

INSPECTION REPORT

BLACKROD PRIMARY SCHOOL

BOLTON

LEA area: Bolton

Unique reference number: 105191

Headteacher: Mr I Dryburgh

Reporting inspector: Mr R A Robinson
21024

Dates of inspection: 9th –12th December 2002

Inspection number: 246453

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 – 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Manchester Road
Blackrod

Postcode: Bolton
BL5 5SY

Telephone number: 01204 333488

Fax number: 01204 333490

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs S Scull

Date of previous inspection: February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21024	Mr R Robinson Registered inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Religious education Provision for children in the foundation stage	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13786	Mrs Sue Walsh Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
10269	Mr David Figures Team inspector	English Art and design History Music English as an additional language Special educational needs	How well are the pupils taught?
29426	Mr David Grimwood Team inspector	Science Design and technology Geography Physical education Educational inclusion	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

PENTA International
Upperton House
The Avenue
Eastbourne
East Sussex BN21 3YB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	12
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	17
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	17
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	19
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	20
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	25

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This average-sized primary school for boys and girls aged 4-11 is situated in the community of Blackrod on the outskirts of Bolton. The school has 208 full-time pupils: 104 boys and 104 girls. Almost all pupils are from a white ethnic background and one pupil is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The school serves an area comprising a mixture of private and rented accommodation. Thirty-six pupils (17 per cent) are on the register of special educational needs which is about average, although an above average proportion of pupils (six pupils) has a statement of special educational needs. Most of the pupils with special educational needs have physical or specific learning difficulties. Children's attainment on entry to the reception class is about average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about seven per cent which is below the national average. The school receives some funding for information and communication technology and assistance with the teaching of science from the local high school which has technology status, and from the New Opportunities Fund for childcare and study support. The school is part of a cluster of schools that has benefited from grants from Networked Learning Community. At the time of the inspection, the deputy headteacher was absent due to ill-health and a temporary teacher taught the Year 6 class.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Blackrod Primary School is a very good school. Pupils achieve very well, by the end of Year 6, and standards are high. Pupils' attitudes to work, their behaviour and personal development are very good. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff are excellent and the governing body fulfils its responsibilities very well. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve very well so that standards by the end of Year 6 are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science.
- Standards are above those normally expected in art and design, design and technology, history, geography, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education.
- Pupils' behaviour, their attitudes to work and their personal development are very good.
- The quality of teaching is good throughout the school.
- The systems to check pupils' achievement are very good and used very well to guide future learning.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff are excellent, and the staff and governors assist the senior managers very ably.
- The school's aims and values are fulfilled exceptionally well.
- The school works very well with parents.

What could be improved

- There are no significant areas for development in this very effective school

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection in February 1998. Standards, by the end of Year 6, have risen from in line with the national average to well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to work are now very good. The leadership and management of the school are

exceptional. The following items represent responses to the areas for development identified in the last inspection:

- the school now plans very well for the needs of higher attaining pupils and they achieve higher levels by the end of Year 6.
- the checking of pupils' progress has improved and is now very good.
- the planning for outdoor education in the reception class is now good.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	B	A*	A	A
Mathematics	A	A	A	A
Science	A	A	A	A*

Key	
Highest 5% nationally	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
Average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

- As can be seen from the above table, standards by the end of Year 6 are high and have been so for several years. Inspection judgement of the present group of pupils at Year 6 agrees with the results seen in 2002. No significant differences are apparent between the performance of boys and girls.
- The results of the national tests in 2002 for pupils at the end of Year 2, and the performance of this year's group of pupils in Year 2, are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children in the reception class make good progress in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. In these areas of learning, the children are likely to exceed expected levels by the end of the reception year. In physical development, the children make sound progress and are on course to achieve the expected level by the end of the reception year.
- Pupils achieve very well from entering the school in the reception class to leaving at the end of Year 6. The school's targets for the proportion of pupils in English, mathematics and science who are likely to reach the levels expected nationally in the 2003 tests and above are extremely demanding, though are likely to be achieved because of the good quality of teaching and pupils' very good attitudes to learning.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school and show high levels of interest and enthusiasm towards their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well both in classrooms and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils respond very well to the opportunities to take responsibilities. The pupils get on very well with one another and with

	the staff.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Good, consistent teaching, with a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching, ensures that pupils achieve very well overall from entering the school in the reception class to leaving at the end of Year 6. The teaching of English, including literacy, and mathematics, including numeracy, is good. All pupils benefit from good teaching including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Pupils cover a great deal of work and achieve standards which are well above average. The quality of teaching is good in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, science, physical education and religious education, and is satisfactory in music.

The strengths of the teaching include the very good planning of lessons, which is closely linked to the assessment of pupils' work, so that material is presented in a logical sequence, firmly based on what pupils know and what they need to learn next. The management of pupils' behaviour is also strong; this ensures an orderly and calm atmosphere in which pupils can concentrate and make progress. In Years 3 to 6, in particular, teachers' skilful explanations help pupils understand, and their use of questions challenges them to think more deeply. Occasionally, the deployment of the teaching assistants is less effective than it could be and sometimes, when marking pupils' work, teachers do not state clearly enough what pupils should do to improve.

Teaching in reception is good because the lessons are well planned and work is thoroughly organised. This ensures pupils are challenged at their own level and achieve well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a well-planned, interesting curriculum for all pupils that meets statutory requirements. The curriculum is enriched by the school's use of the local community and through positive links with other schools and colleges. A wide range of extra-curricular activities supplements pupils' learning well.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Work for pupils with special educational needs is based on well-constructed individual education plans. The contributions of the skilful teaching assistants are very well organised.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils are fully included in lessons and all activities and receive good help from school staff and teachers from the local education authority.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Particular strengths lie in the fostering of social, moral and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The procedures for ensuring the pastoral care of pupils are good. The school monitors pupils' academic progress and their personal development very well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher and other members of the senior management team provide exceptional direction to the work of the school. The aims of the school are met fully. Subject co-ordinators fulfil their management roles most effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors are very mindful of their responsibilities and accomplish their duties very well providing a high level of support to the headteacher. Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The checking of pupils' work and the quality of teaching is very well established. Very appropriate objectives are set to move the school forward. The staff and governors are extremely determined to maintain high standards and are capable of achieving this goal.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Members of staff are very well deployed and senior management provide excellent assistance for new teachers. The accommodation and learning resources are used very well. Additional funding provides many additional learning opportunities for pupils, as well as helping pupils with special educational needs. Educational and financial decisions are very carefully considered by governors to help the school decide whether it is providing best value.

The school has sufficient staffing, who meet the needs of the pupils very ably. The accommodation is very good. Learning resources are plentiful and support the teaching well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views of the school. The partnership with parents is very good and this has a positive effect on the children's learning. Information sent to parents is generally of a high standard.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children enjoy school, behave well and progress well because the teaching is good. • The school helps children to become more mature and responsible. • Children are expected to work hard. • Parents find the staff approachable. • The range of activities outside lessons is appropriate. • The school is led and managed well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework is inappropriate. • The school does not work closely enough with parents. • They would like more information about their children's progress.

The inspection agrees with the parents' positive views. The amount of homework is appropriate and contributes to the high standards achieved at the school. The school has a very good partnership with most parents. Parents receive appropriate information about how well their children are doing and staff welcome parents who seek further information.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In the current Year 6, standards are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science, as was the case in the national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2002. Overall, pupils' performance in the national tests, at the end of Year 6, has been well above the national average in every year from 1999 and is likely to be similar at the end of the present academic year. This tremendous consistency of high achievement can be attributed to the excellent leadership and management of the school.

2. Standards in the national tests in reading at the end of Year 2 in 2002 were above the national average and above the average of pupils in similar schools. In writing, standards were above the national average and above the average of pupils in similar schools. In mathematics, standards were above the national average and well above the average of pupils in similar schools. In science, standards were judged by the school to be high (highest five per cent nationally) at the level expected at this age and well above average at the higher level. Standards, this year, are broadly similar in reading, writing, mathematics and science.

3. Pupils' achievement, including that of pupils with special educational needs and the very few pupils learning English as an additional language, is very good overall, relative to their attainment on entry to the reception class because of the consistent good teaching, pupils' very good attitude to work and the well-planned curriculum throughout the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection when pupils' progress, on balance, was satisfactory.

4. Children's attainment at the beginning of the reception year is average. With the changes to the curriculum and planning of lessons this year, combined with good teaching, children are making good progress in personal, social, and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development, and are making satisfactory progress in physical development. In Years 1 and 2, pupils build on their prior attainment well and make good progress, as the teaching is, on balance, good. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to achieve well because of the overall good quality of teaching.

5. The school shows a strong commitment to pupils who have special educational need and they make good progress in relation to their previous attainment. The good skills of the teaching assistants in the school mean that these pupils can be helped directly in most lessons; this enhances their understanding of tasks, their concentration and their progress towards the targets set within their individual education plans. Those with severe learning difficulties have regular help from an assistant and make good progress.

6. Pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills very well because of good teaching and the very good implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies. Speaking skills are well above average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Information and communication technology, numeracy skills and literacy skills are developed very well in other subjects.

7. In art and design, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, physical education and religious education, pupils achieve well and reach above expected standards because of the strengths of the curriculum, teaching and pupils' attitudes to work. In music, pupils make satisfactory progress, and standards by the end of Year 6 are average.

8. Parents consider rightly that the school expects their children to work hard and to make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good and have improved since the last inspection. Pupils join in activities enthusiastically. They are proud to be involved with the school. Pupils' attitudes to their schoolwork are usually very good and sometimes excellent. Pupils apply themselves very well and try hard and this helps them to achieve high standards. Pupils are very eager to contribute; they are keen to ask questions as well as answer them. Pupils respond very well to challenging work. Pupils are particularly good at working together to solve problems.

10. Behaviour is very good. Pupils are very sensible during their lessons and as they move around school. Pupils have delightful manners. They respond very well to responsibility and are keen to carry out small tasks. Pupils behave well in the playground. There is a very pleasant atmosphere when older pupils are at play, with both boys and girls joining in games, such as skipping. Behaviour in assemblies is also very good. The school has a well-established history of high standards of behaviour and has had no exclusions for a very long period.

11. Relationships are very good, both between pupils and between pupils and teachers. Pupils of all ages are very good at working together. They help each other and offer a lot of support to pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language. Pupils demonstrate very good initiative; for example, during a Year 3 mathematics lesson, a pupil thought of an ingenious way of using equipment to help him solve a problem. A second pupil also used his initiative realising that his teacher had set him a purposeful challenge with an elusive solution. He had developed mathematical skills that allowed him to identify the problem and the confidence to express his views clearly.

12. Pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils of all ages are confident enough to speak to the whole school during assembly. Year 6 pupils are extremely keen to give talks regularly to the class on subjects of their choice. Members of the class listen respectfully and recognise the value of each other's contributions.

13. The enthusiasm for school of the pupils with special educational needs is as strong as those of the other pupils, who accept them totally; for example, all Year 6 pupils entered into the spirit of a 'slave' auction, which concluded the term's work on the Greeks, with equal energy and enjoyment.

14. Attendance rates are good. Pupils attend school regularly and this helps them to achieve well. The main reason for absence is holidays in term time and the school carefully monitors this situation. Very few pupils have unauthorised absences.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. A particular feature of the teaching, which makes a powerful contribution to the pupils' very good achievement, is the strength and consistency of the planning. Firmly based on information about what pupils already know, understand and can do, teachers' plans ensure that pupils build on what they have learned before. In the lessons, material is presented logically and progressively; for instance, the very clear plan for English in Year 2 was linked well with other subjects and organised the lesson in a sequence of small steps which led the pupils through a succession of relevant tasks. This meant that all pupils, including those with

special educational needs, were presented with suitable work at exactly the right time. They were challenged at their own level, they could all do the work planned for them at each stage, but not without thinking about it first. Part of the plan was the well-calculated pace, so that pupils were moved relentlessly on but without a sense of being rushed. As a result, pupils were thoroughly engaged for the full period of the literacy lesson, concentrating well and making very good progress.

16. Teachers' very successful management of the lessons and the pupils' behaviour creates a good context for effective learning, so encouraging pupils' very good behaviour and contributing to their very good achievement. Based on warm reciprocal relationships, it ensures the pupils want to do well and please the teacher; for example, the teacher made a point of considering everybody's responses, never dismissing inappropriate answers but using them sensitively to extend the pupils' understanding. This had a marked effect on their self-esteem and encouraged them to try harder. Teachers' skilful use of questions is frequently very effective. It ensures that all pupils are included, keeps them alert, and encourages them to contribute. Further, questions often probe; they oblige pupils to think more deeply and express their ideas more accurately. Well-placed questions encourage pupils to evaluate their own work. Year 3 pupils, listening to a performance they had recorded during a music lesson, were prompted by questions like 'What are we listening for?' 'How can we make it better?' Occasionally, the purpose of some questioning is limited, and it restricts, rather than extends, pupils' understanding.

17. In the best lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are clear so that pupils understand and know what is expected of them. This leads to confident pupils, working industriously and learning effectively. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is passed on to the pupils and encourages in them a similar attitude. Teachers, cleverly, exploit the natural links between different areas of pupils' experience. An outstanding geography lesson brought pupils' information and communication technology skills to bear on the subject of water supply and sanitation in developing countries; it encouraged pupils to reflect maturely on inequalities in the supply of basic needs. An equally outstanding art lesson involved pupils in using many skills: counting, measuring, copying, cutting, sewing and sticking – and co-operating. Pupils evaluated spontaneously the processes. In the words of one of the boys: 'Sewing is better than sticking because it isn't so messy.'

18. Teaching is strong in the reception class because work is well planned. The teacher provides a good range of interesting activities for both groups and individuals, so encouraging independence and meeting different needs well. Relationships are warm and supportive and the pupils respond well to the teacher's encouragement. Their behaviour is usually good, sometimes very good, and pupils are frequently totally engrossed; singing about Christmas particularly appealed to them. The teaching assistants are skilled at helping pupils with their chosen activity; for instance, pupils discussed with a teaching assistant how to make a gingerbread man and worked out the ingredients required, recording their conclusions on the computer.

19. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in lessons at a level appropriate for them. This is because suitable work is prepared for them, and because special resources are available; for example, if a pupil has difficulty writing, work is prepared on the computer. It is also partly because the skilful and well-prepared teaching assistants work effectively with them. In one instance, a group of pupils, having worked well with the concentrated help of the teaching assistant, read their poem to the rest of the class. It was well received and their confidence was boosted by the experience. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are similarly well catered for.

20. Some areas for development remain, however. Teachers' marking of pupils' work, for example, is conscientious and thorough. It, rightly, praises and encourages pupils when they have done well. It does not sufficiently explain what the pupils should do to improve, or set targets for the next pieces of work. Further, although the expertise of the classroom assistants is used well most of the time, their potential to observe individual pupils, or monitor agreed aspects of the lesson is insufficiently exploited during teacher-led parts of a lesson.

21. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection when it was satisfactory, representing a significant achievement. Because good monitoring arrangements support staff well, the school is well placed to improve further.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

22. The school is particularly keen to give its pupils an all round education and to this end provides a curriculum which is well thought out. It is successful in this to the extent that standards are at least above average in all subjects, except music, where standards still reach the national average. The school has adopted nationally recognised programmes of work in all subjects but has modified these so that they are particularly relevant to pupils at the school. This means that there is a unified approach to the teaching of each subject and that pupils' knowledge and skills are systematically developed. Since the last inspection, the school has adopted the national strategies for the teaching of English and mathematics and evidence of the success of their implementation is provided by the high standards achieved by pupils in the national tests. The school has made considerable improvements in the provision for higher attaining pupils. Again the success of these measures can be judged by the high proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in the national tests for mathematics, English and science by the end of Year 6.

23. The school provides an interesting range of activities outside school hours. These are designed to extend schoolwork, particularly in music and sport, and attract good levels of support. They have a positive influence on the learning of pupils.

24. Members of staff value all pupils equally as individuals, whatever their needs, and work hard to make sure they get the best from their time in school. The support for pupils with statements of special educational needs is very good. Pupils with severe learning difficulties are given lessons in life skills, which are helpful in building their knowledge and confidence.

25. The school has a very good, structured programme for personal, social and health education (P.S.H.E). The programme for sex education is mostly integrated into P.S.H.E. and science lessons, and there are specific lessons, taken by the school nurse in Year 6. Matters concerning the use and misuse of drugs are also covered in P.S.H.E. and science lessons and are supported well by outside agencies, such as the police and school nurse.

26. The school makes very good use of the local community to assist the learning of its pupils. A range of trips to local museums and places of interest helps to extend the programme for history and geography. Visitors, such as the local baker, enrich the programme further. Local businesses, such as the supermarket, provide opportunities for younger pupils to practise a range of skills and for pupils with special educational needs to develop life skills. The school is particularly careful to foster good relationships with the community; for example, the innovative Christmas Production included performances specifically for grandparents and the over sixties, in addition to ones for parents and friends.

27. The school has very productive links with other schools and colleges in the area. Local colleges provide expert tuition and top class sporting facilities for the pupils. This has resulted in coaching in, for example; street dancing, gymnastics and tennis. Close links with other primary schools that have a high proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds give pupils first hand experience of other cultures. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 have sessions in science and mathematics on Saturday mornings at a local high school. Induction days and the introduction of projects, started by the pupils in their last few weeks at primary school, to be completed in their first weeks at secondary school, help to make the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary education as seamless as possible.

28. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now very good overall. Spiritual development is fostered well. Lessons, in history and English, particularly, provide opportunities for spiritual development; for example, a topic on Remembrance when, 'We thought about the feelings of men who fought in the War.' The planning of lessons, occasionally, enables pupils to gain a sense of awe; for example, when children in the reception class saw a toy they had programmed actually start, and when pupils in Year 5 observed the sensors, measuring temperature, record readings on a computer screen. Care is taken to create a tranquil atmosphere for acts of collective worship through the choice of appropriate music to start the sessions. Pupils respond with quiet and respectful behaviour, particularly during prayers and periods for reflection.

29. The school's efforts to promote pupils' moral development are very good. Moral issues are discussed in personal development, literacy and geography lessons and pupils respond in a mature way; for example, Year 5 pupils discuss the advantages of saving money, recognise the greater sense of achievement in having done something for themselves and then contrast their own situation with that of an African woman who spends 15 hours a day collecting water. The school has a strong behaviour policy which sets clear expectations for its pupils. The general ethos of the school is to assume that pupils will behave appropriately and they respond well, so that, for example, in whole school productions, like the Christmas Play, pupils take on the responsibility of showing adults around the school and act out roles, such as being Roman guards, without needing direct teacher supervision. Responsible behaviour and regard for others are rewarded; for example, 'Child of the Month' certificates are distributed. Adults in the school provide good role models. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are very well maintained. Pupils are encouraged to think of those less fortunate than themselves through their wholehearted support for several charities each year.

30. The school makes very good provision for social development. The idea that everybody is of significance in the school is immediately apparent in the entrance hall, where there are photographs of everybody presently associated with the school, all displayed with equal prominence. There is a school council to which pupils are democratically elected and the pupils set the agenda. School productions give pupils the chance to work collectively and this process is taken further when, for example, school plays are performed at a number of senior citizens' residences. The practical investigative approach to many subjects gives pupils the opportunities to work on projects in small groups; for example, in Year 3, each child had to produce a model monster, worked by a pneumatic device, but pupils worked in groups of three or four helping to improve and develop the model of each member of the group. Older pupils have the opportunity to assist in the smooth running of the school, tidying and maintaining the library, providing music in assemblies or acting as general monitors in the classrooms. The good range of educational visits provides useful opportunities for pupils to mix together in the wider community.

31. Cultural provision is very good. Pupils gain an appropriate knowledge of British culture through their work in history and geography and through the visits they make to local museums and places of interest. This is extended by special events such as theatre trips for the older pupils; for example, the latest one included a performance of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream and a visit to an exhibition of the paintings of L. S. Lowry. Special events, such as 'Creative Arts Week,' give the pupils a taste of a wide range of topics from African drumming to the works of Kandinsky. A variety of visitors, including artists, writers and the mayor enrich the programme. A study of different faiths in religious education, supported by visits to churches and mosques, gives the pupils insights into other cultures. This is helped by the close links and exchanges with local schools with high proportions of pupils from other ethnic groups. More dramatic are the links with a primary school in a township near Pretoria in South Africa. Pupils exchange e-mails and letters and the South African headteacher has visited Blackrod.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. Members of staff approach care in a very positive way and reinforce the philosophy of the school which is to ensure that pupils feel happy, safe and secure. Minor difficulties, worries and upsets that pupils have are dealt with very well. Members of staff have very good relationships with pupils, they respond to their concerns in a sympathetic way and pupils are very well supported, both academically and personally. This helps them to achieve very well and to grow in confidence and maturity. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection; procedures to promote pupils' welfare are usually very good and are now followed consistently

33. The school has clear procedures in place to deal with child protection issues and support vulnerable children. The procedures are well known to long serving staff, and new members of staff are made aware of whom they should approach for advice. The school has sensible strategies to promote the health, safety and welfare of pupils and staff.

34. The school has good procedures to monitor attendance, which are appropriate for a school with high attendance rates and very co-operative parents. Pupils whose attendance is not up to standard are well known to the school and efforts are made to encourage better attendance. The school has appropriate contact with the education welfare department.

35. The school has very good procedures in place to promote good discipline and behaviour. The policy for behaviour management is of very good quality. Class teachers are extremely skilled at managing pupils' behaviour through very high expectations and very good relationships and by providing interesting lessons. Sanctions rarely have to be used. The very good behaviour and attitudes of pupils allows pupils to make very good progress. The school has a well-developed anti-bullying policy. All cases of bullying are taken very seriously and the school always tries to resolve issues.

36. The school has very good procedures to assess pupils' work and to monitor their academic progress. Regular testing and the careful analysis of results contribute well to this. The school is very aware of what each pupil has learnt and what they need to learn next; this is a significant factor in ensuring that pupils achieve very well. There have been improvements in procedures to check pupils' progress since the previous inspection and information is used very well to plan work for pupils at all attainment levels. The monitoring of personal development is good. Members of staff know the pupils very well and provide them with very good assistance.

37. Careful measuring of the progress of pupils with special educational needs against their targets ensures that, at each step, they are given work which builds on what they have already learned.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

38. Parents are very supportive of the school and their children's education. This helps pupils to make very good academic progress and ensures that their personal development is supported well. Many parents and other members of the local community help in the school and staff and pupils appreciate their assistance. There is a very active Parents and Friends Association which has raised substantial amounts of money for the school. This has allowed the school to purchase useful equipment, such as a digital camera and a video camera.

39. Parents are very pleased with the work of the school. The provision for homework is good. The school has developed a very good partnership with parents and works very closely with most parents. Parents can access members of staff very easily and there is a warm welcoming atmosphere. The school regularly runs family learning days for parents and parents were invited to be involved with mathematics week. The school has continued to improve its partnership with parents since the previous inspection. The inspection found no evidence to support criticisms about how closely the school works with parents.

40. The school provides very good information for parents. The prospectus is well presented and the Governors Report to Parents is of very good quality. There are regular newsletters, and parents are well informed about what is going to be taught. This helps them to provide good assistance for their children. A small number of parents were concerned about the quality of reports. The reports are satisfactory and tell parents clearly what their children know, understand and can do; however, targets are sometimes too vague and do not give parents or pupils clear strategies for improvement.

41. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are involved closely in partnership with the school. They are part of a termly review of progress, and the parents of pupils with severe learning difficulties participate fully in the annual review of statements.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. The school benefits from excellent leadership and management by the headteacher who works in a very effective relationship with other members of the senior management team and governors. A particularly strong and effective feature of the senior management team is the breadth of the body which includes, as well as the headteacher and deputy headteacher, a teacher with responsibility for reception to Year 2 along with special educational needs, and a Years 3 to 6 co-ordinator and the school administrator. They lead and manage the staff extremely well and provide a clear vision for the school linked to the mission statement 'Joy in Learning and Joy in Life'. The school's aims are promoted excellently in the every day work of the school. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. High standards have been maintained for several years, the teaching is good and pupils achieve very well. Parents are very involved and supportive of the school and, rightly, judge that the school is led and managed well.

43. Subject leaders carry out their duties exceptionally well. Their roles are clearly defined and they ensure a consistent approach throughout the school by checking teachers' planning and pupils' work. The co-ordinator responsible for checking pupils' progress has developed, with senior managers, very thorough systems which help staff to ensure that pupils achieve their potential in each subject. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very effective; as a result, the pupils are very well supported

by a thoughtful and well-informed staff. The deputy headteacher, acting in the role of school improvement officer, is most effective in contributing to the development of teaching and pupils' learning, and for the maintenance of high standards.

44. The governing body is very effective. It carries out its statutory duties very well through an efficient committee structure. Governors take responsibility for key activities of the school, such as monitoring the help pupils with special educational needs receive. Governors contribute actively to the annual governors' report to parents by writing about their areas of responsibilities. The governors find out what is happening in the school very well through visits and detailed reports from co-ordinators; for example, the assessment co-ordinator gave a presentation to the governors of ways pupils' progress is tracked, and explained the statistical information on standards received by the school.

45. The school development plan is both succinct and comprehensive, providing clear information for the current year and outline plans for future years. The large financial reserve has been allocated for further improvements to the buildings. Grants and funds for pupils with special educational needs are used very well. The grants from Network Learning Community benefit staff greatly by providing additional opportunities for training. Other grants and award money have been used very purposefully to improve the accommodation and learning resources; for example, the library, the computer suite and the outdoor area.

46. The school has very good procedures to assess the performance of all staff based on monitoring of their roles by the senior management team and governors. The monitoring of teachers is based firmly on the observation of their teaching and rate of pupils' progress. The tracking of pupils' performance is very well established from the reception class to Year 6. The school plans to refine its good systems by enhancing the use of information and communication technology to provide more information about the progress of different groups of pupils.

47. The administrative officer and administration staff deal efficiently with day-to-day matters and finances. Finances are kept in good order. Computers and other information and communication technology are used well to support administration and the management of the school.

48. The school has a very good core of experienced and skilled teachers who are helped very well by capable teaching assistants. Teachers, who are new to the school, are given excellent help from the established staff and guidance from the very good staff handbook and lesson plans. The school is extremely well placed for the training of new teachers because of the strengths of the leadership and management, the quality of support available and the helpful, very good, documentation.

49. The accommodation is spacious and has been improved significantly over recent years to provide a stimulating working environment for primary aged pupils. Learning resources are good overall and assist pupils' learning well.

50. The school applies the principles of best value very well. Decisions on spending are linked directly to the effect on standards. There is excellent commitment of all staff and governors to improvement. The impact of spending decisions by governors is analysed closely; for example, the decision to provide time for the deputy headteacher to be the school improvement officer has been checked through reports to the governing body.

51. Parents' opinions, such as on access to computers at home, are considered through questionnaires.

52. The good leadership and management reported at the last inspection have been improved to excellent; this is a major factor in the success of the school and the high standards that are achieved.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- There are no significant areas for development and, therefore, no key issues to address.

The following less important areas for development should be included in the action plan:

- the marking of pupils' work should be improved to include comments to help pupils to appreciate how well they have done and how they can improve, (Paragraphs: 20, 57, 61, 74, 79, 87, 81, 98, 102, 108)
- teaching assistants should be used more productively during whole class teaching (Paragraphs: 20, 79.)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	11	22	13	0	0	0
Percentage	8	22	44	26	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	208
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	14

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	36

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	15	14	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	15	15
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	27	29	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (85)	100 (89)	100 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	15	15
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	29	29	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (89)	100 (93)	100 (93)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	14	12	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	14	13
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	25	26	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	97 (100)	100 (94)	96 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	13	14
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	23	25	26
Percentage of pupils	School	88 (97)	96 (100)	100 (100)

at NC level 4 or above	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)
------------------------	----------	---------	---------	---------

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

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	172	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	29.6

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	329

Financial year	2001/2
----------------	--------

	£
Total income	468164
Total expenditure	468079
Expenditure per pupil	2283
Balance brought forward from previous year	57550
Balance carried forward to next year	57635

--	--

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	207
Number of questionnaires returned	170

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	37	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	39	5	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	51	1	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	51	10	1	1
The teaching is good.	61	35	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	45	14	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	36	8	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	31	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	42	44	10	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	56	35	3	2	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	42	2	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	43	4	1	3

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

53. The learning opportunities for children in the reception classes have improved very well since the last inspection. The curriculum is based firmly on national recommendations and provides very good guidance to teachers. The outdoor accommodation has been improved very well to provide a wonderful area for learning. Standards by the end of the reception class are higher, overall, and children make good progress because the teaching is good.

Personal, social and emotional development

54. The personal, social and emotional development of children is likely to be above expected levels by the end of the reception year because the quality of teaching is good and the children respond well. Children arrive at school confidently. They know the school routines; for example, they hang up their coats and place homework bags in the correct boxes. In whole class teaching, they settle well and listen to their teachers. They concentrate for significant periods of time because they find the learning interesting. The children behave very well and most are mindful to listen to others when they are speaking; this is because the members of staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attention and provide clear direction to children of how they are to respond

55. Teachers have a very pleasant way of speaking to the children and they respond very well to this approach; for example, the teacher spoke quietly and gently to children after they had decorated the Christmas tree and gave each child the opportunity to reflect on their feelings about Christmas. Most children took turns willingly, although a few were rather hesitant or shy and needed encouragement from the teacher. They spoke sensitively and the views of each were listened to well by others.

Communication, language and literacy

56. Children are on course to achieve above the expected standards by the end of the reception year in this area of learning. The teaching is good and the children make good progress.

57. Lessons are planned and organised very well with a strong emphasis on discussion. Children work and behave very well in independent activities. Sometimes, whole class teaching is too long and a few children, understandably, become restless. Occasionally, teaching assistants do not have an active part during whole class teaching and are not used well enough by the class teacher to assist children's learning, although in group work they are deployed well.

58. In the role-play area, the teachers encourage children to take on roles; for example, in the café where children were waitresses, waiters and customers and acted out their parts through actions and speech. The children write strings of letters to represent the customers' orders. The children listen well to stories and enjoy reading, along with the teacher, familiar stories such as 'The Gingerbread Man'. The planning of lessons is very good and provides for the needs of children at different levels of attainment as well as giving opportunities to use information and communication technology. Children understand the names for parts of a book, and recognise terms such as 'illustrator' and 'text'. Songs and actions are used well to learn letter sounds which helps to keep children interested. Whiteboards and marker pens are used effectively to practise writing but staff do not always ensure that the children are

holding their pens correctly and little attention is given to assisting left handed children to angle their whiteboards appropriately; for example, a left-handed child wrote on a whiteboard without angling it, resulting in rubbing out of the work that was written already. The children develop their recognition of words well when they play games with their teacher using a dice with words on the faces, such as 'see', 'dog' and 'it'.

59. The school and parents work very well together to develop children's reading. A diary provides parents with good information about how to develop their children's reading. Parents and teachers complete the diary to inform each other of the progress the children are making. Higher attaining children read confidently and know all the words from early reading books such as 'I', 'can' and 'swim'. They work out, by sounding the letter sounds, words such as 'lets' but sometimes struggle with words such as 'come' and 'hide'. Most children recognise and read words such as 'look' and know some letter sounds. Lower attaining pupils use the pictures in the books to tell the story but have little recognition of text; however, they enjoy reading with the teacher repetitive phrases such as 'sing, sing, sing together'. Most children enjoy listening to stories on the listening centre.

Mathematical development

60. The quality of teaching is good and, as a result, children achieve well and are on course to reach above the expected level by the end of the reception year.

61. Lessons are well organised and teachers help children very well to understand the need to concentrate and to behave well. The planning is very good, provides very clear direction for teachers and helps children to build up their learning on previous work well. Learning resources are used very well to interest and challenge children; for example, very good use was made of soap bubbles to achieve a learning objective 'to count objects that cannot be touched'. The activity excited and interested the children who enjoyed practising counting up to six. Counting the number of times the teacher hit a chime bar reinforced the previous activity. The children were asked to indicate on their fingers the total and a few were asked to record in numbers; however, the opportunity to assess the learning of individuals was missed, as the teaching assistant, who was involved appropriately in the activity, was not asked to check individual children's understanding. In group work, however, the teacher checked children's number recognition using dice with numbers and spots. Most children sorted numbers correctly from smallest to largest. Lower attaining children, with help from an adult, played a game using dice to practise counting on to ten. Higher attaining children worked independently on a similar task, though counted on to twenty. Children enjoyed throwing beanbags at a target and most counted the number of beanbags that had landed in the hoop and the number that missed. The children experiment to change the shape of models made from malleable materials to produce three-dimensional mathematical shapes. They describe their shapes using words like 'cuboid' and 'cone'.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

62. The children are likely to exceed the standards expected nationally at the end of the reception year. The quality of teaching is good. A pleasant but firm approach stresses considerate behaviour and that every child is equally important. Individuals are not allowed to dominate groups. Considerable importance is placed on children sitting in circles for discussions. The children gain an increased understanding of the world around them because the teacher plans interesting activities; for example, farmyard play equipment helped children to identify and name different animals. Children increase their knowledge of weather conditions by completing a weather chart each day. They consolidate their knowledge of the Christmas Story and support their learning in mathematics and information and communication technology by programming a toy to take Mary and Joseph to seven inns

before arriving at a stable. Role-play is designed to explore and reflect on ideas developed in lessons; for example, the children take part in a wedding ceremony, an event which involves a marriage certificate. Sessions at the end of lessons, when children explain what they have been doing, provide useful opportunities for consolidating learning and for children to develop their speaking and listening skills.

Physical development

63. The children are likely to meet the national expectations by the end of the reception class. They make satisfactory progress, as the teaching is sound. Teachers encourage children to find a space though some find this difficult and huddle close to one another. Most children hop on one foot and then the other. They listen to instructions, although occasionally the teacher spends too much time instructing and the children do not have sufficient time to practise movement skills. Members of staff provide good feedback to help children appreciate how well they are doing. The planning for physical development is thorough and provides opportunities for children to work in the outdoor area when weather permits. The children develop skills in using large play equipment, such as wheeled vehicles and a climbing frame. They practise throwing, kicking and catching balls of different sizes.

64. In the classroom, pupils have good opportunities to enhance cutting skills; for example, cutting out shapes. They select materials and assemble and join the materials they are using, making drawings of their constructions. They quickly learn to use computers to assist their learning; for example, they manipulated the mouse well to draw colourful pictures of themselves using a graphics program.

Creative development

65. Children achieve well, helped by the good quality of teaching, and reach the nationally expected standards by the time that they start Year 1. Children experiment with a comprehensive range of materials and different techniques to make various styles of picture. They recognise and name basic colours and learn to mix them to make new colours. Children use brushes, crayons and pencils to create desired effects. They print using different objects and assemble collages using a variety of materials. Most children know a number of songs and rhymes which helps their work in, for example, number and English, as well as extending their abilities to sing in tune and in time, and to sing loudly and softly. They enjoy singing, under the teacher's good direction. Accordingly, they listen carefully and join in willingly. They know the names of many of the musical instruments used in class, and play them accurately.

66. All children benefit greatly from carefully planned work, which matches individual need well, from the use of a wide choice of materials, and from clear explanations of what is expected. Children listen carefully to instructions on how to use materials. They then respond creatively and imaginatively to tasks, such as making cards, or painting a Christmas scene. Pupils achieve well because the teacher and teaching assistant work well together, and are very well organised. They give instructions clearly, in a warm, supportive manner, and encourage accuracy and neatness successfully, whilst fostering pupils' imagination and individual responses.

ENGLISH

67. Standards in English at the end of Year 6 have been consistently high and rising for at least the last four years. In three of those years, results in the national tests were well above average. Boys do as well as girls, a significant achievement when compared with the national picture in which girls are about half a year ahead of boys at this age. This accords

closely with the quality of work seen; the present generation of pupils are set to achieve results which are well above average by the end of Year 6. They are achieving well in maintaining and extending the high standards reached when they were in Year 2 and are achieving very well over their time in school. The very few pupils who are learning English as an additional language make good progress.

68. The higher standards have been brought about in a number of ways. The National Strategy for Literacy has been implemented successfully and used very well by teachers to guide their lesson planning. In addition, the quality of teaching is good overall. Warm relationships make for attentive and well-behaved pupils. In the best lessons, teachers know the subject thoroughly and their enthusiasm for it is caught by the pupils; in Year 5, for instance, the well-chosen poem on the life of a river (part of an overall project on water) captured the pupils' imagination quickly. The teacher's explanations were very clear so that the pupils could relate the sections of the poem to changes in the river. Instructions were precise so that pupils knew exactly what to do and could get on straight away. Questioning was particularly strong; it probed, obliging pupils to think more deeply about the text and refine their ideas about it. The comparatively few occasions when the teaching does not help pupils as much as it should arise when a teacher's incomplete understanding of the subject matter leads to pupils' confusion or when the focus of a lesson is not clear enough so that activities tend to veer off the lesson's main point.

69. By the end of Year 6, pupils' skills in speaking and listening are high. Pupils speak confidently and well. The best, thoughtful and articulate, speak clearly in well-constructed sentences which convey meaning well. Pupils listen with attention to the teacher and each other. Pupils in Year 6 are very good readers. The best have mature tastes and talk intelligently and enthusiastically about what they have read. In the middle range of attainment, pupils are good readers with a wide interest in different types of books and authors. Other pupils are competent readers but a few make mistakes which arise from reading the words without being fully aware of their meaning within the sentences.

70. The quality of pupils' writing is very high by the end of Year 6. At its best, it is varied, lively, interesting and, generally, technically correct. Writing is fluid with an open relationship with the reader; an example of this being, 'You may think Shakespeare is quite boring, but in fact he is much the opposite.' Striking opening sentences engage the reader: 'The Marie Celeste is one of the earth's greatest mysteries.' The middle ability pupils have good ideas which they express in simpler prose which is, generally, accurate and spelt properly. Pupils with lower attainment, organise their writing competently when they have intensive support but, on their own, their work is not well organised and is often technically inaccurate.

71. Pupils' standards at the end of Year 2 are above average; however, the trend in the writing results is static, though above average, and that in reading has declined from well above average a few years ago to above average now. The principal reason for this is a change in the standard of language skills of pupils, particularly boys, on entry to the school. Pupils' standards tracked over Years 1 and 2, show progress similar to that of earlier generations, but starting from a lower base.

72. This good progress is achieved by teaching which is good in quality and which includes some outstanding practice in Year 2. The most successful lessons are planned and organised thoroughly. They proceed in small and manageable steps so that pupils are led through a sequence of tasks which they recognise as relevant. Every pupil is presented with suitable work at exactly the right time. Pupils with special educational needs work at the same tasks, varied for them suitably. This results in all pupils being moved forward relentlessly but with no sense of rush. The teaching assistant works well in the whole-class parts of the lesson to prompt, encourage and cajole the less secure pupils to have the

confidence to offer answers. Helped by teaching of such quality, most pupils are competent or good speakers. They explain well what they are doing and, by their answers, show they have also listened well. Less accomplished pupils are confident when they speak but need their listening reinforced by careful questioning. Standards of reading are good: the best pupils read accurately, fluently and with good expression, the less able make mistakes and some need the pictures to make sense of the story.

73. The quality of pupils' writing at the end of Year 2 is good. The most proficient write interesting narrative using linking phrases well: 'On the way home they tramped through mud.' Middle attaining pupils write competently and make their meaning clear. The lower attainers have still to gain the maturity to put their ideas into controlled prose.

74. Throughout the school, work is well presented and there have been good gains in the quality of pupils' handwriting in recent years; however, this is put at risk by the number of pupils who do not hold their pens or pencils properly, these being nearly half in one class and up to a third in another. The quality of marking is an area remaining to be developed. Teachers, rightly, praise pupils for good work, but, by and large, they do not give pupils enough guidance about what they could do to be better next time, or set them targets for improvement; without this extra dimension, teachers do not provide themselves or the pupils with a record of the progress made over time.

75. The high quality of the subject leadership contributes significantly to the standards being obtained. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly, and conclusions are drawn from the information gained to help improve the quality of provision. The results of tests are analysed carefully to reveal weaknesses in attainment and the results are incorporated into future lesson planning.

76. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection and is well placed to continue to improve.

MATHEMATICS

77. Standards, in Year 2, are above average and, in Year 6, are well above average. Pupils enjoy mathematics and their behaviour in lessons is very good. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection because standards, by the end of Year 6, have risen from in line with the national average to well above average. In addition, the quality of teaching is now good and the curriculum has been improved with the very successful introduction of the National Strategy for Numeracy and through the very good use of information and communication technology.

78. The quality of teaching is good with particular strengths apparent in the teaching in Years 2, 3 and 5. The consistency of good or better teaching over time in all classes ensures that the pace of pupils' learning is brisk and overall achievement is very good. The teaching is firmly based on a very good understanding of national guidance and this results in pupils' building up their skills and understanding of numeracy very well. The quality of lesson plans, the high expectations of teachers, and teachers' relationships with pupils are all very good; these particular strengths ensure that all pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and pupils learning English as an additional language, make good progress in their learning. Pupils are very interested in lessons because the teachers make the learning of mathematics exciting and the teaching understandable.

79. Learning resources, particularly computers, are used well to assist mathematical learning. Teaching assistants help pupils well during small group activities; however, in whole class times, the skills of the teaching assistants are not used sufficiently by teachers.

Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously. The marking follows the requirements of the policy for marking but is mainly ticks and crosses with comments on presentation of work. The marking encourages successfully a high standard of presentation of work but rarely provides information to pupils on ways they can improve their work.

80. Where teaching is of a high standard, pupils make very good progress in their learning. Teachers explain carefully new work ensuring that pupils know what is to be learnt. The planning of activities provides plenty of challenge according to pupils' prior learning, and uses learning resources very well; for example, in Year 2, pupils completed calculations using paper chains with numbers on some links and not on others. Higher attaining pupils in Year 2 linked numbers together up to 100 using knowledge of addition, subtraction and multiplication, whilst most pupils worked within 20. Lower attainers did similar work up to 10 with help from adults. In Year 3, the teacher prepared wrapped 'Santa's parcels' to demonstrate dividing by three which created a high level of interest amongst the pupils and enabled most pupils to be able to calculate $\frac{2}{3}$ rd of 9 correctly. In Year 5, the teaching was very thorough, resulting in pupils gaining a much better understanding of factors of numbers and prime numbers. A teaching assistant helped pupils with severe learning difficulties very well by making very good use of a computer program, which was set to a level suited to their needs; as a consequence, these pupils made very good progress in recognising multiples of ten.

81. Weaknesses in otherwise satisfactory or better teaching occur when teaching assistants do not have a clear understanding of their role when the teacher is instructing the whole class, and, on rare occasions, when the teacher confuses pupils because of insecure understanding; for example, in the interpretation and construction of graphs.

82. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Very thorough systems are in place to monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' work. The tracking of all pupils' progress is very good and the information enables teachers to plan appropriate opportunities to push on pupils' learning. The school keeps parents very well informed about the teaching of mathematics; for example, an invitation was open to parents to join staff and pupils during a 'maths week'. Members of staff are extremely committed, and are capable of improving standards further, and the school is well placed to maintain the high achievement of pupils.

SCIENCE

83. Standards reached, by the end of Year 6, at the school, are well above average and pupils achieve very well. Pupils' attainment, by the end of Year 2, is above average. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection because the quality of teaching and the guidance for teachers to assist the planning of lessons is better.

84. Pupils' responses, to national tests, are thoroughly analysed to find areas of weakness. The school has recognised the need to challenge the learning of higher attaining pupils, an aspect of the science programme criticised in the last inspection. Specific activities for higher attainers are now planned successfully; for example, in a Year 2 class, investigating electrical circuits, pupils were asked to complete an electric circuit to light a bulb on Rudolph's nose. Higher attaining pupils were expected to construct a circuit to light three bulbs on a Christmas tree. Higher attaining pupils in a Year 6 class, asked to give a small presentation to describe a food web to the whole class, explained that, even in semi arctic conditions, there will be sufficient light for photosynthesis to take place. They readily use terms like 'biodegradable' and 'microorganism'.

85. There has been a considerable whole school effort to improve standards in information and communication technology and this has helped to assist learning in science; so, for example, Year 3 pupils, working in groups but largely independent of the teacher, produce graphs of their results in an investigation. Year 5 pupils watch in awe as the readings of sensors, measuring temperature, are recorded in line graph form, on the computer screen.

86. The good planning and preparation allied to the good class management skills of teachers help to provide successfully a practical and investigative approach to the subject, which, in turn, stimulates the interest and enthusiasm of the pupils; for example, Year 3 pupils using 'push meters' which they have designed and made themselves, investigate to find the relative forces necessary to move a series of mystery objects. Teachers' success at creating interest in science results in very good attitudes to learning in the subject. 'Thank you for letting us bake. I really enjoyed it', wrote a Year 6 pupil at the end of a project on microorganisms. Secure subject knowledge, allied to good questioning skills, allows teachers to challenge and extend pupils' learning; so, for example, 'How could you make your line graph smoother if you were using measurements taken with a thermometer?' asks a Year 5 teacher.

87. Teachers emphasise, continually, important features of science, such as accurate and systematic recording and the necessity for fair testing; for example, Year 4 pupils, working on an experiment investigating solutions, realise that they must have equal amounts of water and each solute if they are to compare solubility. Teachers use science well to assist learning in other subjects. Year 2 pupils measure melting ice cubes. Year 6 pupils write biographies of well-known scientists, such as Edward Jenner and Louis Pasteur. They include a glossary, as an appendix, at the end of a unit of work. Year 5 pupils use their knowledge of the solar system to explain why certain regions of the Earth are warmer than others. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and are almost invariably positive in their remarks, but there are relatively few examples of teachers challenging pupils with questions or suggestions to extend their learning.

88. Resources for science are generally good but, occasionally, are not of sufficient quality to help pupils' learning. Year 2 pupils, investigating electric circuits, have difficulty handling small and awkward crocodile clips.

ART AND DESIGN

89. Standards are above average at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well because they work on a logical sequence of projects which build up their skills systematically; for example, before Year 5 pupils tackled a still life picture, they undertook preliminary studies on colour families and brushwork techniques so that they were well prepared for the main task.

90. Pupils in Year 2 achieve high standards of work in complex projects, a fabric collage being a particularly striking example. The preliminary designs show that good observation and drawing skills are well developed, pencil and crayon both being well controlled. Realising a design in many materials on a hessian background required many more skills, all of which were accomplished well: selecting appropriate material, counting, measuring, cutting, pasting. Pupils learn to evaluate different techniques as they go along. Pupils worked hard with manifest enjoyment, concentrating well for long periods, co-operating closely in groups of two or three. This was because of the outstanding quality of the teaching. The project developed a range of skills, many of them specific to the subject, but others linked to other areas: literacy, numeracy, and social development. Excellent teaching skills ensured all

pupils were included in the work, because they all knew what they had to do, why they had to do it and how to accomplish what they wanted.

91. Pupils extend these skills steadily as they move from Year 3 to Year 6. Art supports other subjects well, but not at the expense of developing the subject itself; thus, when Year 3 pupils created germs after a P.S.H.E lesson on hygiene, they worked confidently in vibrant colour, expressing the threat of the creatures by using oranges, reds and purples within spiky outlines. Year 4 pupils deal with abstract ideas in a more systematic way; for example, their study of moods and attributes, such as happiness or honesty, was a very imaginative exploration of the themes. Year 5 pupils' work with computers adds more techniques to their repertoire.

92. Building on this foundation, pupils in Year 6 extend their skills; for example, they have concentrated on developing precise colours, tints and tones. Their collage studies of emotions reveal considerable depth of thought. 'fright' creates a tyrannical atmosphere using a variety of materials, 'confusion' spills over into the associated writing, where the text is formatted in a variety of typefaces, font sizes and colours. Paper sculptures of Greek masks, part of the Greek project, also express feelings well.

93. It is not possible to make a fully secure judgement about the quality of the teaching in Years 3 - 6 in the absence of any observed lessons but the exuberance of much of the work and the thoughtful way in which pupils apply good skills to expressing deeply felt ideas suggest that it is good. The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good.

94. The subject has improved since the last inspection when standards were satisfactory and the school is well placed to raise standards further.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

95. Standards are above average for pupils by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, as do pupils who do not speak English as their first language. There is little difference between the progress of boys and girls.

96. The subject contributes significantly to the social development of pupils. They have opportunities to work together on projects. Year 3 pupils, making their pneumatic monsters, all produce individual finished products but work together, helping each other. Trips out to local businesses, to study pizza making, and to toy museums, to study the mechanisms of toys, help to stimulate interest.

97. There has been an improvement in standards since the last inspection, when they were judged to be average. Better teaching has brought about this improvement; it is now good as opposed to being satisfactory. This improvement in teaching can be attributed, at least in part, to good leadership of the subject and to curricular improvements. Pupils have a detailed approach to their projects; so, for example, Year 2 pupils, making wheeled vehicles, first looked at key features and purposes of various vehicles, then a focused practical activity, looking at axle arrangements, then made a standard vehicle, using techniques learned, and, then, each pupil produced an individual model. Pupils evaluate the success of the project, although this was not covered as effectively as other areas. Finally they considered whether their finished product met their design criteria which was, in this case, the need for vehicle to carry a chocolate cake, made by the pupil, to the next classroom.

98. Year 3 pupils consider the person for whom they make their photo frames: 'I put a dog's head design on mine because my grandmother used to work in a pet shop', explained

one pupil. Year 6 pupils make paper prototypes of the slippers they are constructing. Some work contains some sophisticated touches; for example, a Year 5 pupil, making a drum, incorporated a device for tightening and loosening the skin. Pupils' progress in each unit of work is checked and the assessment is used to help teachers to plan future lessons. This allows teachers to cater for high attaining pupils, as well as those with special educational needs resulting in all pupils making good progress. This is another improvement since the last inspection, when the progress of higher attaining pupils was questioned. The marking of pupils' work is well developed. Work is certainly marked and there are many examples of encouraging comments; however, there are far fewer examples of suggestions for improvement.

99. The co-ordinator has been further able to affect standards by monitoring pupils' and teachers' work. She provides written feedback for teachers and some of these comments form the theme for staff discussions.

100. New guidance helps teachers plan lessons thoroughly. Good class management results in a pleasant atmosphere in lessons, which allows teachers to discuss work with individual pupils and make suggestions on how their work might be improved. Teachers use information and communication technology well to assist work in design and technology; for example, Year 2 pupils use the computer to design logos for their vehicles. Teachers make good use of teaching assistants and parents to give individual help with pupils, particularly those with special educational needs

GEOGRAPHY

101. Standards, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, are above average. Most pupils make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who do not speak English as their first language, also make good progress relative to their previous levels of attainment.

102. The standards, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, have improved since the last inspection and this is largely the result of better teaching. The quality of teaching at the time of the previous inspection was judged as satisfactory. The quality is now good, overall, and there are examples of excellence. Teaching has been assisted by the introduction of a nationally recognised programme of work. This has helped to unify the approach to geography throughout the school and means that pupils' skills can be developed systematically. Teachers use this new programme to plan their work thoroughly, including activities for pupils of different abilities. This helps the progress of all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, who are often helped further by receiving individual help from teaching assistants. The checking of pupils' progress is carefully planned into the work. Each unit of work starts with the pupil having a sheet detailing themes: what they are likely to learn, skills, associated vocabulary. This gives pupils a clear overview of each unit and allows them to assess their own learning, to a certain extent. Many pupils tick off items as they encounter them. The teacher assesses each pupil's learning at the end of an individual unit, sometimes by means of a short written test. These assessments are used to help the planning of future work. Teachers mark pupils' work and often offer encouraging remarks. There are relatively few examples of teachers challenging pupils with questions or suggestion for further study.

103. Teachers use information and communication technology well to support research skills in geography. An excellent lesson involved Year 5 pupils using the Internet to research the work of charities in places where a clean water supply is a problem. Because the work fully involves pupils in their own learning and topics are relevant, pupils are positive and enthusiastic in their attitudes. This positive approach starts with the younger children. Year 1 pupils are encouraged to book their holidays using the information to be found in the role-play

travel agency. Teachers encourage these positive attitudes further with educational visits. This is another improvement since the last inspection, when there were no geographical visits. Year 2 pupils, as part of their work on comparing another locality to their own, study a variety of maps and start to draw their own plans and simple maps. They made a visit to Liverpool when they took the ferry across the Mersey and visited a football stadium and the Anglican Cathedral. The visits benefit the social development of pupils and means that geography is used well to assist learning in other subjects. Year 5 pupils help their learning in mathematics when they used graphs and calculated percentages to illustrate problems of pollution. Discussions on pollution involve moral arguments and pupils show good knowledge of the issues. Year 6 pupils are able to explain the greenhouse effect. They also have a good knowledge and understanding of places. Pupils develop their literacy well; for example, by composing faxes to foreign tourist boards seeking information.

HISTORY

104. Standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils of all levels of ability achieve well. Standards have improved since the last inspection, when they were satisfactory, influenced significantly by a review of the curriculum in the light of new national advice. The school has the energy, interest and skill to continue to raise standards.

105. Pupils in Year 2 know that some events happened in the past, before anybody now living could encounter them. They recorded a visit to the village war memorial and interpreted some of the information on it. Most pupils know why the Armistice is celebrated on 11 November and can explain why the poppy is a symbol of remembrance. Some know that the memorial records the names of those who died in the war.

106. Educational visits provide enrichment for the curriculum in Years 3 to 6 and foster pupils' interest in the subject. Year 5 pupils talk with enthusiasm about a visit to a nineteenth century cotton mill, recalling, in particular, the privations of the apprentices' homes, and making relevant comparisons with their own situation. Year 4 pupils visiting a nearby Tudor mansion, dressed in period costume and learned about life in Tudor times. Further, Year 4 pupils made successful use of the Internet in a fruitful link between history and information and communication technology; for example, they searched for information about the Tudors, distinguishing, for the most part, between fact and opinion as they did so.

107. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy their work; for example, they all, regardless of attainment level or degree of learning difficulty, entered fully into the drama of the auction of slaves which formed the concluding lesson in a unit on the ancient Greeks. The higher- and middle-attaining pupils reflected maturely on what they did. They showed a high level of self-awareness about what they had learned and how the subject related to present day experience. Research into different aspects of the topic was recorded in elegant prose, and was well presented with clearly labelled diagrams. Lower-attaining pupils recorded many relevant facts about the Greeks; for example, the story of the Battle of Marathon was well narrated.

108. Pupils are helped both to achieve well and enjoy history by the good quality of the teaching. The topics are well planned and pupils know at the outset what they are going to learn; for instance, in Year 6, they are given an outline of the unit which sets out 'what you will know by the end of this unit'. Work is carefully assessed at the end of the unit to ensure that this is so; however, when work is marked, marking consists largely of ticks and praise without suggestions of how the pupils could improve their work. Individual lessons are well planned and well paced so that everybody has appropriate time for their tasks.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

109. Standards, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, are on course to be above the national expectations. Since the last inspection, the school has made very good progress in developing the subject, resulting in an improvement in standards. The curriculum has been improved well to incorporate national guidance. The recent installation of a computer suite enhances teaching and learning opportunities significantly. The teaching is now good and pupils are making good progress.

110. The teaching develops pupils' skills well through careful planning and effective use of the computer suite; for example, pupils in Year 2 built on their previous learning well by using a graphics program to produce attractive calendars which incorporated text. They were confident in logging onto the computer and selecting a particular program. They used the tool bars well and most pupils could retrieve work from their folders on the hard drive. Pupils with special educational needs were helped effectively by teaching assistants and adult helpers.

111. Teachers have a very good understanding of the subject and are skilled at using information and communication technology to assist learning in other subjects. Year 4 pupils searched for information about the wives of Henry the Eighth. The lesson was very well planned and the teacher's lively manner and explanations on the method of accessing the Internet site helped pupils to find relevant information quickly. The teacher overcame confidently technical problems so that the pace of learning proceeded at a brisk pace. The learning was extended well to include using a 'search engine' to find additional information.

112. In an excellent geography lesson in Year 5, the teacher questioned and consolidated pupils' understanding of technological language, such as 'hyperlink'. Pupils were extremely interested and discussed information on a website very well. Most pupils could access a word processing program whilst working on the Internet. They knew how to gain advice by using the 'help' button. The pace of learning was very brisk and pupils learnt the value of using the Internet to enhance their learning opportunities. Pupils with severe learning difficulties were involved fully in the whole class teaching and then were given very good help from a teaching assistant. Probing questioning by the teaching assistant enabled the pupils to make very good progress in their learning.

113. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is an outstanding commitment amongst all members of staff to use information and communication technology to develop further standards in all subjects. The procedures for checking pupils' progress are good and are used well to enable teachers to plan pupils' future learning. The resources are very good and used efficiently; for example, the computer suite is fully timetabled but the lack of a suitable ventilation system in the computer suite sometimes results in high temperatures and an uncomfortable learning environment.

MUSIC

114. Standards in music are average by the end of Year 6 and pupils are on course to achieve satisfactory standards by the end of Year 2. This represents satisfactory achievement and maintains the position reported at the time of the last inspection.

115. Pupils enjoy making music, especially when teachers are confident and knowledgeable; for example, pupils in Year 3 say they enjoy music and find it 'interesting and exciting'. They were really energised by the task of performing music prepared over several lessons. Their eyes were bright and concentration was written all over their faces as they worked to bring together the separate elements of the music and make the performance good enough to record.

116. Pupils in Year 6, enjoy singing. Most pupils sing in tune with a steady rhythm though often with a harsh tone. Pupils' strong sense of rhythm leads to confident and accurate playing on percussion. Percussion ensembles contributed competently to morning assembly and to the Christmas performance, pupils controlling the instruments well and maintaining different parts accurately.

117. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory and there is some very good practice. Lessons are well planned, so that new material builds well on what has gone before. In the best lessons, the teacher's infectious enthusiasm for making music makes the pupils want to do well. This leads to intense concentration and very good behaviour. Well-directed questions help pupils evaluate their work: 'What are we listening for?' 'What improvements can we make?' Often, the teacher's own good performance skills add significantly to the quality of the pupils' experience. Sometimes, however, when teachers do not correct poor intonation, this lowers the quality of pupils' performance

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

118. Pupils, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, achieve well and reach standards which are above average. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection, when standards for both age groups were judged to be average. The improvement in standards can be directly linked to good teaching, improvements to the curriculum and very good leadership of the subject.

119. Teachers run a series of after school clubs and teams which attract a good level of participation from pupils. These allow skills to be developed to a higher level and for pupils to develop their skills in a competitive situation; an example is the cross-country running leagues, in which all pupils in Years 5 and 6 are invited to take part, and races take place over a series of weeks, at different venues. An annual residential trip, attended by most of the pupils in Years 5 and 6, gives pupils access to a range of outdoor and adventurous activities, including rock climbing and canoeing.

120. The school has sought and embraced help and expertise from outside agencies, a particular example being from local colleges. Expert tuition in tennis has led to pupils in Year 5 having levels of racket-handling skills which are well above average. The gymnastic skills of pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 have been boosted by expert tuition. Good organisation and checking of pupils' progress means that all pupils are helped to achieve the required standard in swimming and some exceed it. The leadership has been imaginative in raising the status of the subject. This has been done by organising events, such as Physical Education Week, when coaches with national reputations are invited and pupils are introduced to a range of activities.

121. Teaching is good, overall, though a significant amount is very good. Teachers plan their lessons very well and provide activities for pupils of different abilities. Higher attaining pupils in Year 3 are encouraged to extend their sequence of movements into different levels by using selected items of equipment. Help for pupils with special educational needs is arranged very well. In some cases, the organisation of the lesson does not allow for maximum participation of pupils; for example, in Year 1, pupils, practising their throwing skills, are divided into groups which are too large, so that individual pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to practise and develop their skills.

122. Teachers' management of their pupils is good in all lessons. This means that pupils pay attention and this helps their learning. Equipment is got out and put away quickly and efficiently so that time is maximised. Teachers have good subject knowledge and, in most cases, good ability. This means that they are able to demonstrate skills and techniques

effectively. In a Year 2 dance lesson, the teacher led the action, demonstrating controlled and graceful movement. Pupils follow this example, interpreting music sensitively, and are well on the way to synchronising their movements into a whole class routine. Teachers stress the effects of exercise well. Pupils know the reasons for warming up and stretching muscles. Year 2 pupils know that the heart beats faster and increases blood flow during exercise. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils demonstrate high quality balances in pairs but the teacher is still able to indicate how these balances might be improved with attention to detail. In less successful lessons, demonstrations merely involve pupils doing what virtually everybody else has done and pass without comment from teacher or pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

123. Pupils' attainment, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is above the expectations of the local education authority's syllabus; pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs. The quality of teaching is good. It was not possible to observe the teaching in Years 5 and 6, although pupils' work showed good progress over time. Pupils' attitudes to work and their behaviour are very positive because teachers make lessons interesting. Improvements since the last inspection are very good, as pupils' attainment and the quality of teaching have improved.

124. Teachers have a very good understanding of the subject and the planning of lessons is of a high standard. This was evident in an excellent lesson in Year 2, when the teacher developed pupils' understanding of aspects of Hinduism very well, through discussion and challenging questioning. The pupils were extremely eager to learn more. Pupils knew many facts about the beliefs of Hindus; for example, that Krishna was a special God who Hindus believe comes down to earth to help people. The pupils gained a much better understanding of good and evil through reflecting upon stories related to the Hindu faith.

125. In a very good lesson in Year 3, pupils were very attentive throughout the lesson and were eager to respond to questioning. The teacher's very positive relationships with the pupils made them want to work hard and join in. Learning resources, such as bricks, sand and water, were used well to demonstrate the biblical story of 'the Wise and Foolish Man' as well as to maintain interest. The story was consolidated through effective use of song and the playing of musical instruments. Most pupils at the end of the lesson knew that a parable is 'a story with a moral'.

126. In Year 1, the pupils are very eager to answer questions, and listen very sensibly to stories; for example, about the birth of Jesus. They sang spontaneously Christmas carols, and, whilst doing their written work, could be heard humming and singing 'Away in a Manger'. Work is linked well to pupils' level of attainment and there is a strong emphasis on high standards in the presentation of written work.

127. The subject is used very well to develop literacy skills; for example, in Year 4, pupils reflected in writing why gifts were given by the 'Wise Men'. The strong support for the development of literacy skills is also apparent in Year 5 and Year 6, such as in their detailed writing and mature reflections about the symbols of the Jewish faith.

128. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject makes a very good contribution to the fostering of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and supports the aims of the school very well. There is a strong commitment to further improvement, and, because of the high standard of teaching, the school is in a very good position to enhance standards further. The systems in place for checking pupils' progress are very good and the information gained is used well to help plan pupils' future learning.