are given to do, their learning is slower than it either could or should be.
15. In most lessons in the Reception Year, Years 1 to 2, and Years 5 to 6, sharp explanations from teachers mean that pupils know what to do and how to do it. Most importantly, they know why they are doing it because the teachers tell them what they should be able to do by the end of the lesson. This and the personal targets written in the front of their workbooks – particularly successful in Years 5 and 6 because they are reviewed regularly and rewritten – mean that pupils understand what they have already achieved and what they need to work on next. Disappointingly, however, the teachers' comments in the pupils' workbooks do not do enough to support the pupils in their self-review. These tend to congratulate pupils on a job well done, but do not give pointers for improvement. On the rare occasion that they highlight something that needs attention, such as "Try to be neater", pupils do not respond and little, if any, improvement is made.
16. Teaching throughout the school makes good use of the computer-linked interactive whiteboards. Lessons are usually well prepared, with computers programmed in advance. Pupils are fascinated by the whiteboards and, because they and the teachers can also write on the boards, teaching is slicker and learning is enhanced. Particular good use of the interactive whiteboard was seen in a Year 5 science lesson, for example, when the teacher used it to show diagrams and video clips, and give pupils instructions for their investigation.

17. Relationships in all classes are excellent. Teachers and pupils show respect for each other because of the secure friendships that have been established even at this early stage in the school year. Teachers clearly value what pupils have to say, reflected in pupils' comments such as, "They make us feel good" and "I am proud of myself". Subject language is promoted well by teachers and because of this pupils talk with increasing precision about the work they are doing and have done. For example, in a Year 2 ICT lesson, the teacher encouraged pupils to be 'selective' in which tools they use and reminded them that they can only 'undo' their last movement. In science, teachers constantly ask pupils to "use a scientific word please", which encourages them to be more accurate in their descriptions and explanations.
18. There are few pupils at this school with special educational needs. This is partly due to the way in which the school identifies early those pupils with potential problems, supports and monitors them, and deals successfully with their difficulties so that their needs are fully met without additional support. It is also due to effective teaching of those pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language. These pupils are supported mostly by the learning support practitioners, who help them to overcome their difficulties by working with them either in class or in one-to-one sessions outside the classroom. Very good regard is taken of what these pupils need to learn next and care is taken to build their learning step by step so that they understand fully what they are doing.

The curriculum

The school provides a very good range of worthwhile curricular opportunities that caters for the interests, aptitudes and, in most classes, the individual needs of pupils of all abilities, and ensures that their learning is built systematically over time. There are very good opportunities for enrichment including a wide range of after-school and lunchtime clubs, visits and visitors. Accommodation and learning resources are good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good range of extra-curricular experiences awakens new interests and enthusiasms and increases motivation for the more formal statutory curriculum.
- Leadership of the curriculum is very good, so that it adapts very well to meet national and local expectations and also pupil needs.
- Successful bids for funding have resulted in much improved accommodation, and a greatly enriched curriculum. However, the Foundation Stage curriculum is weakened by the lack of a secure, well-surfaced and readily accessible outdoor learning area.
- The curriculum is planned so that pupils see the links between subjects and apply their skills and what they know in a good range of contexts.
- There is a very good and successfully taught personal, social, health and citizenship education programme.

Commentary

19. The curriculum has been developed and significantly improved since the last inspection. The head teacher is vigilant in noting and responding to national and local initiatives and bids, and continues to be most resourceful in seeking funding for the school from external grants and bodies. This has enabled her to keep the building as well suited as possible to changing curriculum needs. Building improvements since the last inspection have made possible the creation of a centrally situated library/work base, an early years' 'practical room', and an ICT suite. A new sports hall and administrative suite have released space in the rest of the school;

the sports hall is already improving the physical skills' curriculum. As yet, the head teacher has not been able to secure funding for improving the outside space for children in the Reception class, so that the Foundation Stage curriculum is not as effective as it should be.

20. The school is particularly successful in providing an extensive range of out-of-school clubs and activities and in the use it makes of visitors to the school and of outside visits. There is a very good range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, some of which result from the school's partnership with the local secondary school. There are annual residential visits for pupils from Years 2 to 6. Participation in projects such as the Creative and European Partnership projects mean that visitors to the school share their expertise with the children and their teachers. These enrich the curriculum in a host of ways, not least in fostering motivation for learning and awakening new and potentially life-long interests. "I hope to be a nature photographer myself," wrote one child when asked to evaluate a photography project, which was part of the Creative Partnership initiative. This project has had a very positive impact, bringing a creative dimension to several of the school's units of work. It has also had a very beneficial effect upon pupils' story-telling and writing abilities and upon standards in art and design. Moreover, it has given exciting opportunities for personal, social and community development as pupils have travelled to different venues to explain to others about their successes.
21. The school has made important changes to its planning systems in order to make links between subjects and, in the words of the head teacher, "to create a more joined-up curriculum". Teachers now plan units of work that tie together a cluster of subjects. There is, for instance, a Year 5 unit on 'The Victorians' that involves a scientific enquiry into how the Victorians viewed the solar system, and requires ICT to be applied in Internet searches. This gives the pupils the chance to apply what they have learned in one set of lessons in a meaningful context.
22. The new initiatives are due to be evaluated by the senior management team this year. The very active Creative Partnership co-ordinator and the literacy co-ordinator already have a body of evaluative evidence to show a very positive impact upon standards in literacy of the current Year 6 as a result of the partnership work in Year 5.
23. There is a very good programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education which prepares pupils well for their adulthood and gives them a good understanding of citizenship and the skills needed to live harmoniously with others. There is good attention to sex and relationships education and a strong emphasis on teaching pupils about the dangers of alcohol and drug misuse. The school has gained the Healthy School gold award and is now going for the newly introduced platinum award.

Care, guidance and support

The school is very good at ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. It provides good support, advice and guidance for pupils, based on the monitoring of their academic achievements and personal development. It is very successful at seeking to involve pupils in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Through its thorough attention to health, safety and welfare issues the school ensures a very good level of pastoral care and support for pupils' learning.
- Excellent relationships promoted very successfully by the school give pupils the confidence that they can readily approach a member of staff when worried about anything.
- Regular canvassing of pupils' suggestions, views and concerns ensures they are given many opportunities to influence the nature of improvement to the facilities and school routines.

- Carefully planned induction into the Reception class helps children to make good early progress.

Commentary

24. This is a very caring school where all pupils are valued and where the staff and governing body work very well together to ensure pupils work and play safely in a secure and friendly environment. Through continuous observation and monitoring of pupils' academic and personal development, the school is able to provide good and relevant support and guidance as pupils enter and pass through the school. Pupils' views are regularly sought and acted upon to enable them to play an effective role in bringing about improvements to school routines.
25. The school has recently undergone a period of disruption due to structural alterations and building work. Staff and governors have worked closely together to ensure pupils have not been exposed to danger. Premises' inspections have been frequent and the school has maintained a very good standard of safety. All the usual health, safety and welfare measures, including child protection requirements, have been carried out at the same time with no loss of attention to detail. Pupils are cared for very well and parents have expressed their appreciation for the amount of concern and effort put in by the staff to keep their children safe whether in school or off site.
26. Teachers know each pupil well and have a good awareness of their individual needs. The school places great emphasis on developing high standards of mutual respect between pupils and between pupils and staff. The outcome is shown by a clear willingness of staff to encourage pupils to bring any worries or concerns to their attention, safe in the knowledge that the staff will listen and help. The same support can be seen when older pupils befriend and take care of the younger ones. Pupils with special educational needs are particularly well cared for and are supported and guided both by the staff and by visiting specialists.
27. Parents are aware, and accurate, when they say that the school provides more than an academic education. Pupils are also taught personal and social skills to enable them to prepare for the responsibilities of adulthood. They are given the opportunity to discuss and agree class rules. They are encouraged to bring forward their own suggestions for ways in which the school can improve for the benefit of others. A 'sharing box' is provided for written ideas or concerns to be deposited. The head teacher uses assembly times to remind all pupils when the improvements are about to start and that all suggestions about how to proceed will be welcomed. The most effective means of pupil participation centres on the work of the school council. Pupils' views are obtained by the councillors and brought to the head teacher for discussion and resolution. Pupils have been involved in the design of the new glass window in the library and of the new sports hall, the introduction of the healthy eating initiative, and the provision of more and better playground equipment.
28. The school has implemented good procedures for the induction of new children into the Reception class. All parents are invited to meet the staff and inspect the facilities. They are invited to school and given detailed information on what is taught and how they can help, whilst the children enjoy the activities provided. Any parents unable to attend are sent a comprehensive information pack. Home visits by the Reception class staff follow and an early assessment of children's abilities and needs is prepared. Pupils wishing to come to this school are invited into school part time to meet their classmates, prior to attending full time. This helps them to settle in quickly and without fuss and worry; they quickly develop the trust in the staff that enables them to make good early progress.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are very good. The school has established good links with the community and uses these well to enhance the curriculum. There are extensive links with other schools, colleges and universities, which are used very well to improve the quality of education provided for the pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong support from parents encourages the school to continue to drive up standards.
- Regular information on pupils' progress and consultation over curriculum changes give parents confidence in the school's determination to fully consider their views and allay their concerns.
- Very effective links with other schools and colleges provide a wide range of opportunities for both staff development and additional learning experiences for pupils.
- Links with the community are effective in providing pupils with additional support and opportunities for learning.

Commentary

29. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress and are actively encouraged to support their learning. The school welcomes parents' support and active interest in improving the quality of their children's education. To ensure parents are kept well informed, consultation evenings are provided each term and additional meetings held for parents of those pupils preparing for the national tests. Pupils' individual targets are discussed and set down in a booklet for parents. Reading diaries are well used for home-school communication. The school consults parents on specific matters such as recent changes to the curriculum and transition work between the Reception and Year 1 classes. Details of curriculum and topic work are sent home each term to enable parents to plan how to help their children. The school provides or arranges family learning and other adult education courses to enable parents to develop their own skills and ability to support their children's work at home. Parents help the school by working in classrooms and supporting the efforts of the parent-teacher group. Parents say that the school responds well to any concerns and they feel very comfortable about approaching staff. Working parents particularly appreciate the school's help in providing the breakfast and after-school clubs and comment favourably on the good use of time to develop learning.
30. The school has unusually strong and very successful links with other schools in the area, in other parts of the country and also in Europe. These links provide good opportunities for staff development through sharing best practice and joint training. The senior managers of three local primary schools meet regularly to develop expertise on curriculum analysis, pupil tracking and target setting. Teaching assistants from all three schools meet to develop improvements in assessing and recording pupils' progress. Pupils also meet to share knowledge on how their school councils can be more effective and how they could extend their healthy eating projects. A partner school with sports college status is jointly developing the new sports hall use. Links with three European schools are used to enhance pupils' wider cultural awareness; a group of Year 6 pupils will visit Germany later this year. Links with the local secondary schools are used well to provide out-of-hours extension work in computer use and art, and to help to promote the smooth transfer from Year 6 to Year 7.
31. Links with local colleges are used to provide adult education courses for parents, as well as providing training for the teaching assistants and childcare students. The school provides placements for work experience and some 12 trainees come into school each year. The school works with a local college and universities to provide placements from training teachers. The additional adult support in school is well used to enhance pupils' learning.
32. The school is active in the community and uses its membership of the Creative Partnership project to secure visiting tutors for art. Other specialist groups come into school for music and drama events. Sports coaching, road safety and personal safety instruction are provided through the school's community partners. Visitors to school include people from different religions and cultures and a local resident who has given pupils instruction in digital photography. Whilst it makes insufficient use of different faith centres, the school enjoys links with local churches, residential homes for the elderly and a hospice. Local residents have been interviewed by pupils to provide information about the school in earlier times and pupils have used these clips to compile a DVD on the topic. Other off-site visits are well planned to illustrate the curriculum and to provide greater stimulus to learning. The school is seeking to extend community use of its facilities and the new sports hall is already used for adult aerobics courses.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good overall. The head teacher and other key staff provide very good leadership; management and governance are both very good and the governing body fulfils its statutory duties very effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head teacher has a very clear vision for the school, which includes the pursuit of high standards.
- She is supported very well by other key management staff.
- Governors are fully involved in the work of the school and make a major contribution to its leadership.
- Strategic planning is very good.
- The school manages its finances very well.

Commentary

33. The head teacher leads and manages the school very well and has the full confidence of all staff, the parents, and the governing body. She has a clear vision for the school's development and a desire for all pupils to achieve the highest standards of which they are capable, which she communicates very well to staff and parents. She has created an effective senior management team, who are extremely knowledgeable about leadership and management principles and techniques and who are capable of moving their subjects and curriculum aspects on.
34. The head teacher is supported well by the deputy head teacher, who performs a wide range of administrative tasks. The other senior managers and the co-ordinators for the key areas of English, mathematics, ICT, and the Foundation Stage provide very good leadership, monitoring and analysing what is happening and taking effective action when weaknesses are detected, for example the relatively low number of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in mathematics in 2003 and 2004 and some weaknesses in teaching in Years 3 and 4. The key issue from the last report, that some major initiatives had not been systematically monitored and evaluated, has been addressed and fully resolved, as have the weaknesses in the management of special educational needs identified in the last report – which is now a strength of the school.
35. The governors have a very good understanding of the school because of their very close involvement in it. They spend a lot of time in school, watching lessons, talking to pupils and staff and generally finding out what is going on. Responsibilities are shared according to governors' individual interests and expertise. The governing body meets all its legal responsibilities very effectively. The premises manager works closely with governors in ensuring that health and safety requirements are met. The governors are also involved closely in monitoring progress on the school improvement plan and finance.
36. The management of the school is very good. The school has good systems in place to evaluate its own performance. It analyses data well and takes effective action on the outcomes, for instance in the development of pupils' writing. The school improvement plan is a very effective document which sets out very clearly the priorities for development and responsibilities for different aspects of the plan. It is also closely linked to the school's budget and expenditure. There are very good induction procedures and professional development opportunities; the head teacher and other senior staff support new teachers effectively and tackle weaknesses head on.
37. The financial management of the school is very good. The head teacher is extremely creative in seeking outside financial support and she and the governors have secured a lot of additional funding through different partnerships and projects. Between them, they also ensure that the school gets best value for its expenditure. Governors show a good awareness of the need to monitor the effect of decisions about spending, for example in the purchase of ICT equipment. Their links with subject co-ordinators gives them an insight into what is going on in school, the

knowledge to spot where there are weaknesses, and the opportunity to keep a keen eye on developments.

38. Although the figures below show a larger than usual amount carried forward to the next financial year, this is principally because it includes some of the finances for the building developments being carried out, but not yet paid for. Forward plans show this amount being rapidly reduced to a more realistic and acceptable figure.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	731607
Total expenditure	710648
Expenditure per pupil	3336

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	22061
Balance carried forward to the next year	43020

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

39. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good with some very good features. Although there is no Nursery class, children achieve well in all areas of learning from the start of the Reception class to the end. This is because the Reception class teacher has put in place a very good Foundation Stage curriculum, representing good improvement since the last inspection. Good, and sometimes very good, lively teaching makes for very attentive, eager learners and the children's behaviour and attitudes to learning are of the highest order. Very good assessments of what children know and need to learn next are used well to plan sessions, although some over-direction from teachers and learning support practitioners sometimes caps the level of challenge, particularly for the most able children
40. Most children come into school with slightly above average skills in all areas of learning. Because the team create a secure, bright and caring environment, the children settle well, and are confident and happy. Parents appreciate the care their children receive, and the way the adults know the children and their families so well.
41. The learning support practitioners and students make a very good contribution to the teaching. This is partly because the teacher produces very detailed activity plans to guide their questioning, but also because the learning support practitioners are skilled themselves. The class teacher is an excellent role model for the support team, and relationships are very good. The children benefit from the harmonious team ethos in the classroom.
42. Leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator leads the team of learning support practitioners and students very well. Consequently, all have a very good understanding about how young children learn through observation and exploration and give the children relevant and meaningful experiences. They continuously strive to improve what is on offer and have very high aspirations for what can be achieved.
43. However, the accommodation is a significant barrier to further improvement. There are three separate learning areas, all of which are significantly far apart, making movement between them and supervision in them difficult. Despite the school's efforts, the outdoor curriculum is weakened by the lack of a secure, accessible, properly resourced outdoor learning area. The children have to go down steps to the outside door, so that they cannot move independently between indoors and outdoors. The teacher and learning support practitioners are imaginative in providing a good range of experiences in the outdoors on a daily basis if possible. The play items are very well chosen and stored, but in winter, the grassed area inevitably becomes more bumpy and damp, and the over-large playground makes it hard for the adults to supervise the children. Children have to go down steps to the toilet and although the adults monitor this vigilantly, it limits children's independence and takes up teacher time. The second classroom is effectively used, for example for small group work and imaginative play, but this room is along the corridor and round the corner, resulting in splitting the class and the staff. The head teacher has drawn up very good plans for making the two classrooms into one with a dedicated canopied area directly off it, and with grassed areas and a sensory garden designed to enhance the children's learning. One bid for funding has been turned down but the school is now looking to other means of funding the project.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in this area is very good and is threaded through all the experiences of the day.
- The children form very good relationships with adults and with each other.
- Behaviour is very good indeed, verging on excellent.

Commentary

44. Children achieve very well to exceed the early learning goals in this area; they do considerably better in reading than children in most other schools. This is because the teacher sets clear boundaries and insists that these are kept to. As a result, the children are interested, enquiring learners, who get on together beautifully in the classroom setting. The teacher takes a real interest in the children's families, and uses references to family life sensitively to boost self-awareness and self-esteem. The children have learned to tidy up efficiently, and take care of their belongings; for instance, they fold their clothes neatly after changing for physical education. They move about the school very well, making the long journey from the classroom to the sports hall perfectly. At no time during the observations were children seen to be rough or unkind to each other, and they always worked harmoniously as part of a group. For instance, a group of children played in the 'hospital' set up to attend to Jack and Jill's injuries without a single squabble or cross word. When they choose apparatus for outside play, they are again courteous to each other and take good responsibility for moving the crates, setting them down and collecting equipment. Very good behaviour is reinforced at every turn.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching builds well upon the skills that the children bring with them to school.
- All of the children achieve well in the early stages of reading and writing, and some achieve very well.
- The children have a good vocabulary and learn to speak clearly and with confidence.
- The direct teaching of phonics, letter formation and sentence construction is very good.
- The teacher plans opportunities for reading and writing as part of learning across the curriculum but they are not promoted as vigorously as they might be.

Commentary

45. The majority of children achieve well and the number of children exceeding goals they are expected to reach in this area by the end of the Reception class and working within Level 1 of National Curriculum is higher than in most other schools. This is mainly due to effective teaching in this area of learning. The teacher is very skilful in leading 'share and tell' sessions, questioning and prompting so that the children extend what they have to say – for instance, into the 'pretend' microphone. She helps the listening children to ask relevant questions, which they do very well. The children know the rules of class discussion, and are very good at waiting their turn to speak, recognising natural lulls in the conversation and developing lines of questioning beyond their years.

46. Most children leave the Reception class well poised to succeed at the reading and writing challenges of the Year 1 curriculum. As a result of lively phonics teaching, well targeted at different levels of attainment, the children build up a firm understanding of the link between letters and sounds. They are already using this to spell words using initial and end sounds when they write. Scrutiny of their workbooks shows that last year's above average and average attaining children were working at the recommended Year 1 level of phonic progression, segmenting and spelling words that contain consonant clusters. The average children in the current year group can already match simple rhyming words such as 'bat – mat' or 'dog – frog'. The children read to an adult every day, talking excitedly about the story and using the pictures well as clues.
47. This year's class are achieving well in writing and are set to reach the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Reception Year. For instance, one group of children formed recognisable letters, and independently represented words with their initial and final sounds. The writing books from last year's class also show good achievement overall, and very good achievement for the highest attaining group. The teacher and learning support practitioners set out suitable opportunities for the children to write in other areas of learning. For instance, there is a 'writing box' for the children to choose in outdoor play. However, these activities are not vigorously promoted, so that children tend to rely upon the teacher to identify writing tasks, and do not practise independently as much as they might.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher's planning for mathematics sessions is very good, with different tasks set for different levels of ability.
- The teacher uses a good range of practical, first-hand experiences, so that the children develop sound mathematical understanding.

Commentary

48. An observation of part of a numeracy lesson, and an examination of the previous year's workbooks, show that children achieve well and reach good standards in their mathematical development. Most children are set to achieve the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Reception Year, and many are on course to exceed them. For this point in the year, a good proportion of children can distinguish between flat and solid shapes, and some can confidently name a cylinder, and sphere, as well as a circle, a rectangle and a square. The children are interested in number and shape work because the teacher has appealing ways of adding interest and variety to all parts of the lesson. There is a good investigative strand to the teaching and learning that sets a firm foundation for later 'investigations' in the National Curriculum.
49. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teacher and learning support practitioner reinforce number concepts as the children work at other activities, such as baking and counting. However, there is less opportunity for children to apply their number skills for themselves as they play, build or construct.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make very good progress in ICT.
- They handle tools, objects and construction materials safely and very responsibly.
- The lack of a secure, properly surfaced and resourced outdoor learning area limits several aspects of children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

Commentary

50. It was not possible to observe much direct teaching in knowledge and understanding of the world. However, it is clear from work on the walls, the teacher's planning, activities planned for the outdoor learning area, and teaching by the learning support practitioners that, because of good teaching and learning, children achieve well in this area of learning and a higher proportion than expected nationally usually exceed the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Reception Year. In part of a very good session using programmable toys, the learning support practitioner was very well briefed and ensured that the children learned well through the investigative approach intended by the class teacher. Through trying the toys out for themselves, the children learned how they worked, and discovered how to move them forward and to reverse, using the remote control. The children usually meet the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Reception Year in ICT, including computer work, and many often exceed them. The children cook regularly, developing their observation skills and learning how materials change. Displays on the walls and stored work show that the children have a good series of visits into the world outside school, and their knowledge of the local and more distant environment is boosted by family visits to places of interest or fun. Because of the need for adult supervision whenever children move from indoors to outside, they have limited opportunity to persevere with large-scale construction. The teacher and learning support practitioner have been very innovative in setting up a 'planting and digging' area, and the sensory garden that is part of the plans for the outside space is intended to improve provision and increase children's learning about plants and other living things.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teacher makes very good use of the new sports hall to develop the children's ability to move within a large space, and to control and co-ordinate these movements.
- The lack of a secure, properly surfaced and resourced outdoor learning area means that the children do not have enough regular access to climbing and balancing equipment.

Commentary

51. Despite shortcomings in the outdoor provision, children achieve well in this area of learning and their physical development is good. Most of them exceed the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Reception Year and are well on their way to achieving the first level of National Curriculum work. However, this judgement is based mainly on seeing children moving around the classroom, handling and working with small tools and equipment, and the observation of a session in the sports hall. Therefore, no judgement about the quality of teaching can be made. In the one lesson seen, children showed that they could use space well. They were good at responding to music with feeling, and could hold body shapes well. During vigorous play, they control push and pull wheeled vehicles well, but because of the lack of a secure and well-resourced outdoor learning area to which the children have regular daily access, there is limited opportunity for them to climb and use large physical education equipment.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in this area of learning and children achieve well.
- Imaginative play is well planned and, in painting, the teaching of colour form and texture is particularly good.
- Children have too few opportunities, however, to use the skills they have learnt to create things independently.

Commentary

52. Children achieve well in this area of learning and most achieve beyond the goals they are expected to by the end of the Reception Year and have started on Year 1 work. This is because of good teaching. The imaginative element is a particular strength. For example, children took on doctor and patient roles in the 'hospital' set up to tend to Jack and Jill, and persisted in role for a good amount of time. They designed and made a carrier for Jack and Jill, and evaluated its effectiveness. The direct teaching about colour, form and texture is good, because of the high quality of the teacher's questioning and her enthusiasm for the children's responses. However, most creative activities are strongly teacher-directed, and there are too few opportunities for skills to be tried independently by the children, once they have been learned alongside the teacher.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well to reach a very high standard in English as a whole, and test results are consistently well above those found in most schools.
- Pupils achieve well in speaking and listening and are very confident, articulate speakers for their age.
- Inspirational teaching in Years 5 and 6 leads to high achievement in these classes.
- Progress in Years 3 and 4 is slower than in other year groups.
- The development of literacy across the curriculum and through the Creative Partnership initiative is having a very good impact on standards in writing.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Boys do better in reading than in writing across the school, but the school is dealing with this well.
- The marking in some classes does not show the pupils how to improve.
- Pupils' use of ICT in literacy is variable across the school.

Commentary

53. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards in English are well above average. This is because almost all of the pupils reach at least the level expected nationally and the number of pupils that reach the higher level is greater than in most other schools. Set against the national upward trend, standards at this school have risen faster, representing good improvement since the last inspection. Almost half of the Year 6 pupils reached the higher level in 2004 and the current

Year 6 are on course to do even better than this. This is because they race ahead in Years 5 and 6, recovering well from the slower rate of progress in Years 3 and 4. However, boys do less well than girls in writing, particularly at the higher level, and in Year 2 writing standards lag behind those in reading. In 2004, a fifth of the Year 2 pupils – mostly boys – did not reach the nationally expected level, although the high scores of the more capable pupils kept the averages up. The school has been quick to spot this and take action so that already there is improvement.

54. Many children come into school with good communication skills, and the teachers build well on this. The very good relationship between teachers and pupils, and the regular opportunities that pupils have to express their ideas, result in confident, articulate pupils. Drama and story telling take place in literacy lessons to lead into writing, with good outcomes. For example, groups of Year 1 pupils presented their short plays of 'Little Red Riding Hood' to the rest of the class, speaking in role and timing their dialogue beautifully in order to entertain their audience! By Years 5 and 6, pupils are confident to present their work orally to adults and children in a range of settings in and outside the school.
55. The standard of reading is well above average. This is because phonics are taught well in the early stages of learning to read, and the school works hard to promote reading amongst the older pupils. Parents also give good support through the home-school reading scheme. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from effective one-to-one teaching by the special needs learning support practitioner and they are very well included in lessons. In Year 6, the highest and lowest attaining pupils are taught in one set most effectively, because of the skilfully managed support for both groups. By Year 6, pupils are sophisticated, enthusiastic readers, because the school works so successfully to keep their interest alive. For instance, the library is welcoming and accessible with a good collection of up-to-date children's literature. Older pupils read widely, talk credibly about their favourite authors, and effectively use information texts or computers for information. Short daily guided reading sessions are tightly structured so that the time is used well in most classes. The pupils learn the beginnings of critical analysis although they are less secure at 'reading between the lines' and working out how authors create their effect, and why.
56. Writing is particularly strong by the end of Year 6, with almost two thirds of the present class currently on course to reach the higher levels. This high standard of writing is largely brought about by the skilful teaching of the Year 5 and 6 teaching team. They have, for instance, firmly tackled a weakness picked out in the 2004 test results. This was that pupils did not organise their writing into paragraphs well enough. As a result, the current Year 6 class achieves this very well. Lessons are planned to overcome and deal with weaknesses in pupils' learning and work is tailored very well to meet the pupils' individual needs. The school has also discovered that boys do less well than girls at the highest levels, and is addressing this well through the Creative Partnership project. Also, very high expectations and punctilious marking in Years 5 and 6 mean that pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve and work hard to meet their writing targets. The writing in the Year 5 and 6 books is a model of good practice in terms of presentation and neatness. In the Year 3 class, the writing of the pupils who did not gain level 2 is improving, because of the regular monitoring and intervention by the co-ordinator. However, in both Year 3 and Year 4, the more capable writers are still not being challenged enough, and presentation in the books is often not good enough. This is because teaching makes too little use of assessment information to be sure what pupils are good at and what they need to learn next, or to make the work suitably challenging for differently attaining pupils and those who learn at different rates.
57. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good because it builds successfully upon the good start made in the Reception class. Through drama and story-telling, pupils in Year 1 develop a very good sense of

story structure, and learn how to compose a sentence that is complete and properly punctuated. The present Year 2 pupils have already reached an above average standard, and may well improve on this by the end of the year.

58. The teaching of English is good overall and very good in Years 5 and 6. Teachers plan well, making very good use of interactive whiteboards and other resources. They are confident to adapt their literacy lessons to suit the objectives of a unit of lessons, so that there is some variety between the lessons, holding pupils' interest. All written work is regularly marked but there is variation in the way that teachers pick out how the pupils can make their writing even better. In the best teaching, the pupils' targets are integral to the planning, teaching and marking, but this is not the case in all classes.
59. The leadership and management of English are very good. The co-ordinator is respected in school and out for her knowledge of the subject and keen management skills. Regular monitoring of pupils' work and lessons and a much improved tracking system mean that she knows exactly how well pupils are doing in the different classes. She intervenes and supports as much as possible, but so far has not been able to bring all teaching up to that of the best.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. This aspect is a strong feature of literacy teaching. All teachers identify opportunities for reading, writing and speaking and listening in their plans for other subjects, so that pupils have good opportunities to write for real reasons and different purposes. Boys in particular are responding well to drama and story-telling as starting points for narrative writing, and work within the exciting Creative Partnership project has escalated progress in writing, particularly for the older pupils. However, the use of ICT to teach research and editing and drafting skills, whilst satisfactory, is still variable across the school.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well to reach standards in Years 2 and 6 that are well above average for pupils' ages.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- There is good challenge for the most able pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Sometimes activities are not matched closely enough to the needs of all pupils, particularly in Years 3 and 4.

Commentary

61. Pupils achieve well in mathematics. In the national tests for Year 2 pupils the school consistently achieves results which are well above the national average. However, in the 2004 Year 6 tests, the school's results were above the national average, but were satisfactory when compared with schools that attained similar standards at the end of Year 2. This was largely because the number of pupils attaining above the expected level was no better than in most other similar schools. However, effective action has been taken to address this and the standards

seen during the inspection in both Years 2 and 6 were well above average and show pupils making good progress from their above average attainment on entry to the school.

62. This is mostly due to good teaching and learning. Teachers plan lessons well. In a Year 2 lesson, for example, the teacher introduced the idea of rounding numbers to the nearest 10 imaginatively with the idea of cars queuing up at two petrol pumps, to see which pump was nearer. One higher attaining pupil quickly spotted that there was a problem with numbers ending in 5, and the teacher used this well to explain the rule clearly to the whole class. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully. Teachers usually match work well to the different abilities of pupils. Sometimes, however, and particularly in Years 3 and 4, the activities are not well matched: lower attaining pupils find the task they are set too difficult, and the most able pupils are not given enough independence or sufficiently challenged.
63. In contrast to this, however, good support is provided for the most able pupils in Year 6, who are taught in a separate group; during the inspection they were helped to understand basic algebraic concepts by skilful teaching based on clear assessment of their previous understanding. Similarly, the more able pupils in Year 5 are taught with the main Year 6 class, and during the inspection were challenged well by working with able pupils in that group on a currency conversion task.
64. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator is clear about what is going on in the subject, knows where the strengths and weaknesses lie, and works hard to pursue and eradicate the weaknesses. For example, she initiated action to address the underperformance of girls when compared with boys in the Year 6 tests in 2002 and 2003, and this was no longer an issue in 2004. Similarly, the lack of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 appears to have been resolved by careful planning. The school also identified the need and has taken action successfully to develop pupils' skills in solving mathematical problems.
65. During the inspection, individual pupils, particularly in the younger classes, were observed using a computer program to develop their mathematical skills, and there is also evidence in pupils' work of their using ICT to produce graphs, but there were no opportunities for pupils to choose ICT as their preferred way to solve a problem.
66. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. At that time progress in Years 1 and 2 was unsatisfactory. Teaching in these classes is now good, and teachers have high expectations of their pupils; as a result pupils achieve well. The disparity between the achievement of boys and girls in the junior part of the school has also been resolved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

67. Mathematics is used well in other curriculum subjects. It is used in science to record and plot the results of investigations. Data-handling skills are used and developed in ICT, where pupils produce a range of graphs to show, for instance, pupils' favourite food, birthdays and eye colour.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The most rapid progress takes place in Years 5 and 6 because the quality of teaching is inspirational.
- Pupils enjoy the practical nature of the subject and work hard because they understand what they are doing.
- Teachers make good use of ICT to aid teaching, but pupils could make more effective use of it as a tool to aid learning.
- There is some inaccurate teaching in Year 4, and insufficient use is made of assessment information in Years 3 and 4 to tailor work to meet the needs of the most and least able.
- Throughout the school, marking has little impact on improvement.
- Effective subject leadership and governor involvement have brought about good improvement since the last inspection.

Commentary

68. Pupils achieve well in science to reach above average standards at the end of Year 2 and well above average standards at the end of Year 6. This is because improvements to teaching have resulted in better teacher subject knowledge and less reliance on worksheets – both weaknesses at the time of the last inspection. However, the teaching in Years 5 and 6 is better than it is in other year groups and this is where pupils make the most progress. In these two classes, pupils gain a very good knowledge of scientific facts through investigation and exploration. They learn how to find out things for themselves and many think of themselves as “kind of scientists”. They have very positive attitudes towards learning and some are working hard in the hope of reaching Level 5 in the national tests. They talk enthusiastically about their work in school and at the University of Birmingham, where they explored the feeding habits of caterpillars. In one lesson seen, Years 6 pupils excitedly observed different materials burning, paying very good attention to safety and observing and describing in minute detail what happened – for example, when the material “disintegrated” and the foil “blackened”. In both years, teaching inspires pupils to have a go and makes them want to find things out. This is because the teaching style matches the way pupils learn through investigation and exploration and the work interests and excites them. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, the teacher made use of many different teaching and learning styles in one lesson, such as gaining information about seed dispersal through watching video clips, sowing different seeds to gain an understanding about how seeds of different sizes, weights and shapes become embedded in the soil, and dissecting and observing different plants to see where the seeds are located and what they look like. In addition, the work is always adapted well to suit pupils’ individual needs and to build well on their previous knowledge and understanding.
69. Similarly, in Years 1 and 2 investigative work enthuses the pupils and makes them want to learn. For example, Year 2 pupils excitedly investigated which materials would bend, squash, twist and stretch and recorded their findings accurately on charts before drawing conclusions. In contrast, however, in Years 3 and 4 the teaching is not as effective as it should or could be. The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged because the teaching takes too little notice of what they have learned already. For example, in a Year 3 lesson pupils were asked to identify which objects were attracted to magnets. Teaching took insufficient account of what had been found out about pupils’ existing knowledge and understanding of magnetism or of the fact that the pupils had carried out similar work in a previous class. Failure to challenge the most able sufficiently and the opportunities missed to build on what pupils already knew meant that learning was unsatisfactory. Similarly in a Year 4 lesson, inaccurate teaching meant that pupils’ investigation results were invalid and gave them false information about which materials make the best thermal insulators.

70. Following the last inspection report the school has appropriately focused on increasing pupils' opportunities to learn facts and develop their understanding of scientific ideas through investigation. The subject leaders and governor for science have worked extremely hard to promote more investigative work throughout the school. The subject leader, who co-ordinates the subject well, has organised several training sessions to boost teachers' subject knowledge and understanding and this has led to improved coverage of investigative work throughout the school. Whilst there is still some way to go, particularly in Years 3 and 4, pupils have a far better understanding than they had before of how to carry out fair tests, record results in order that they can be easily interpreted, and draw valid conclusions. However, limited use is made of ICT for this. Pupils sometimes use computer-linked sensor equipment – such as the digital thermometer – and data-handling programs, but teachers do not encourage them to choose ICT, if and when relevant, to support their work in science, limiting their understanding of the usefulness of ICT as a tool.
71. Throughout the school, teachers' comments in pupils' workbooks serve little purpose other than to make pupils feel good about what they have done. They do not point the way forward because they do not make it clear to pupils what they need to improve and how to do it.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils develop above average ICT skills and achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to choose ICT as a tool for learning in other subjects.

Commentary

72. Because of the good facilities in the ICT suite and the good teaching they receive, pupils achieve well to reach standards above those expected for their age in both Years 2 and 6. For example, pupils in Year 2 used a 'paint' program to create images of animals in a lesson during the inspection. Previous work showed that they can use a range of fonts successfully and redraft their work when writing stories. They can program instructions for a robot and test them out. They also know how to access information from a CD-Rom. In Years 3, 4 and 5 pupils learn how to use a database, send e-mails, produce repeating images and access the Internet to retrieve information. In Year 6 they prepare effective multi-media presentations, as well as use a control program well. In the lesson observed with Year 6, pupils were able to find and access different websites to retrieve information to e-mail to partner schools in Germany and Italy.
73. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use the ICT suite well. Teachers generally teach only half a class there, while the other half of the class is engaged in a related activity in the classroom. This means that each pupil has access to a computer during their time in the suite and does not waste time waiting for their turn. Teaching is supported well by an ICT technician, who is normally in the school one day a week to remedy any problems which arise with the equipment. Teachers mostly have a good understanding of the subject, although occasionally they are less confident in its application.
74. The subject is led and managed well. The school has invested well in up-to-date resources and pupils' work is monitored through regular reviews. Good links have been established with the local high school, which more able pupils have the opportunity to visit and use the facilities to develop a website. The school has an e-mail link with a school in Northampton. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The standards achieved by younger pupils have improved, as have the resources.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their work in other areas of the curriculum. They use it to redraft their writing in English, to research in history and geography, using the Internet, or to use digital photography in their art and design work. In science, pupils in Year 6 have prepared multi-media presentations on aspects of animal life. Specialised programs are also used well to help pupils with special educational needs in their learning. However, these activities have been principally directed by the teacher. ICT has not yet been introduced as a tool for pupils to use independently when they decide it is most appropriate, for instance in English and mathematics lessons, and it does not feature regularly in their recorded work.

HUMANITIES

76. There were no opportunities to see history or geography lessons during the inspection and because of this no judgement can be made about the quality of provision in these subjects. A discussion was held with a group of pupils from Year 6 and some examples of work and displays from previous years were seen. However, there was still insufficient evidence to make a judgement about standards, although it is clear from the curriculum planning and time allocations that there is good coverage of both subjects.
77. Year 6 pupils could recall clearly work done in **geography** in Year 5 on the rain forests. They enjoy learning about other countries. The work of Year 2 pupils showed an understanding of

how food can come from other countries. Pupils in Year 1 had investigated the school grounds, making their own map.

78. In **history** younger pupils had learned about the great fire of London and famous people such as Florence Nightingale. Year 6 pupils could recall work from previous years about the Romans, Tudors, Victorians and Ancient Egyptians. They had carried out research using the Internet as well as from books. They remembered clearly a visit from a 'Roman soldier', and also a visit to Hartlebury museum, where they were able to gain an insight into life in Victorian times. They have had the opportunity to write about what it was like to be a Victorian child.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The subject is led and managed well.
- There is no system for measuring pupils' attainment against expected levels.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to visit places of worship or listen to visitors from different faiths.

Commentary

79. The standards achieved by pupils in Years 2 and 6 meet the expectations of the local authority's agreed syllabus for religious education. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and their achievement is good.
80. The written work of pupils in Year 2 shows a good knowledge of aspects of Hinduism, including an understanding of the temple as a place of worship. During a lesson observed during the inspection, pupils were beginning to think of the church as a 'special place' for Christians, leading up to a visit to the local church. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 learn about Buddhism, Islam and Judaism, as well as deepening their knowledge of Christianity. They are familiar with stories from the Old and New Testaments, including the Creation, Noah's Ark and a good range of the parables of Jesus.
81. Teaching and learning are good. During the inspection, in a Year 6 lesson, the teacher created a reverent atmosphere for a lesson on Judaism, using music and a candle to aid pupils' concentration. As a result they listened very well to each other as they talked about the significance of light to each of them. Teachers make good use of opportunities to develop pupils' writing, as, for instance, in a Year 2 lesson, when they wrote about their 'special places'. Sometimes, however, there are weaknesses in teachers' knowledge of the range of world faiths, which has a negative impact on what pupils learn.
82. The subject is led and managed well. The subject leader has monitored teaching and pupils' learning effectively, through both observing lessons and looking at pupils' workbooks. She has identified appropriate areas for development, such as the need to extend pupils' learning *from*, as well as *about*, religion. She has also devised a system for teachers to assess what pupils have understood after each unit of work, but a new syllabus is awaited which is intended to provide more secure levels against which pupils' knowledge and understanding can be measured, and

she has improved the stock of artefacts to assist teachers in their teaching. However, although pupils visit the church, there are no opportunities for them to visit different places of worship, nor are there regular visits from representatives of other world faiths, to help pupils understand the significance of religious observance to followers of those faiths.

83. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching and learning have improved and the school now has an adequate range of artefacts to support learning, which was a weakness at the time of the last inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

84. Insufficient lessons were seen in art and design, design and technology, music and physical education to make overall judgements about provision. In addition to observing lessons or parts of lessons, files of photographic evidence compiled by the subject co-ordinators were examined, along with the school's planning for these subjects to make sure that all aspects of each subject is taught. In addition, discussion with the co-ordinator of the Creative Partnership project informed the inspection team of the impact of this initiative upon the creative, aesthetic and practical subjects, as well its effect on the wider curriculum.
85. There is not enough evidence to make a judgement about standards in **art and design** at the end of Year 2, but those in Years 5 and 6 exceed national expectations and achievement across the junior classes is good overall. It is very good for those pupils who, thus far, have benefited the most from the Creative Partnership project. Furthermore, because a strong aspect of the project is the development of teachers' as well as pupils' skill, standards are rising in all classes. Currently, as they move through the school, pupils are given exciting opportunities to experiment with colour, shape, size and pattern so that they develop confidence and competence in using different media and techniques. The use of colour to create pattern and design is a strong feature of the work on display.
86. A stunning example of the impact of the Creative Partnership upon art work is the large window that faces out into the new entrance area. Pupils from all classes worked with a local glass artist to design and produce a three-dimensional effect depicting the projected layout of the school grounds. However, as yet, the art work in most classrooms is less adventurous, even though broadly good.
87. Insufficient direct evidence was obtained to make secure judgements about standards or the quality of teaching and learning in **design and technology**. However, it is clear that design and technology is taught regularly, and that pupils work well, and are fully involved. The comprehensive set of planning documents and collections of photographs show that throughout the school, pupils are introduced to the full design and make process. They draw sketches and diagrams of their designs, annotate them, and evaluate completed work. Skills improve steadily, showing progression from Year 1 to Year 6. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have made magnetic boats and other items with moving parts such as puppets. The slippers made by Year 6 pupils show imaginative designs and well-finished products.
88. No lessons in **music** were observed, but a substantial part of one singing practice for younger pupils was seen. However, this was not enough to make an overall judgement on provision, or to assess the quality of teaching and learning across the school. However, the use in one session of the large sports hall as a venue because the 'old hall' was otherwise in use, was not conducive to creating a warm, shared experience. Teachers in the school generally feel that they are not well skilled at teaching music, and so the managers have secured support for them from visiting music specialists for both music teaching and instrument tuition. Because of all the

recent initiatives, music has not been a priority subject, but the school is careful to make sure that all children receive their statutory entitlement.

89. One full **physical education** lesson was observed in the Reception Year, and a part of one was seen in Year 6, as well as sampling pupils at work in the sports hall during lunchtime extra-curricular activities. Again, this was not enough to make any secure judgements about provision, standards or teaching and learning. However, the school's decision to bid for funding for the newly completed sports hall shows its commitment to the aim of increasing pupils' participation in sport during and out of school hours. Already, pupils are benefiting from the lunchtime and after-school tuition in basketball, cricket and football as part of the school's involvement with the School Sport Co-ordinator programme. In these sessions, the pupils' hand-eye co-ordination, and their batting, bowling, dodging and marking skills were satisfactory for their age.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a comprehensive and inclusive programme to promote pupils' personal development and develop their understanding of citizenship.
- The school enables pupils to grow into confident youngsters with very strong opinions, a mature outlook on life, and a good feeling about themselves.
- Very good leadership and good governor involvement means that provision, including the quality of the teaching and learning, is continually reviewed and improved.

Commentary

90. Very few lessons were seen. However, discussions with pupils and the subject leader, analysis of pupils' workbooks and scrutiny of the teaching plans show that personal, social and health education and citizenship are embedded throughout the work of the school. They are treated as a discrete subject and taught to pupils of all ages and abilities.
91. Through their effective use of the non-statutory national guidelines, every teacher knows what to teach and how to build pupils' learning systematically over time. Lessons are planned in detail and are designed to cover a wide range of personal, local, national and world-wide issues. For example, Year 3 pupils have explored what it means to be disabled and how obstacles can make life difficult for people who are. They have looked at the role of the local council services, such as refuse collection and town planning. Year 5 pupils have explored how to respond to peer pressure, Year 6 have discussed the problems of the Third World and what it means for those people living in it and for the rest of the world. Pupils of all ages get many opportunities to debate issues and share opinions about, for example in Year 6, the destruction of the rain forests and how the media can present a biased view of events.
92. As a result of this very effective teaching programme and by keeping a personal diary of their own achievements, pupils at this school develop into confident, sensitive, thoughtful and caring youngsters with a good knowledge of social and personal issues. They come to terms with their own feelings during, for example, discussions in Year 4 about what makes them and others angry, such as "When I don't get picked". By the time they reach Year 6, they have an increased understanding of things like service industries, healthy living, trade and money, and the harms of alcohol and drug abuse. They understand the relevance and dangers of peer pressure and are determined not to bow to it. They know and appreciate that some of the things they are learning now will help them later on in their chosen career; one pupil described the way design and technology lessons could help in training to become an architect and another the contribution of drama to a career in acting.
93. Leadership and management are both very good. The co-ordinator has a passion for the subject and continually seeks ways to improve provision. Effectively supported by an equally enthusiastic governor, he regularly watches lessons and talks to pupils in order to gauge the success of the programme. His work with the school council is particularly effective, leaving council members proud of what they achieve and enthusiastic about their involvement in decision making. The support that the subject leader and governor give to their teaching colleagues is easily accessible, valuable and accurate, and gives them the confidence to do a good job.

Example of outstanding practice

This example illustrates how effectively teaching responded to the needs of the pupils by making imaginative use of their natural curiosity to answer the question “How is wool made?”

Invited by the class teacher to write questions about things that puzzle them, one Year 2 pupil had written on the class notice board, “How is wool made?” Choosing this particular question to explore one day, the class teacher had acquired and brought in a bag of unspun sheep’s wool. The pupils were intrigued as they examined the wool by squashing, rubbing and smelling it, amazed at how ‘waxy’ it felt, and joyful at how soft it was. After showing them the tools and giving a very clear explanation and demonstration about how professionals spin wool, the teacher encouraged pupils to have a go at spinning it themselves by twisting it round and round whilst rubbing it between their fingers. As they became enthralled by what was happening to it and how it suddenly started to “look just like mum’s knitting wool”, the class teacher began to knit with one of the pupils’ strands of spun wool. Pupils were excited by what was happening and couldn’t believe that they had started off with a bagful of sheep’s ‘fur’ and ended up with a knitted square – their question was answered, and all within half an hour!

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	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)	1
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
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	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
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	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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