

INSPECTION REPORT

THE GATEWAY COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Dartford

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 132107

Headteacher: Mrs Heather Hadley

Reporting inspector: Dr Vivien Johnston
8402

Dates of inspection: 7 – 9 July 2003

Inspection number: 248899

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 9

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Milestone Road

Dartford

Postcode: DA2 6DW

Telephone number: 01322 220090

Fax number: 01322 289958

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Ms Gaynor Sackman

Date of previous inspection: No previous inspection as this is a new school

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8402	Vivien Johnston	Registered inspector	English Design and technology English as an additional language Information and communication technology Equal opportunities	How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
9053	Viv Phillips	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23354	Evelyn Adams	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Geography History Physical education	
27654	Robina Scahill	Team inspector	Science Art and design Music Religious education Special educational needs	How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school has been open for almost four years, and now has pupils aged four to nine (Reception to Year 4). It will continue to grow for another two years, until the oldest pupils are aged eleven (Year 6). It is a community primary school, with 120 boys and girls currently on roll. It has been increasingly popular in the local area, and so all thirty places in the younger year groups are filled. Numbers are lower in Years 3 and 4, and so these pupils are taught in a mixed-aged class. About nine-tenths of the pupils are from a white British background, and the remaining tenth are from Asian, African or mixed ethnic backgrounds. Overall, pupils' social backgrounds are broadly average. The attainment of children on entry to the reception class has been average, except for the oldest year group as their attainment was well below that expected for their age. The school as a whole has an average proportion of pupils with a special educational need. Mostly, the pupils' needs are not severe, although a few have specific learning, behaviour or communication difficulties. Year 4 has a considerably higher proportion of these pupils than the other year groups do. Years 3 and 4 have also had a large turnover of pupils, whereas in the other year groups almost all the pupils who came in the reception year have stayed. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. Although in the past the school has had to provide help to pupils who spoke very little English, at the time of the inspection no pupils were at an early stage of learning the language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of the school is very good. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 2, teaching is very good, and the school is led and managed very well. It provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2.
- Teachers focus strongly and successfully on enabling everyone in the class to learn.
- Staff are very good at identifying the needs of individual pupils and providing appropriate support, both for their personal needs and in their work.
- The school has a strong community ethos, which encourages pupils to behave very well and enjoy learning.
- The school is very well led and managed, as the headteacher and staff share a vision of what they want for the school and its pupils, and have a clear idea of how to get there.

What could be improved

- Communication with parents.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This was the school's first inspection. Inspectors judged that the school has made very good progress since it opened. Its development has been very well planned and implemented. During this school year, the three senior staff have carried a heavy load of responsibility because of staffing difficulties, and this has limited their capacity to implement all the improvements they recognise are desirable. Nevertheless, they have made significant improvements in standards in writing and science, and re-established consistently effective teaching. The school has made rapid progress towards becoming the kind of school that the headteacher and governors planned it would be, with a strong and positive ethos supporting its focus on learning for all.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2, based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
Reading	n/a	D	A	A
Writing	n/a	E	B	B
Mathematics	n/a	E*	A	A

Key	
top 5%	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
bottom 5%	E*

The results in 2002 were much better than those of 2001, reflecting the difference in the attainment of these year groups when they entered the school, and the different proportion of pupils with special educational needs in these year groups. In 2001, the mathematics result was in the lowest five per cent nationally. The results for 2003 are higher than those for 2002, but a comparison to all schools' results cannot be made as national data is not yet available. The comparatively low number of pupils who took the tests means that valid comparisons of boys' and girls' results cannot be made. The school does not yet have to set targets for results at the end of Year 6. It has set demanding targets for how well the pupils do in the Year 2 assessments, and these targets have been met.

The standard of work attained by the children at the end of the reception year is above average. The children are particularly strong in their personal and social development, and in their knowledge of the world. They also do very well in their mathematical knowledge. The children achieve very well, in relation to their broadly average attainment on entry to the reception class.

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 also achieve very well. The standard of work attained by the pupils now in Year 2 is well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In science, standards are also now well above average, which is a considerable improvement on the previous year. The overall standard attained by pupils in Year 4 is below the national expectation for pupils of their age. This represents good achievement because these pupils were of much lower attainment on entry to the school and at the end of Year 2.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils like school and enjoy learning. They respond well to good teaching, and are proud of their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are consistently very well behaved in lessons and around the school. They are very good at working together in pairs and small groups in lessons, and play co-operatively in the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are confident and friendly. They are tolerant and caring of each other. Relationships are very good, both among pupils and between pupils and adults.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The rate of attendance is similar to the national average for primary schools. Pupils arrive at school punctually and so lessons start on time. There is very little unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very 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.

All the teaching and learning observed during the inspection was satisfactory or better, with about nine-tenths good or better. The teaching and learning were very good, and occasionally excellent, in two-fifths of the lessons. Most of the very good and excellent teaching was observed in the reception class and Year 2. The children in the reception class are confident when working independently as well as in groups with an adult. Throughout the school, teachers and teaching assistants are very good at identifying and meeting pupils' individual needs, and lesson activities are managed very effectively. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to fast-paced, challenging lessons. They listen attentively during discussions, and try hard in written and practical activities. They make good gains in their skills in reading, writing and mathematics because the skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well. Teaching and learning are good in English and mathematics. Teachers make good use of homework activities to extend the work done in class. Marking is inconsistent; some teachers provide very good feedback and guidance, while other marking is encouraging but uninformative.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum has been planned carefully, and provides well for pupils' needs. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory, given the age of the pupils, although there are too few opportunities for sports.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils' needs are identified early, and the work in lessons is very well adapted to meet these needs. The support provided by teaching assistants is very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The promotion of a strong ethos has been a major focus from the beginning of the school. Staff provide for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development very strongly. Their cultural awareness is promoted well, including through a variety of events and activities.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Teachers and support staff know the pupils as individuals, and so are aware of how to meet their needs. The arrangements for pupils' welfare are very good, as are the procedures for checking their academic progress.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Satisfactorily. Parents contribute well to their children's learning, particularly of reading, and respond well when the school makes requests for help. Satisfactory information is provided to parents, including reports, but opportunities to share the school's many strengths with parents are missed.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and other key staff share a clear vision for the school, and have done very well in implementing it. The success of the school's leadership and management is shown by the way difficulties have been overcome, and the staff constantly seek to improve and develop the school.
How well the governors fulfill	Well. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and have made a very good contribution to its development. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Governors are aware that the next

their responsibilities	step is to develop their role as critical friends and monitor how well the school is doing.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school improvement plan is very good. It is based on a close analysis of what has been successful and where improvements have been needed. Action to tackle weaknesses, such as in writing, has been very successful.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school has invested wisely in the resources and equipment needed, and has good resources. Its accommodation is very good. It is well staffed, with a strength in the expertise and contribution of the teaching assistants. It applies the principles of best value well as it has compared its performance with other schools, carried out some consultations with parents, seeks to obtain good value for its expenditure and sets itself high challenges.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and are making good progress. • Behaviour in the school is good. • The teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework their children are given. • The information they receive on how their children are getting on. • The closeness with which the school works with parents. • The range of activities provided outside lessons.

The inspection team agrees with the positive views expressed by parents. The inspectors also agree that the school could do more to work closely with parents. They found that the provision for homework is good. Reports and other information on how well pupils are getting on, and the range of activities provided outside lessons are satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When the children in the reception year started school, their attainment was broadly average in comparison with the expectation for their age. During the year, they have made very good gains in their learning, and overall their achievement is very good. They do particularly well in their personal and social development, and in the areas of knowledge and understanding about the world and mathematical knowledge.

2. The school has results for the national tests at the end of Year 2 from 2001 onwards, when the first group of pupils reached Year 2. The results for 2001 should be interpreted with caution, due to the different characteristics of this group of pupils (who are now in Year 4) compared to other year groups – the year group was small in number, had a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, and had had a considerable turnover of pupils. Also, the school's data showed that the attainment of most of these pupils on entry to the school, whether in the reception year or later, was lower than that expected for their age. The results were best in reading, where they were below average, and weakest in mathematics, where they were in the lowest five per cent nationally. Nevertheless, the school's data indicates that the pupils had made good gains during Years 1 and 2, particularly in reading, and that overall they had achieved well.

3. These pupils are now in Year 4. Although the overall standard of their work is below the national expectation for their age, this represents good achievement in relation to the standard of their work at the end of Year 2, particularly in writing and mathematics.

4. The 2002 results, gained by the pupils now in Year 3, were much higher than those of the previous year. This reflects the different nature of the year group, in comparison with the Year 4 pupils. The pupils were of higher attainment on entry to the school and fewer of them have special educational needs. The 2002 results were best in reading and mathematics, and weakest in writing. This was because the higher-attaining pupils did better in reading and mathematics than in writing – in reading and mathematics almost half the year group attained Level 3 in writing, which is above the national expectation, whereas few pupils gained this level in writing. The teacher assessments in science were average overall, but with few pupils attaining Level 3.

5. The results for 2003 were higher than those for 2002. Although national data is not available for comparison, the improvement in writing and science assessments appears to be significant. In both these areas, many more pupils gained Level 3, indicating that the higher-attaining pupils did much better than previously. This improvement in results is reflected in the standard of work of the pupils now at the end of Year 2: standards are well above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. In the other subjects, the available evidence indicates that standards in all subjects meet or are above national expectations at the end of Year 2. In information and communication technology (ICT), standards are in line with expectations for the end of Year 2 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall although the older pupils and those in Year 1 have until recently had too few opportunities to use computers regularly and this has slowed their progress in ICT.

6. The available evidence indicates that all groups within the school are doing equally well. This is the result of the staff's concern to meet individual needs. For example, no significant differences were found in boys' and girls' standards of attainment or their achievement. The school has raised the standard of the higher-attaining pupils in writing and science, having recognised that weaknesses were shown by the national assessments in 2002.

7. Twenty-nine pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, relating to learning and behaviour. Two pupils have a statement of special need. Although the standard attained by pupils with special educational needs is below that expected nationally, they make very good progress towards attaining the targets in their individual educational plans as a result of well-planned, skilled support.

8. A very small number of pupils have previously needed help with learning English. They have made very good progress in becoming fluent in English, in response to the individual help they were

given. At the time of the inspection, the pupils who speak English as an additional language coped confidently and independently with classroom activities, and achieved as well as their classmates.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. As parents indicated in their responses to the questionnaire, their children like school. They particularly enjoy practical work in lessons and being part of a lively community. In lessons, good attitudes and willingness to have a go with well-explained activities are characteristic of pupils in all year groups. The children in the reception class and the older pupils show great enthusiasm and a very strong desire to find things out for themselves. They are very interested in what they are doing and quickly become absorbed in their work. They enjoy thinking for themselves and answering teachers' snappy, searching questions. Pupils spoken to during the inspection explained that they really enjoy opportunities to look for information and try things out for themselves. However, they lose interest when they have to sit and listen for a long time, and then feel frustrated by the lack of time to finish the work they are expected to do on their own.

10. Behaviour is very good throughout the school. Pupils of all ages and backgrounds understand the school's code of conduct very clearly. They appreciate rewards, such as choices of how to spend 'golden time', and know the consequences of inappropriate behaviour, including the loss of such time. They follow the very good example set by adults, and so treat other people with respect and care. Pupils of all ages try very hard to behave very well, which helps them to succeed in their learning. There have been no exclusions in the present school year, although there was one in the previous year.

11. Generally, the pupils with special educational needs behave well in lessons, and respond well to teachers' good strategies for managing unsuitable behaviour. When someone calls out or behaves inappropriately in class, other pupils are generally not distracted. This illustrates the success of the school's promotion of an ethos of respect for others and interest in learning.

12. Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good. The children in the reception class and the older pupils enjoy helping teachers and doing small jobs for them. Pupils of all ages get on very well together, in response to the very strong encouragement they are given by adults to do so. In all classes, pupils work together very well in different groupings. For example, pupils are often asked to turn to the person next to them and explain quickly the key points that they have learned or to debate specific issues raised by a question. They do this in a highly focused and responsible way. Pupils showed a good appreciation of others' needs and sense of social responsibility. For example, in a geography lesson, groups of Year 2 pupils were asked to consider the impact of waste on the environment. Their lively discussions generated a rich range of ideas such as, "We have to think about similar problems such as exhaust fumes and effects on the habitats of baby birds."

13. Attendance is satisfactory. It is similar to the national average. Most pupils come to school regularly unless they have a very good reason to stay away. The school has reminded parents very clearly about the adverse effects on learning of taking holidays in term time. Children from a very few families have frequent absences, including for holidays. This has a noticeable impact on these children's learning because they fall behind when they miss so many lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Teaching and learning were satisfactory or better in all the lessons observed during the inspection. The proportion of good or better teaching was considerably higher than in most other schools inspected. Very good, and occasionally excellent, teaching was seen most frequently in the reception class and in Year 2. In the other classes, the teaching was good. In Years 1 to 4, teaching and learning are good in English, mathematics and science. In these classes, very good or excellent teaching were observed in English, science, geography, music, physical education and religious education.

15. Throughout the school, the key strength of the teaching is that the teachers and teaching assistants focus on pupils' learning, and ensuring that the work meets the varying needs of all in the class. In class discussions, teachers involve pupils of all levels of attainment by varying the difficulty level of the questions they ask, and by noticing and subtly involving those who are quiet or unsure as well as those who have their hands up and are keen to answer. This means that girls and boys, high-attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties all get opportunities to play an active part in the discussion, and are interested in the work. Teachers also plan well for the pupils' learning in small groups, adapting the task so that everyone is given worthwhile activities that are challenging to them, supported by a good range of resources. The pupils tackle these tasks confidently and independently.

16. Pupils with special educational needs are given very good support, enabling them to make very good progress. Teaching assistants help individuals and small groups to take a full part in lessons, and so the pupils try hard and remain interested for the whole lesson. For example, in whole-class discussions the teaching assistants manage any inattentive behaviour by stated to pupils very effectively, enabling them to maintain their concentration on the topic and to contribute comments and suggestions when the teacher is questioning the class. In group activities, teaching assistants work very well with pupils with special educational needs and others who may be finding the work difficult, engaging their interest in and helping them with challenging activities. Teaching assistants know and work to the targets in pupils' individual education plans, and plan well with the class teachers to make the most effective use of lesson time. Occasionally, individual pupils are withdrawn from the class for work on specific areas of difficulty. The staff do their best to ensure that the pupils do not miss out on what the rest of the class is learning.

17. Pupils of all ages respond well to their teachers' high expectations of their work, effort and involvement, including for homework. For example, pupils from Years 3 and 4 have completed a considerable number of worksheets at home, as well as reading regularly. The regular use teachers make of homework contributes to pupils' good learning, especially in English and mathematics.

18. From the reception class onwards, pupils work co-operatively and purposefully in small groups. Occasionally pupils become noisy and over-excited, or they are inattentive because the work ceases to hold their interest, but teachers and teaching assistants are generally skilled in managing this behaviour and so it does not last long. Occasionally, the pace of work slowed in lessons observed during the inspection, for example when the teacher asked each pupil to take a turn at an activity, and the others in the group observed without having a further task to carry out.

19. The very good and excellent teaching was characterised by demanding work for everyone in the class, throughout the lesson. For example, in a Year 2 English lesson the pupils discussed the linguistic structure of a poem. They enjoyed reading the poem, but at first even the high-attaining pupils found it hard to identify the structure of the kennings. The teacher made links to the pupils' own experience, and this made the meaning of the lines clear to all including the lower-attaining pupils, and so enabled them to understand the poem's use of language. The teacher was very well prepared, enabling her to respond to unexpected questions confidently and to build skilfully on the many ideas suggested by the pupils. Pupils then wrote their own versions following the poem's linguistic structure, the group activities being set at a level of difficulty that challenged everyone. The higher-attaining pupils began to use alliteration as well as following the pattern of the poem. Pupils were given excellent evaluative feedback in the final part of the lesson, when they read their work aloud to the rest of the class. Throughout, the class were reminded of the purpose of what they were doing, and of links to their previous learning, and this contributed to their confidence and enthusiastic response.

20. Pupils' written work is usually marked regularly, and that of pupils in Year 2 has very good, helpful guidance that gives the pupils good understanding of how to improve in future. Other marking provides encouraging praise, but is insufficiently informative and stimulating. As a result, the pupils in Years 3 and 4 have a less sure understanding of what they need to do next to improve their work than do the children in the reception class and Year 2.

21. While successful teaching is the norm now in all classes, pupils' work and information from the school and parents showed that earlier in the school year there were significant weaknesses in Year 1. These were caused by staffing difficulties. The learning of these pupils was held back for a

time. Firm action was taken to deal with the weaknesses as soon as they were identified, and to re-establish successful teaching. These pupils are now doing well, and over the school year as a whole they have achieved satisfactorily. Staff changes involving the classes with pupils in Years 1, 3 and 4 have also slowed pupils' learning in ICT during this school year, because the new teachers have needed training in how to teach the subject and have initially made too little use of computers in their teaching.

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

22. The development of a well-planned curriculum that meets national requirements and is relevant to the pupils' needs has been a key focus since the school opened. What should be taught each year has been thought through carefully. The curriculum plan has taken good account of the needs of the pupils in Years 3 and 4, taught in the mixed-age class, so that different topics are covered each year and pupils' skills are developed systematically. For example, the science curriculum provides well for pupils to learn how to plan and carry out investigations. The curriculum also provides well for challenging both those of high attainment and those with learning difficulties.

23. The curriculum content is based on nationally-produced schemes of work and guidance, for both the Foundation Stage and Year 1 onwards. Children in the reception class make a successful transition to National Curriculum work because this is carefully planned during the summer term, in preparation for the children's move to Year 1. The work in the reception class and Years 1 and 2 is linked to broad topics for each half term. Each day, the activities of the reception class have a focus on one of the areas of the curriculum for children of this age, such as mathematical or creative development. This is a good arrangement as it contributes to the children's work being purposeful, varied and interesting each day. The work for Years 1 and 2 makes connections between National Curriculum subjects where they are appropriate, and so gives the pupils opportunities to consolidate and extend their previous work. This makes a good contribution to the pupils' learning because skills and knowledge introduced on one subject are reinforced in others. The curriculum is further enhanced by a good variety of visits and visitors, and by special events such as book week and art days.

24. Many parents expressed to inspectors a wish for a wider range of extra-curricular activities than is currently provided. However, the inspection team found that a satisfactory range of clubs and activities is offered, given the age of the pupils, the size of the school and the stage of its development, although a variety of sports activities has not yet been introduced – more are planned for the next school year. Whole-school events, such as at Christmas, give pupils of all ages good opportunities for performing and make a good contribution to their personal development.

25. The school gives a very high priority to helping pupils to reflect on their behaviour and experiences, and to become responsible young citizens. Its overall provision for pupils' personal development is very good. It reflects very clearly the school's aim *'to maintain a well disciplined environment that promotes high moral standards based on respect of people and property and sensitivity towards others'*.

26. Through everyday routines and interactions, pupils' spiritual, moral and social skills and awareness are developed very well. For example, displays of pupils' work (such as their cloud poems, work on the story of the Three Little Pigs and on De Bono's Ways of Thinking) encourage pupils to see that their ideas, efforts and experiences are valued very much. In assemblies, inspiring music and lighting candles for virtues such as kindness and forgiveness are used to create a reflective atmosphere. Assembly stories are well chosen, with clear moral messages that pupils are encouraged to think about. Teachers plan carefully for activities that captivate the class, and use them very well when magical moments occur. For example, the reception children were fascinated by what they saw when they used a magnifying glasses to observe snails closely, and made comments such as, "That snail has big antennae and it's looking at me!"

27. The school places a high priority on pupils' moral and social development, with their personal and social responsibility as a key part of this. A programme of personal, social, health education and citizenship contributes very helpfully to development of related skills and understanding. Pupils have

good opportunities within lessons and 'circle time' to talk about issues such as friendship and conflict, to listen to different points of view and to express their feelings. Playtime and lunchtime arrangements also foster high-quality social interaction, with much happy conversation in the dining hall and lively play, including team games, outside. The very positive, shared approach to managing behaviour within clear boundaries underpins the way in which the school ensures that children have a very clear sense of right and wrong and of how to treat others.

28. The staff are very good at nurturing a sense of responsibility to others and helping the pupils to learn to co-operate with everyone. Although opportunities for independence and responsibility are not fully established because of the stage of growth of the school, the older pupils are being given increasing opportunities to take responsibility and to use their initiative, ready for when they reach Year 6. For instance, Year 2 pupils have the chance to be members of a class council and plans are in hand to extend this to setting up a system of playground 'buddies'.

29. Throughout the curriculum and by means of special events such as workshops on African drumming, the school promotes pupils' cultural awareness well. Subjects such as art, music, religious education, history and geography help pupils to become aware of similarities and differences in their own and other cultural traditions. The school teaches pupils to respect other people from all over the world, or with backgrounds different from theirs, through lessons and in its daily life. Tolerance and understanding of other people's values and needs are highly prized within the school, which supports this area of work well. Pupils have good opportunities to take part in celebrations such as Christingle at a local church, and have learned about Diwali from a special visitor who dresses for the occasion and talks about the festivities. The school recognises that it has scope for even wider use of visits and visitors to enrich and extend pupils' understanding of cultural diversity.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. The school takes very careful steps to ensure that all pupils are happy, safe and focused on learning. Its arrangements for child protection are very good because everyone is up-to-date on how to respond when any concerns come to light, and very alert to attendance or behaviour that might signal such a concern. Checks on attendance are systematic, and absences are recorded clearly. Teaching and non-teaching staff check on pupils' personal and academic progress with great care and so know all the children and their individual academic and personal needs very well. They respond to all pupils in a positive and helpful way that supports their learning and development of personal qualities very constructively. Pupils of all ages with special educational needs receive strong support. Their emotional, personal and learning needs are recognised, carefully monitored and dealt with sympathetically.

31. The school promotes high standards of behaviour very effectively. The teaching and non-teaching staff have very clear, high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and take a firm line with any instances of unkind or bullying behaviour. They are firm and fair in dealing with the occasional instance of inappropriate behaviour, and this creates a secure environment within which pupils develop confidence and follow the positive role model provided by the staff.

32. In the school's day-to-day life, adults pay very good attention to matters of health and safety. Children are supervised very well at all times, including playtimes. Arrangements for matters such as first aid, fire drills and for teaching pupils to protect themselves from harm are very good. For example, the school takes care to safeguard pupils when they use the Internet.

33. The school has very effective procedures for checking how well pupils are doing, particularly in English, mathematics and science, and then identifying gaps in their learning in order to take action to fill them. Very good assessment records enable teachers to track individuals' progress from year to year, and to diagnose areas where groups or individuals need more practice or further help to improve. For example, each year the results of national assessments at the end of Year 2 are analysed to see if they show any areas of concern. The 2002 results indicated a weakness in writing, and so the staff successfully took action to raise standards. In some classes, assessment information is used very well to help teachers plan their lessons. This results in well-thought-out activities that provide very well for groups or individual pupils.

34. The very systematic approach to analysing what pupils can or cannot do has also helped the school to support pupils with special educational needs very well. The staff are very good at looking out for and responding to the pupils' needs. These are identified at an early stage, including in the reception year. Individual education plans are reviewed regularly. The school makes every effort to see that each pupil has suitable support, and appropriate outside agencies are involved where necessary. Some of the children make rapid progress because of the promptly-provided support, and learn to cope with the work independently.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

35. Parents' responses to the questionnaire indicated that, in the main, they are satisfied with what the school does for their children. Parents are pleased with their children's progress, the good teaching provided, standards of behaviour and the fact that their children like school. Parents who attended the meeting before the inspection expressed some concerns about how well the Year 1 pupils were doing, and about home-school communications. Questionnaire responses also show that some parents are unhappy with extra-curricular activities, homework and the way the school works with them and keeps them informed of what is happening.

36. Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by most parents, and found that in many ways the school is more successful than parents said. However, the inspectors agree with parents that the quality of information they are given is uneven, although satisfactory overall. The range of extra-curricular activities is narrow, but it is reasonable at this stage of the school's development. The school provides very clear guidance on homework, which is usually set appropriately.

37. Links with parents are reasonably effective. The school does what it can to encourage parents to help with reading at home, and to attend parents' meetings and social events. The school also encourages good exchanges of information about children's needs, particularly for those with special educational needs, which enables appropriate help and support to be put in place. Parents have had too few opportunities to become involved more actively in school life, such as in helping with extra-curricular activities, although they respond well to the requests that are made by the school.

38. Regular newsletters give a clear, general idea of what is going on, and are satisfactory overall. However, they lack the vitality of the displays around school and do not reflect the richness of its everyday life. This means that parents have too little insight into what goes on in school. Staff have missed chances to explain what it does to maintain quality of provision in classes when staff changes have occurred, and this has contributed to some parents' concerns about the quality of education their children have received.

39. Parents are supportive of the school, and keen to help their children's learning. They are keen that their children attain high standards of work and behaviour. Almost all ensure that their children attend regularly and make good progress with their reading. As a result, the children's learning benefits from parental support for and involvement with their education. Parents of children with special educational needs feel that their children's needs are catered for well. The parents are kept well-informed about their children's progress towards the targets laid out in the individual education plans, including targets for behaviour.

40. Reports on pupils' progress have good features such as clear information about learning in English, mathematics and science, and individual targets. The school has overlooked the usefulness to parents of specifying the next steps for the child to take towards these targets. Pupils do not comment on how they are doing or what they need to do to improve. However, the staff plan to involve pupils in their own target setting in the next school year, as the value of this is recognised.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. The school is led and managed very well. The headteacher has successfully built up a very good and effective school over the last four years. She provides very good leadership, ably supported by a very committed senior management team and hard-working staff. There is a high level of commitment to improvement and a very good capacity to succeed. The concerted actions of

all the staff and governors promote high standards and a very good overall quality of education for the pupils.

42. The headteacher provides a very clear direction for the work of the school. It is based on the expectation that, in developing the school, a strong ethos of care and the fostering of positive relationships are maintained. The headteacher has not been afraid to make difficult decisions in order to tackle weaknesses in the quality of the teaching and learning. Despite some significant staffing problems and a high turnover of staff, she has, for example, managed to ensure that the work on raising standards in English, mathematics and science has continued.

43. The headteacher and the two permanent teachers take responsibility for all subjects and other areas of the school's work. This is a heavy load for them, which arises from recent staffing difficulties. However, their clear prioritising of what is most important and their good management have contributed to the school's success in improving standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science. However, the staffing situation has slowed the school's development in areas such as teaching ICT and improving communication with parents.

44. The school is very good at promoting equal opportunities and meeting the needs of all its pupils. For example, the few pupils who have been at an early stage of learning English have been looked after very well, both in terms of language support and in their wider needs for personal and social inclusion in the life of the school. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is managed well, with care taken to ensure that pupils' individual learning programmes and the support they receive are suitable and matched appropriately to their needs. Regular meetings keep staff informed and enable them to ensure that the pupils are suitably supported. Spending for special educational needs is used well, with the emphasis on providing staff to support pupils in class. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified. Although they currently do well, the school recognises the need to focus more sharply on the provision for these pupils.

45. The governing body shares the headteacher's vision for the school, and is strongly committed to helping it achieve its aims. All the governors were new to the role when the school opened, and they have done very well in helping it get established. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Although the governing body is not up to its full strength, it has restructured the way it works so that roles and responsibilities are more clearly defined and more effectively carried out. They are still hoping to recruit new members onto the governing body. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities, and play a full part in planning the way forward. For example, governors are aware that their next step is to improve their skills in and focus on monitoring and evaluating the school's performance more effectively and taking on the role of the critical friend.

46. Appropriate steps are taken to check that the school is providing the best value in all aspects of its work. For example, parents have been consulted about their views of the school, and results in national tests are compared with those gained by pupils in other schools, both locally and nationally. The school works to a well-defined improvement plan for the current academic year and with prudent attention to the future needs of the school as it grows. For example, when equipping the school, they are building up the resources for each class as it is opened, so buying the most up-to-date and suitable equipment available. The school has had relatively high funding because it is new and expanding. The budget has been managed prudently, to obtain the best value for expenditure. A high amount has been carried forward from the previous financial year, in order to pay for the new facilities and resources that will be needed as the school grows.

47. The headteacher monitors and evaluates the work of the school through lesson observations and examining weekly planning, with the assistance of the other permanent teaching staff. This monitoring has led to relevant areas for development being identified, such as handwriting. Results of national tests are analysed carefully, and action has been taken where necessary to improve performance. The school's own self-evaluation has identified the need for this monitoring to be extended from a focus on English, mathematics and science to include the other subjects of the curriculum.

48. There has been a high turnover of teaching staff since the school opened. Two classes have been particularly affected by this during the current school year. The headteacher has managed the

staffing situation well, although teacher changes have led to some difficulties for pupils, particularly in the Year 1 class. Parents raised a concern about this before the inspection, expressing the view that their children have not done well enough during this school year as a result of weaknesses in teaching in Year 1. However, every class had a full-time teacher for the term of the inspection, and the evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed showed that the temporary teachers were working successfully as they had been inducted well into the school's expectations and systems. The headteacher has a good rationale for recruitment for the next school year and for deployment of the teaching staff.

49. The school has many high-quality teaching assistants, most of whom have relevant qualifications and very good expertise. They work very well with the teachers, and play a valuable role in supporting pupils' learning. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress, particularly for those with special educational needs. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis due to the efficient administration of the school office. The school makes good use of new technology, both in the every-day running of the school and to support pupils' learning.

50. The accommodation provides very good facilities. Classrooms are spacious, and very well maintained and decorated. Recent development of the outdoor space now provides two well-marked playground areas, a large grassed playing field and an area for pupils to sit and chat or play quietly. The children in the reception class also have a good, enclosed play area for outdoor activities. The overall quality and quantity of learning resources is good. Resources are well used and support the teaching and learning of pupils of all abilities. The library is an attractive area. It is well managed and contains books that provide a good resource to enrich pupils' learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. As well as the planned developments as the school grows each year, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) improve communication with parents, so that they are better informed about all the successful work of the school and are more able to work with the staff to support their children's learning [*paragraphs 37, 38, 40*].

In addition to this, the governors may wish to include the following additional issues in the Action Plan that will be developed in response to the inspection:

- improving teachers' marking of pupils' written work [*paragraph 20*];
- giving pupils in Years 1, 3 and 4 more experience of using computers, to build further on their recent gains in learning ICT and so raise standards in the subject [*paragraphs 88, 89*].

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	27
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	9	14	2	0	0	0
Percentage	7	34	52	7	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 more than three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	120
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	13

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	29

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

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	13

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.5
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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	9	10	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	17	17	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (57)	89 (57)	95 (57)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	17	17	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (71)	89 (57)	95 (86)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll 2002-03	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
76	2	1
1	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0

No ethnic group recorded	2	0	0
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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

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	188

Financial information

Financial year	2002-03
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NB the following income and expenditure figures have to be wrong! HT to correct!!!!

	£
Total income	337,873
Total expenditure	345,289
Expenditure per pupil	2,877
Balance brought forward from previous year	66,219
Balance carried forward to next year	58,803

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
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	120
Number of questionnaires returned	41

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	32	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	61	34	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	41	5	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	37	22	0	0
The teaching is good.	64	27	7	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	39	15	7	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	24	12	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	27	5	2	5
The school works closely with parents.	34	39	15	12	0
The school is well led and managed.	38	46	7	2	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	44	2	0	10
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	29	17	17	8

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

52. Children enter the reception class at the beginning of the year in which they are five. A higher-than-usual proportion of the children now in the reception class started school just after their fourth birthday, and will not be five until August. Teachers' assessments show that children enter the school with skills and attitudes that are overall in line with national expectations for their age, and broadly average across all areas of learning. The children achieve very well during their time in the reception class. Overall, by the end of the school year their attainment is above expectations as most children have met or exceeded the expected levels for their age (the Early Learning Goals). The children do particularly well in their personal and social development, becoming confident and co-operative when contributing in class and working together.

53. The quality of teaching and learning in the reception class is very good. The teacher and support staff work together very effectively to support children's learning. Their planning is thorough. Detailed observations of how the children perform and behave are used to ensure that the work is consistently well matched to each child's needs. A wide range of activities is provided in all the areas of learning. Teaching assistants are deployed very well, and give skilled support to the children. This enables those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language to make very good progress. Appropriate emphasis is given to teaching basic skills in language and mathematics. Time and resources are used productively, and relationships are excellent.

54. The work of the Foundation Stage is very well led and managed. The curriculum provides well for the children's needs. For example, the structure and routine in the reception class shifted from an emphasis on practical, play-based activities in the first part of the school year, towards a more formal classroom routine in the summer term in preparation for Year 1. The outside area is used successfully to promote physical and personal development. The reception class is well resourced and equipment is readily available for children to use.

Personal, social and emotional development

55. The provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is very good overall, with some excellent features. The approach to behaviour management is consistently positive and children are actively encouraged to reflect on their own behaviour and develop a sense of personal responsibility and self-discipline. The teacher provides an excellent role model and treats each child with care and respect whilst fostering a sense of self-reliance and high expectations. Children in the reception class work very co-operatively, sharing equipment and treating each other with respect. They show concern for each other and generally care for others' well being. An example of this was seen when a boy's hat blew off as the class were coming in from playtime; two children ran after the hat, retrieved it, calmly gave it back to him and were thanked in return, with no adult involvement or prompting. The children in the reception class are independent, self-reliant, confident, happy learners.

Communication, language and literacy

56. Provision in this area of learning is good, with a consistent emphasis on the promotion of reading and writing. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils in this area of learning. The children have daily opportunities for speaking, listening, reading and writing. They are encouraged to express their views and opinions and to learn new vocabulary. They contribute willingly to class discussions and express their thoughts and opinions confidently. By the time they leave the reception class, most children speak confidently and clearly, expressing a range of ideas and views and stating their needs clearly. They generally listen very well. They have learned to do this in response to the teacher's use of a wide range of strategies to promote the skill of listening, including 'brain gym' activities which are designed to encourage active listening and a retentive memory.

57. Every day, the children are set a learning task relating to literacy. This is expressed in language the children understand, and presented by a 'thinking person' who is drawn as a smiley face. The children have a secure grasp of what the 'thinking person' means for them, and so they know the purpose of the work they are asked to do. They have the opportunity to read a wide range of books each day. Information books are used well to support learning. For example, when the teacher brought in snails for the class to observe and study, she also provided a good range of information books about snails for the children to look at and read to broaden their learning. Children regularly read to adults and make good progress in developing their reading skills. Most write legibly by the end of the reception year. They have learned various strategies for spelling which include listening to the sound of the word, referring to words displayed around the classroom and using their knowledge of word shapes and phonic blends.

Mathematical development

58. The provision for children's mathematical development is very good. By the time they leave the reception class, the children count confidently to ten and correctly match the numbers to the words. The majority of children have achieved or exceeded the Early Learning Goals in this area. For example, they count and match numbers far beyond ten confidently and accurately. The children generally write numbers correctly and display a good general knowledge about, and confidence with, mathematical tasks. They know 'o'clock' times on a clock face, and over half the class recognise and understand the concept of half past the hour. A few high-attaining children are now working on the concept of quarter past and quarter to, which is a standard well beyond that expected for their age.

59. Work is well planned, and appropriately adapted to meet individual children's needs. For example, in the work on time the higher-attaining children used clock faces and recording sheets while working on identifying quarter past and quarter to the hour, whereas children who were uncertain about measuring time estimated how many jumps they could do in one minute and then used sand-timers as they tested their estimates. Comprehensive records and observations are kept by the teacher and support staff, who monitor and track the children's progress well.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

60. Resources in the classroom, teacher's planning, children's records and photographic evidence of past topics all showed that provision in this area of learning is very good. The children have daily opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world, and for one day each week emphasis is placed on this area of learning. During the inspection, the topic was 'Gardens'. The children had a dozen snails to observe as part of this work. Activities were well planned to ensure that each snail-related task had a clear objective that the children could readily understand. Time was well used and support staff well briefed to ensure that learning opportunities were maximised. The teacher's enthusiasm and fascination with the snails was infectious, and the children were delighted to observe the snails' many features. They used magnifiers carefully and skilfully. They made relevant and appropriate comments and observations. They treated the snails with care and respect. They were made aware of the health and safety aspects of touching the snails, both from their own standpoint and from that of the health of the snails. The children's obvious delight at being in such close proximity to the snails and observing their shells, trails and antenna manifested a sense of awe and wonder that promoted their spiritual development very well.

Physical development

61. Provision in this area of learning is good. Children learn to use a variety of equipment and tools safely and with increasing control. They hold pencils and scissors correctly and their writing and cutting skills are generally good. When outside, they use a variety of large toys with care and skill and are well co-ordinated. There are regular timetabled physical education lessons, but these were not observed during the inspection. Regular reminders about aspects of health and safety are given

by the teacher and support staff and these include the importance of washing hands, drinking water, wearing sun hats and generally keeping healthy.

Creative development

62. The provision for creative development is good. Children learn to paint and make pictures using a wide variety of materials. They have many opportunities for cutting, sticking and drawing. Creative activities are planned into the overall topic and always have a clear learning purpose. During the inspection, the children were making 'snail trails' using pipettes, glue, sequins, rice and lentils. The children used the pipettes with care and accuracy and displayed obvious delight when creating a snail trail of glittering sequins and stars. Observations of how children undertake these tasks are recorded comprehensively, and a good photographic record reflects progress in this area of learning over the year.

ENGLISH

63. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 were much higher in 2002 than in 2001, reflecting differences in the year groups. In 2002, the reading results were well above the national average and the results for writing were above average. Both results were average compared to similar schools. Numbers in the year groups are too small for valid judgements to be made on the differences in boys' and girls' results. The 2003 results were higher than those gained in 2002, particularly in writing.

64. The standard attained by the pupils now in Year 2 is well above average in reading, writing and speaking and listening. Almost all speak clearly and articulately, and read confidently. Standards in writing have improved due to the school's recent focus on this area of English. Most pupils write expressively, with lively choices of vocabulary, and have taken care to spell and punctuate sentences accurately. Their most successful work has been in imaginative writing.

65. The standard attained by the pupils now in Year 4 is below the expectations for their age. The pupils speak most confidently about matters in their own experience, but have some difficulty in exploring ideas in depth. They read simple texts aloud accurately, and the higher-attaining pupils have begun to explore children's fiction independently. In writing, Year 4 pupils are best at tasks involving recording their own experience, such as when they took part in a Roman Day as part of their work in history.

66. Pupils' achievement is good in Years 1 to 4. They do well in relation to their capability and their earlier attainment. The difference in standards between Years 2 and 4 is accounted for by the proportion of pupils with special educational needs being high in Year 4, and by differences in the overall levels of attainment when the pupils entered the school. In reading, the higher-attaining pupils are encouraged to move from the reading scheme to a wider choice as soon as they are able to, while those who struggle to read independently are still supported by the scheme.

67. Teaching and learning are good. Strengths in teaching include purposeful questioning of pupils at the start of the lesson to find out what they remember, with very clear guidance on what they are expected to focus on during the activities that day. This involves pupils at the outset, and they understand the purpose of the work. They find the work interesting, partly because teachers link it in well to the pupils' experience, and partly because the teachers and teaching assistants pose questions that challenge them to think for themselves. Teachers are alert to potential difficulties in understanding how to do the work, and so explain it carefully. They also notice those who are having difficulty, or who are ready to do more, and swiftly give further guidance. This contributes to the good progress made by the higher-attainers as well as those with special educational needs.

68. Teaching assistants have good expertise in English, and are skilled in working with pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties. Teachers also provide well for these pupils by adapting group activities and resources to meet their needs, and involving them in whole-class discussion through carefully-targeted questions that the pupils are able to answer. As a result, the pupils with special educational needs are as keen to learn as the other pupils are, and are proud of their work. The most

significant area for improvement now is in teachers' marking, as some is very good but much is too brief.

69. English is well led and managed. Its development since the school opened has been good. For example, the actions taken to improve the standard of pupils' writing were successful. The resources, including library books, have been well chosen. The curriculum is well planned, with good additional opportunities such as a very successful book week. Teachers also make many links to other subjects, providing good support for the pupils' learning of English skills through their other work.

MATHEMATICS

70. Results in the national assessments at the end of Year 2 were well above the national average in 2002. The provisional results for 2003 were better than those of 2002, which were much higher than in 2001, the first year that the school had Year 2 pupils.

71. Pupils start Year 1 with above-average attainment in their mathematical development, and by the end of Year 2 their attainment is well above average. This represents good achievement. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 also achieve well in relation to their earlier levels of attainment although the performance of the pupils in Year 4 is below the national expectation for their age, reflecting the differences between this year group and the younger ones. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language also make good progress.

72. Pupils enter Year 1 with standards that are above those expected for their age. For example, they can count and write numbers to and beyond 10 and they understand simple addition and subtraction. By Year 2, most pupils have a secure grasp of the size and order of numbers to and beyond 100. By Year 4, pupils use number lines accurately and can assess and evaluate their own work. In the work seen during the inspection, the pupils showed that they had gained a sound understanding of fractions, as they identified which was the smaller of two fractions. Higher-attaining pupils worked very well in pairs when using a computer programme to consolidate this work.

73. Teaching and learning in mathematics are good because lessons are active and practical. Teachers plan thoroughly, and each lesson explain clearly to the pupils what they are to learn. Pupils make good gains in their numeracy skills as a result of daily practice of mental mathematics, regular practice of tables and frequent opportunities for calculating. Mathematical skills are taught well and are frequently reinforced through applying what pupils have learned to problems involving real-life situations. The pace of lessons is generally good, but occasionally groups are too big and pupils have to wait too long to have a turn. Teachers have very good relationships with the pupils and expect them to behave well. At the end of each lesson, teachers question pupils skilfully to review and reinforce what they have learned. The marking of pupils work is satisfactory overall, but is inconsistent across the school. All work is marked, but teachers' comments do not always inform pupils about the strengths and weaknesses in their work and what they need to do next in order to improve.

74. Work is adapted well to meet the needs of individuals and groups of children. Teaching assistants provide effective, unobtrusive support to pupils with behavioural difficulties, allowing lessons to proceed without unnecessary interruptions. Teaching assistants also help pupils with learning difficulties, for example by clarifying teachers' explanations and helping with written work. Higher-attaining pupils are challenged well by additional or more complex tasks.

75. The subject is well led and managed, with systematic monitoring of how the quality of teaching and the standard of pupils' work. For example, staff have analysed assessment information to find any gaps in pupils' performance, and have identified a need to extend opportunities for problem solving. Resources for mathematics are good, and have been carefully chosen to meet the needs of each year group as the school grows and develops. The National Curriculum is covered well, including providing opportunities to extend pupils' learning by the use of ICT. Bright displays of mathematical work around the school encourage pupils to have a positive attitude towards the subject.

SCIENCE

76. Overall results of the teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 were in line with the national average in 2002, although only a small proportion of pupils attained Level 3. In 2003, the results improved significantly. All the pupils attained Level 2 and nearly half reached Level 3.

77. Standards of attainment are above the national expectation at the end of Year 2, but in Year 4 are below the expectation for pupils of this age. Taking account of their prior attainment, however, pupils' achievement is good throughout the school. Pupils have particularly good knowledge and understanding of electrical circuits and of plants and animals. For example, Year 1 pupils know that the sun is a source of light, and have identified and recorded different light sources. Through performing simple tests, they found out that light is essential for seeing. This was made more relevant for them by a visitor to the school talking about blindness and the work of Louis Braille. Year 2 pupils understand variations in plants and animals and that differences in people's physical characteristics can be measured. They know that an experiment has to be fair for the results to be valid. Year 3 and 4 pupils have investigated the conditions plants need to germinate and grow. When setting up their experiments, they understand the need to be very precise and to have a control for each variable. Literacy and numeracy skills are used well in science. Pupils have a very good range of scientific vocabulary. They write up their work well. Pupils with special educational needs and low-attaining pupils are well supported, and so they have also learned to express scientific ideas and predict outcomes accurately.

78. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Practical lessons are well organised and managed, resources are well prepared and all pupils are involved. They listen to the teacher's instructions attentively, show interest by asking questions, and carry out their work enthusiastically. The best lessons seen during the inspection moved at a brisk pace and so little time was wasted. In a particularly successful lesson exploring the relationship between the length of people's forearms and feet, pupils were helped to measure accurately and they suggested ways they could improve their work. The teacher's good subject knowledge meant that the activities were well planned to develop pupils' ideas as the lesson progressed. The pupils were keen to continue their investigation at home.

79. In all classes, good opportunities are planned for pupils to learn through practical activities. This develops their scientific enquiry skills well. However, the older pupils have not been taught how to follow their own lines of enquiry, as teachers rather than pupils generally select the equipment and plan the method of setting up and carrying out the investigation. Older pupils record their work on worksheets, limiting their opportunities to learn how to set it out and organise it. Consequently, some of the written work is insufficiently challenging for the higher-attaining pupils. However, the lessons are interesting and so pupils remain focused, concentrate well and learn what has been planned. The teachers and teaching assistants relate well to the pupils and give valuable support to all in the class. Pupils respond well by working hard and finishing the expected amount of work. Work is marked regularly with positive comments, praising pupils for their efforts. Some marking is very good, with comments and questions that challenge pupils to think about how they could improve and develop their work.

80. The subject is well led and managed. The curriculum is planned coherently as scientific knowledge and skills are taught through the full range of topics, with particular emphasis on experimental and investigative work. An assessment system is being developed to track pupils' learning in science as they move through the school. The subject is well resourced and equipment carefully organised in well-labelled topic boxes. This ensures that everything that teachers need to teach the subject effectively is at hand. There has been good improvement in the subject since the school opened, particularly in raising standards during this school year.

81. In the subject reports that follow, the evidence is based on a sample of pupils' work from this school year together with information from teachers, discussions with pupils and observations of some lessons. Overall evaluations are given where inspectors were able to gather enough evidence to make a reliable judgement.

ART AND DESIGN and DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

82. The available evidence suggests that the work done by pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 is of the standard expected for the pupils' ages, and that their achievement is satisfactory. Teachers have focused well on developing pupils' skills systematically, through sequences of work and interesting tasks. For example, art sketch books showed that pupils have designed blocks for printing geometric patterns, and then used these blocks to obtain different effects by rubbing with colours. This was further developed in the study of African art, through making patterns with fabric blocks. Displays around the school showed that pupils are taught how to plan their work and to evaluate its quality. Pupils have suitable opportunities to study the pictures of famous artists such as Monet and Seurat, and have used different media to produce their own pictures in the same style. The pupils were proud of their display of 'Rainbow Fish' and were keen to talk about this work.

83. The curriculum makes good links to other subjects including English, mathematics, ICT and history. For example, in design and technology pupils in Year 1 explored how to make a boat move using an elastic band to drive a propeller, which extended their science work on sinking and floating. In art, older pupils showed an understanding of symmetry in their cut paper patterns. Written evaluations of what they have made in design and technology, such as puppets and wheeled vehicles, help develop pupils' literacy skills.

84. The subjects are led and managed satisfactorily. Resources are good, enabling interesting topics to be covered. Displays of pupils' work in classrooms and around the school encourage pride in their achievements. A recent initiative in art involved students from a local secondary school. The pupils visited an exhibition of the students' art work and copied and commented on their favourite pieces. This was effective in stimulating pupils' interest.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

85. Pupils in Years 2 and 4 attain standards in history and geography that are in line with those expected nationally. In geography, pupils in Year 2 have learned about their local area and have contrasted it with life on a remote Scottish island through the 'Katie Morag' project. In history, they have undertaken a themed project on houses and homes. Their written work is generally presented well. By the end of Year 4, pupils have carried out mapping exercises in geography and have identified the main types of land use in the UK. In history, they have undertaken a project on the Romans which included a visit to the school by a theatre in education group who presented a Roman Day in which the older pupils participated.

86. Teaching and learning were very good in a Year 2 geography lesson. Strengths included challenging work, the use of ICT to display results of a survey, and questioning that encouraged pupils to debate their ideas on waste recycling and to improve their skills in speaking and listening. The teaching of pupils in Years 3 and 4 was good. They were encouraged to use correct geographical language to identify and classify land usage from a selection of aerial photographs. The last part of the lesson was used well to go over what the pupils had learned and to make sure they understood the main points of the lesson. The marking of written work is satisfactory overall, although inconsistent. Teachers usually make encouraging comments and some give good advice, but marking does not always indicate what pupils could do to improve.

87. Geography and history are well led and managed. Teachers' planning and pupils' work are monitored regularly. The curriculum is well planned, including for the pupils in mixed-age classes. Resources for both subjects are well planned and organised. There has been steady improvement in work in history and geography since the school opened.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

88. The provision of ICT has been slowed by factors relating to the context of this new school. Firstly, the school's computer equipment and programmes have only recently been fully installed. Organising this has taken considerable time and effort. The facilities are now good, with a computer suite that enables groups to be taught ICT together, supplemented by classroom computers for

individual and pair work during other lessons. Secondly, teaching staff have needed training in the teaching and use of ICT within the school's curriculum. This has been provided, but staffing changes have meant that the training has had to be repeated instead of being built on. As a result, pupils in Years 1, 3 and 4 have had too few opportunities for using computers during this school year, slowing their learning in the subject. Thirdly, the heavy load of responsibility carried by the permanent teachers has meant that developing ICT could not be given the time that it would have had in an established school. Nevertheless, the subject has been led and managed satisfactorily, and pupils in all year groups have recently made good gains in their learning.

89. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Standards are average at the end of Year 2, although below expectations for pupils in Year 4. The pupils in Year 2 have done the widest variety of ICT work, including computer art, finding out how to locate information on the Internet, and writing directions to make a programmable toy move. The standard of the database work by pupils in Years 3 and 4 was similar to that of the Year 2 pupils, and reflected the lack of opportunities for ICT the older pupils have had in the past. In all year groups, displays and photographic evidence showed that good links between ICT and other subjects have been made regularly during this school year.

90. In the lessons observed, pupils were keen to use the computers. The pupils in Year 1 used the mouse confidently, and knew how to point and click to play a rhyming game that developed their reading skills. The pupils were taught how to interpret graphs, which linked to their work in mathematics, and then learned the ICT skill of adding data to a database. This was taught well, with clear demonstrations. Groups subsequently worked in the computer suite with teaching-assistant support, and successfully entered and printed out the results of their survey on how people travel to school.

MUSIC

91. In the one lesson observed, the standard was higher than expected for the age of the pupils and the teaching was very good. The Year 2 pupils were encouraged to use percussion instruments to express the mood of a poem. They listened to the introductory music and showed good understanding of the pitch by following with hand signals. They discussed their ideas and worked very well together to produce some expressive pieces. The lesson had been very well planned, and moved at a brisk pace with a good balance between teacher's explanations and time for pupils to practise. They had opportunities for composing and performing in their groups and listening to and appraising each other's work. They thoroughly enjoyed the lesson, and responded very well to the challenging tasks.

92. The subject is well organised, and is being developed successfully. For example, a scheme of work introduced for the younger pupils enables non-specialists to teach effectively. Pupils listen to a good range of music as they arrive for and leave assembly and the singing is satisfactory, taking into account that it is often unaccompanied. Piano tuition is beginning to be established and provides pupils and teachers with good opportunities for developing their skills. Pupils have the chance to learn to play the recorder in an after-school club. As there is no music specialist on the staff, the school employs an accompanist to take each class for singing every week.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

93. The physical education lessons observed indicated that standards are above national expectations. In a games lesson, pupils in Year 2 showed good co-ordination, followed instructions well and used sports equipment with control and care. They demonstrated a high level of skill in controlling a hockey ball, and worked co-operatively with their partners. In a dance lesson, Year 1 pupils moved imaginatively and had an awareness of space and other people. Pupils in both lessons listened well to teachers, followed instructions and worked effectively in pairs and small groups.

94. In the lessons seen, the teaching and learning were very good. Lessons were very well planned and organised. Teachers gave clear instructions and explanations as they made relevant teaching points. Appropriate adult support enabled pupils with behavioural difficulties to be involved as fully as possible, without their behaviour detracting from other pupils' learning. Basic skills were

taught very well, particularly in the hockey lesson. Here, Year 2 pupils' learning of how to dribble a hockey ball was very good because the teacher focused on building the skills systematically, with clear instructions and demonstrations, and allowed the pupils enough time to practise and modify their actions. Pupils enjoyed the lessons, listened well and participated enthusiastically.

95. The subject is well led and managed, and the curriculum is carefully planned to enable pupils to experience dance, gymnastics and games at various times of the year. Resources are sufficient, and well organised.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

96. By the end of Year 2, the evidence indicates that pupils attain the standard expected for their age, as set out in the local Agreed Syllabus, and that their achievement is satisfactory. Younger pupils know some of the stories about Jesus and His disciples. They have recorded these stories in their books, with pictures. In Year 2, very good links are made between literacy and religious education. For example, the pupils wrote captions under pictures describing the events of Holy Week, and higher-attaining pupils also wrote accounts of these events.

97. Pupils gain sound knowledge of Christianity through stories and records of events from the Old and New Testaments. They are encouraged to reflect on their own lives and experiences, as when they discussed the feelings of jealousy after learning about the story of Joseph. Pupils also have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of other religions, including Sikhism.

98. Religious education is well supported by work in art and drama, which enables pupils to explore religious ideas and thinking. For example, pupils took on the role of a reporter and asked questions in a role-play about the 'Storm at Sea'. This was particularly effective in developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of parables. Connections are made between special people, places, celebrations and symbols to make learning from religion relevant to pupils' own lives. Themes from lessons are reinforced in daily assemblies, and this encourages further understanding.

99. The management of the subject is satisfactory, although there are no formal procedures for assessing individual pupils' learning or for recording progress. This limits teachers' ability to plan and to build as effectively as possible on pupils' current knowledge and understanding. A good range of books in the library and other very good resources support the teaching of the different religions.