

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **ASHTON VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

LEA area: Bristol

Unique reference number: 108913

Headteacher: Ms Vivien Champeney

Lead inspector: Geoff Burgess

Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2003

Inspection number: 255378

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 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	147
School address:	Avebury Road Ashton Bristol
Postcode:	BS3 2QG
Telephone number:	0117 9030383
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Peter Crispin
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Ashton Vale Primary is a smaller than average city school with five mixed age classes situated in the south western suburbs of Bristol. It serves a community with its own distinct identity separated from the rest of Bristol by a railway line with the main access through a single track railway arch. The accommodation and grounds are spacious and well developed and the school community is very stable with few movements of pupils, staff or governors. A small minority of families have a variety of non-British ethnic origins and languages. The proportion entitled to free school meals is below average. Relatively fewer pupils are on the special needs register than in similar schools. Four year olds start school socially well adjusted. Some reception class intakes are achieving as well as most four year olds when they start school but other intakes, such as the present Years 2 and 3, have higher numbers of boys and girls attaining at lower levels.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23708	Geoff Burgess	Lead inspector	Science, Information and communication technology, Music, Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage, Special educational needs, Personal, social and health education.
9644	Mike Whitaker	Lay inspector	
21992	Jean Newing	Team inspector	English, Geography, History, Religious Education.
23330	Tony Burgess	Team inspector	Mathematics, Art, Design and technology, Physical education.

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>10</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>23</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a good school with several strengths which provides good value for money and is very popular in the local community.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is good overall with some very good teaching in Years 3 to 6 in a range of subjects;
- Standards in English, mathematics and science in Year 6 have improved in recent years and are currently above average when compared with similar schools;
- Planning does not always take sufficient account of the two age groups in each class, especially the older, higher attainers;
- It provides rich and varied learning opportunities much enhanced by cross-curricular themes and very good opportunities for pupils to extend their experiences during and after school;
- The buildings and grounds have been very well developed to provide a stimulating and well resourced learning environment for children to work and play in;
- Individual reading and handwriting have a lower priority in the younger classes than in most other schools and standards are lower;
- Pupils' personal, moral and social development has a high priority. Pupils behave well, understand the impact of their actions on others and get on well together;
- The head, well supported by the staff and governors, provides positive and thoughtful leadership and ensures that the whole school community is able to contribute to development.

Since its last inspection, the school has made a good improvement, especially in the Foundation Stage (reception), the quality of teaching, the curriculum, and the learning environment. All issues from the last inspection have been dealt with. Standards achieved by eleven year olds have shown an above average improvement over results obtained in national testing at the age of seven.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	E	E*	E	C
Mathematics	E*	D	D	C
Science	E	D	B	A

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

In the table above, E\* indicates that these results were in the bottom 5% of all primary schools. Unconfirmed comparisons for 2003 show that results in English and mathematics have improved further.

Overall achievement is satisfactory. Most children in the current foundation year will achieve the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2 but, having started school with below average attainment, standards of pupils in Year 2 are below average. Boys and girls in Years 3 to 6 are achieving well and standards in Year 6 are up to average in English, mathematics and science. Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is good and good provision in humanities, the arts and physical education ensures that pupils are doing as well as expected. Boys and girls have developed good attitudes, values and behaviour thanks to the school's caring ethos and the high quality learning environment. They understand their role in the community and enjoy taking responsibility for their part in it. All staff provide very good role models and ensure that pupils feel valued and able to express themselves.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**Ashton Vale School provides a good quality of education. Teaching overall is good, with learning strongest in Years 3 to 6 and in subjects such as art, music and religious education (RE) where teachers have particular expertise.** Well trained teaching assistants provide good support but are few in number. Staff have expertise right across the curriculum and provide a good range of stimulating learning opportunities. Literacy, numeracy, science and ICT are strongly represented and the arts and humanities provide stimulation and balance. Of particular note are the many and varied opportunities provided for pupils to take part in activities which enrich their learning. Staff ensure that all pupils are able to share in all that the school has to offer. The school has a good partnership with parents and the local community and relationships with the local pre-school group and secondary school are very productive. It takes very good care to ensure that pupils are safe and happy and able to do their best. Staff know pupils well, which means that boys and girls always have someone to whom they can turn for help or advice. The school makes good provision for promoting pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship development.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**The school is well led and managed.** By providing vision and strong leadership, the headteacher has enabled the well-established staff in their management roles to contribute to the many recent improvements to provision and the environment. Classroom monitoring and data analysis have a high priority, as has the professional development of staff. Governors provide strong support and are made very aware of, and are involved in, the developments and activities of their school. Day to day management is very efficient and, of necessity, the school's finances are managed very efficiently and monitored closely to ensure good value for money.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the school (especially recent improvements), the friendly atmosphere and the quality of teaching, but some have reservations about information about their children's progress. Pupils are very happy with their school and particularly enjoy all the new facilities and opportunities.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that work is planned to meet the needs of both year groups in each class, not only to ensure coverage of the curriculum, but to offer the appropriate levels of challenge and progression of skills and understanding;
- Make it possible for all younger boys and girls to be heard to read and to talk about their reading more frequently, either in school or at home;
- Seek to increase the amount of adult help available in class to support both the above processes, especially in the younger classes;
- Make the development of well formed and fluent handwriting a priority by allocating regular time and acquiring resources to support teaching as well as practice.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

**Overall achievement is satisfactory.** Most boys and girls are likely to reach the goals expected by the time they leave the Foundation Stage (reception). Standards are below, and in some cases, well below, average in most subjects in Year 2, and average in Year 6.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in the current Year 6 are being targeted to achieve the highest ever standards in the school in English, mathematics and science when they take national tests in 2004;
- In national testing in 2002 and 2003, pupils in Year 6 showed a bigger improvement over their results in Year 2 than in most other schools;
- Although standards in Year 2 are well below average in reading, writing and mathematics, the school's records show that this group was well below average on intake and has made satisfactory progress since then. The same applies to pupils in Year 3;
- Achievement is not consistent in the mixed age classes - whilst younger groups in all classes are doing well, potentially higher attainers in some older groups are not always stretched;
- Standards in English are generally lower than in all other subjects including mathematics;
- All pupils have achieved well in ICT over the past few years and standards in ICT, humanities, the arts and physical education are as seen in most schools.

#### Commentary

1. With small numbers in each year group, overall attainment depends greatly on the relative ability of children in each group when they start school, especially as so few pupils leave before Year 6. The school's records show that over the past three years pupils in all year groups have made satisfactory gains year on year. Current standards observed by inspectors confirm this judgement notably in Years 2 and 6 and with generally good quality teaching, achievement is satisfactory. Difficulties caused by all classes having two age groups are exacerbated by the shortage of classroom support which does not help with the inconsistencies in achievement noted above. The fact that individual reading and handwriting have a lower priority than in many schools contributes to the relatively lower standards in English. However, the school is to be complimented on ensuring that equal importance has been given to raising standards in subjects other than literacy and numeracy so that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in all are well up to scratch.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	13.8 (14.2)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	12.1 (11.6)	14.4 (14.3)
mathematics	15.1 (15.0)	16.5 (16.2)

*There were 17 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.2 (21.8)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	25.9 (25.8)	26.7 (26.6)
science	29.1 (27.8)	28.3 (28.3)

*There were 17 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*



## Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Good provision ensures that pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their attitudes to school and behaviour, are good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' good attitudes to learning help pupils to make steady progress and offer a positive contribution in class;
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school so absences are almost always unavoidable and few pupils are late;
- Good behaviour in classrooms, assemblies, around the school and in the playground helps to make this a happy school;
- Pupils are given frequent opportunities to develop confidence and take responsibility, which they take up and follow through conscientiously;
- In this mainly all white school, pupils are prepared well to live in a culturally diverse society.

### Commentary

#### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.9
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	0.5

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

#### Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – any other mixed background
Black or Black British – African
Chinese
Any other ethnic group

#### Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
138	5	0
4	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0

*The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

2. Pupils listen attentively and enjoy their learning. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good. The school has the support of parents and the community and staff have created a lively, welcoming environment that ensures that children enjoy coming to school. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and pupils respond well to the incentives used – verbal praise, stickers, merit marks and certificates. Pupils are active learners, participating fully in lessons by working with concentration and enthusiasm and sharing their ideas. Boys and girls work hard, sometimes independently, sometimes collaboratively. Pupils are very polite and friendly and good manners are strongly promoted in this school. Pupils behave well in unsupervised situations and participate confidently in discussions with visitors. Older pupils act as good role models for younger children.

3. Boys and girls take the responsibilities they are given seriously and take a pride in carrying them out without being reminded. The oldest pupils all have whole school responsibilities including getting the hall ready for assembly and helping in the younger children's playground. The school council gives pupils the opportunity to be involved in some decision making such as the redecoration

of the toilets and improvements in the playground. Pupils' views are sought annually through a questionnaire. The oldest pupils hold very positive views of their school. They show an understanding of what it means to respect the views and beliefs of others. Circle time (when pupils sit together to discuss various issues) makes a good contribution to this understanding.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

### The school provides a good quality of education

#### Teaching and learning

**Teaching and learning are good overall** with no unsatisfactory lessons, some very good teaching in Years 3 to 6, and mainly good teaching in the remaining sessions.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- While teaching overall is good, it is strongest in Years 3 to 6, and often when supported by extra adults in the classroom;
- Better teaching is usually associated with the expertise of the individual teacher, such as in music and physical education;
- In most lessons teachers provide interesting, relevant activities at a good pace which stimulates pupils to learn;
- Good preparation, good class management, and well established and understood expectations for behaviour and ways of working, make it possible for pupils to learn well;
- Pupils work well independently and collaboratively when required and respond well to opportunities to answer and discuss.
- However, for potentially higher attaining, older pupils in the mixed age classes in some lessons:
  - assessment procedures are not used well enough to ensure work is sufficiently challenging;
  - while lesson planning ensures coverage and continuity of content, it does not require such pupils to extend their skills or their understanding of concepts.

#### Commentary

##### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 21 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	3	12	6	0	0	0

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

4. A great deal of work has been completed over the past few years on improving all the structures and procedures which support good teaching and learning to good effect. At the time of the last inspection, most teaching was satisfactory with a quarter good and better - this time, over two-thirds of lessons were good and better with several very good lessons in Years 3 to 6. Examples of the improvements which have had a positive impact on learning include:

- The substantial improvements made to the facilities in the reception class, and the adoption of the Foundation Stage curriculum as a basis for planning;
- The very effective implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies and the adoption of their planning structures and national schemes of work in other subjects has provided an agreed planning and lesson structure to ensure consistency, continuity and coverage;
- A greater emphasis on making learning more interesting and cohesive by providing stimulating activities and relating work in many subjects;
- The enhancement of the role of teaching assistants, especially in supporting pupils with extra needs, and those in the Foundation Stage;
- The new computer suite and associated training which has had a profound effect on the confidence and competence of teachers and pupils in ICT;

- Performance management procedures have added further rigour to the monitoring of teaching, and continuing professional development arrangements have a high profile in the school.

5. As a result of all this activity, there is a great consistency of approach to learning throughout the school. Differences in the quality of teaching come from two sources. As noted above, although most pupils achieve well, work planned for some older pupils in the mixed age classes is not always challenging enough so these pupils do not achieve as much as they could. This makes otherwise good teaching satisfactory. On the other hand, in some lessons the expertise and enthusiasm of the teacher for a particular subject is such that all pupils are fully engaged and focused, and they achieve very impressive outcomes. It is very noticeable that the quality of learning is much enhanced when the well-trained and very conscientious teaching assistants are working with the class. However, the shortage of support staff means that pupils benefit from this less frequently than would be desirable. This has a particular impact on pupils with special educational needs (SEN) who learn much better when supported by an adult.

## **The curriculum**

**The school provides a good curriculum**, which is rich, worthwhile and aimed at stimulating pupils' interest beyond the classroom.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Using a two year rolling programme and with good links between subjects, the school provides a well-planned, broad and relevant curriculum;
- Literacy, numeracy and ICT are suitably emphasised and used well in other subjects, although aspects of reading and handwriting do not have the same priority;
- Teachers work hard to stimulate pupils' interest beyond the classroom;
- The curriculum is much enriched by planned focus weeks, special events and very good extracurricular activities;
- Strong links have been established with partner institutions to promote the arts and physical education to very good effect;
- The good quality of the accommodation has a positive impact on upon pupils' learning;
- Available adult help in classrooms is insufficient to cater for the needs of all pupils in the mixed age classes.

## **Commentary**

6. The school has worked hard to ensure it provides a rich and varied curriculum, which fulfils statutory requirements. Pupils are given a very wide range of interesting and stimulating learning experiences that cover all the required elements. The school provides a carefully planned programme of work in personal, social and health education (PSHE) including drugs and sex education, to be taught throughout the school and reinforced during circle time. There is a suitable emphasis on the teaching of English, mathematics and science, but standards in English and in presentation generally, are inhibited by the lower priority of reading and handwriting.

7. Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to ensure that subjects in addition to English, mathematics and science, receive their due emphasis despite the time constraints on them brought about by many national initiatives. Teachers are constantly looking for ways of extending learning beyond the classroom by stimulating interests that pupils continue at home or share with their classmates. Overall thorough planning which involves all the teaching staff and covers all aspects of the National Curriculum has a positive impact on teaching and learning. There is sufficient flexibility in planning to allow regular updates at the beginning of each term, or medium term planning period, to recognise differences in groups of children and to include aspects that will inspire them. This helps to ensure that the full curriculum is accessible to all pupils. Where possible teachers exploit links between subjects to bring coherence to learning and make the best use of the time available.

8. The school is rightly proud of the regular focus weeks, such as the Arts Week and the Book Week, where professional artists and writers hold workshops for pupils, sharing their expertise and knowledge. It has achieved the Arts Council Silver Arts Mark in recognition in its provision in this area. Staff provide a very good range of clubs and extracurricular activities and strong links have been established with Ashton Park Secondary Sports School to promote physical education in such aspects as boys' dance, tag rugby and high fives netball.

9. The school's spacious indoor and outside accommodation is well used to enrich pupils' learning. A well equipped computer suite is well used by pupils of all ages. There are separate rooms for small group work in literacy, numeracy and for the support of pupils with special needs, and there is a music room. The extensive grounds are devoted to a number of different activities with a well-equipped adventure play area, plenty of tree cover to provide shade in summer, a pond and wildlife area, and a discrete, secure play area, with gazebo, for the youngest children. Teachers' expertise covers the entire curriculum but the number of teaching assistants is inadequate.

### **Care, guidance and support**

**Provision for this area is good.** The school provides a safe, secure learning environment in which pupils can grow and flourish.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils are safe and secure in school;
- Pupils know that they can go to any member of staff for help or support confident that they will be listened to and dealt with sensitively;
- The school monitors how well pupils are doing and keeps parents informed of their children's progress;
- Pupils' personal development is monitored informally and formally and, when necessary, parents are made aware of any problems;
- The school council is effective in giving pupils a voice. Each year pupils are given the opportunity to express their opinions through a questionnaire.

### **Commentary**

10. This is a small school with a stable staff who know their pupils well and much of the care is informal and undocumented. However, this does not mean that it is any less effective or inclusive. In keeping with its ethos of care, the school has all the necessary procedures for pupils' welfare, health and safety in place and all staff are aware and vigilant. The formal procedures relating to health and safety and child protection are fully considered and carried out effectively by appropriate staff and governors. A high standard of general care is maintained; the school office, for example, will phone home that morning if a child is unexpectedly absent. The school acts quickly if a pupil is unhappy or under pressure. Good systems are in place to help new arrivals settle in quickly.

11. Good procedures in place to monitor academic progress and personal development help the school track pupils' progress in the core subjects carefully. All pupils have literacy and numeracy targets each term. Sound provision is made to identify and support those pupils with SEN who find learning difficult. During interviews pupils expressed very positive views about their school and could not cite anything significant that could be improved.

12. Induction procedures for children who start school in the reception class are good. Very close links have been established with the nursery school from which most of the children are admitted and the teacher visits other pre-school providers. Assessment of personal, social and emotional development in the Foundation Stage is good, and formal procedures are in place to monitor personal development from Years 1 to 6, such as stickers, merit points and certificates that are presented in assembly. Names are written in the Golden Book for special achievements. A record of

playground detentions is recorded in the playground behaviour book. If a pupil appears in this too frequently parents are informed.

13. The school council is effective in giving pupils a voice about the improvements they would like to see in their school. The very 'user friendly' annual, pupil questionnaire gives all pupils the opportunity to comment on things they like, or to raise any concerns they may have.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

Ashton Vale School works hard at establishing and maintaining good links with parents and the community; links with partner institutions in all stages of education are very effective.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very positive links have been made with the local pre-school group, Ashton Park comprehensive school and the colleges and universities in the city;
- Good community links help to enrich pupils' learning and promote personal development;
- The school is open and accessible, without formality, to all parents and it makes considerable efforts to keep parents informed and involved;
- Parents' support for school events that involve children is very good, but less support is shown for curriculum-related events.

### **Commentary**

14. Parents hold positive views about the school and are very supportive of it. Communications with parents are good. Newsletters written in plain, simple language - serially numbered - are sent home every Friday. Parents are invited to a wide range of meetings, which address matters such as the ensuing term's curriculum, the implications of national tests, and how the school approaches the teaching of subjects such as numeracy or ICT. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress. They have the opportunity for individual consultations each term and staff are always willing to discuss issues informally, as they arise. The parents of pupils on the special needs register are involved in regular reviews and target setting. In addition to the full annual report, parents receive an interim report in the spring term, which comments briefly upon attainment and effort. Parental views are sought by means of an annual parents' questionnaire and the school is always open to listen to complaints - the governors hold a monthly 'surgery'. It is understood that few issues are ever raised, but governors' availability is evidence of an openness of approach to school management.

15. Pupils benefit from the strong links between the school and the nearby secondary school, which has sports college status. Pupils from Year 3 onwards visit to use the ICT, sports and art facilities, and there is good liaison between teachers over transfer arrangements notably concerning special needs pupils. The local pre-school group works closely with the school; nursery children visit the school to use the hall for physical education and the pond and wildlife area. Nursery and reception staff organise joint activities. A productive and mutually beneficial relationship exists between the school and several local colleges and universities who send a number of students to the school for first-hand experience and teaching practice.

16. Community links enrich pupils' experiences in a variety of ways. Pupils visit a large supermarket near to the school to see large-scale food retailing in action, and the school choir entertains shoppers at Christmas time. The school choir has sung at Bristol City football ground, Bristol Cathedral and the Colston Hall, thus helping pupils' self esteem and personal development. Local figures - artists and writers for example - are invited into school and pupils' sense of community is promoted by their gifts of Harvest Festival produce to local charities.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Overall good leadership and management are helping the school to improve steadily.** Good leadership is provided by the head and senior staff, good management by the whole staff team, and the governing body makes a good contribution to each by being informed, inquisitive and supportive.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The head provides vision and a sense of educational ambition and direction, and involves the whole school community in the decision making process;
- Subject co-ordinators make a good - and sometimes very good - contribution to the promotion of, and provision for, their areas of interest;
- Good use is made of the outcomes of monitoring and data analysis to evaluate the work of the school, set targets, identify priorities and judge the impact and value for money of any actions;
- Governors, many long serving, are very supportive and involved, and eager to do what they can to help the school to succeed;
- Spending targeted on agreed priorities is subjected to best value principles and carefully managed and monitored. Very good use is made of other sources of funding to improve facilities;
- Relationships and communications within the school, and with governors, the local community and parents are very good;
- Responsibility for spending is not yet delegated to staff with management responsibilities: for example subject co-ordinators do not manage a budget for their subjects.

**Commentary**

***Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003***

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	349188	Balance from previous year	2397
Total expenditure	352473	Balance carried forward to the next	- 888
Expenditure per pupil	2397		

17. The school has seen a period of steady and significant improvement over the past three years, started by the then acting head and brought to fruition by the new head. With her support, largely the same staff team and governing body have developed their roles and functions to good, and sometimes very good, effect. While the primary focus has been on raising standards and improving the learning environment, great care has been taken to give everyone a voice and the opportunity to share in the decision making process. Through this, agreed whole school policies and ways of working have been established with clear and specific roles and responsibilities. Everyone on the staff fully understands his or her respective role and is committed to fulfilling it and to improving constantly. The head provides a good model in her role as special needs co-ordinator which she fulfils efficiently to ensure that all necessary procedures and paperwork are in place.

18. All teaching staff have significant responsibilities for leading and managing aspects of the school's work which without exception, they all carry out conscientiously and well. They are mutually very supportive and in addition to more formal arrangements, they make their formidable array of expertise available to their colleagues on a daily basis. All have time allocated during the school day to monitor work in their subjects of which they make good use, but, as yet, funds are not allocated for co-ordinators to manage over the year.

19. Most of the very supportive and appreciative governing body have been involved with the school for some time. With the head and staff providing them with a range of information, they know their school well and easy relationships mean that they are always ready to ask questions and offer opinions. All the governing body's statutory obligations are well met. Together with the head and staff, the governing body ensures that the limited funding and the accumulated resources are well deployed and used for the benefit of pupils.

20. Monitoring and evaluation have high priorities with the lead taken by the head and deputy head who keep a very close watch on what is happening. Standards, classroom practice and the effectiveness of policies and procedures are kept under review by responsible staff and governors. More detailed assessment procedures for 'tracking' individual pupils and similar groups through the school have made this an even more rigorous process. Individual members of staff are encouraged to think about their own performance through professional interviews, and professional development through in-service training has a high priority.

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

## AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall quality of education provided in the Foundation Stage is **good**. Boys and girls are achieving satisfactorily in all areas of learning and, this year, most should reach the learning goals expected by the end of reception.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Foundation Stage is very well accommodated and resourced both inside and out;
- Boys and girls are provided with a suitable range of well-planned, relevant activities across all areas of learning;
- Good arrangements for introducing children to the school make starting school a positive experience for each new intake;
- Boys' and girls' personal, social and emotional development is well promoted;
- Most teaching in each area of learning is good, especially when the teacher has the support of other adults to keep an eye on groups of children;
- When this is not the case, boys and girls not working directly with the teacher tend to lose focus and 'play' without a real purpose or 'chat' socially.

### Commentary

21. At the time of the inspection, the 19 children in the Foundation Stage had only been in school for a few weeks, sharing their classroom with Year 1 pupils who had been in the same class the previous year. The school has put a lot of time, effort and resources into improving provision for young children over the past two years to good effect. Provision is definitely much improved since the last inspection, but outcomes are broadly similar. The very well resourced indoor and outdoor facilities are now a strength of the school and, with the adoption of national planning arrangements, boys and girls in their first year are well provided for. However, the overall shortage of teaching assistant support in the school means that, too frequently the teacher has to depend on these young children or their slightly older Year 1 classmates, to get on without an adult to focus or stimulate their learning.

22. The attainment of the current intake is broadly average but, with low numbers in each year group, this is not always the case. Three year groups further up the school started with attainment below average in all but their **personal, social and emotional development** which is usually more advanced. This is certainly the case with the present reception group all of whom are very well settled into school, understand what is expected of them, and get on happily with each other and whatever they are asked to do. Good induction procedures and very good relationships with pre-school providers make a big contribution to this good start.

23. **Communication, language and literacy** skills in the form of speaking and listening are adequate for the children to join in with classroom activities but few pupils have the vocabulary or the range of experiences usually seen in children of this age. This limits their ability to make the fullest contribution to discussions, and question and answer sessions. Most are in the early stages of acquiring literacy skills but most can write their own names and recognise and copy some letters. Some know the sounds and recognise words in books or around the classroom.

24. Children's **mathematical development** is broadly as expected with most children able to count up to 10, recognise numbers up to 5 and match one to one. They all know simple shapes and can talk about their properties, such as a triangle has three sides.

25. Most children are in the earliest stages of their **creative development**, enjoying experiencing and experimenting with various media, tools and instruments. Some are able to produce recognisable images, but for most the fun is in the doing. The classroom is set up to allow boys and girls to use equipment to 'play' constructively with mathematical and creative equipment in free time which they do happily. Much of this has been associated with the current topic on toys, which has



been the focus of their learning in the development of their **knowledge and understanding of the world**. In discussion, few children show the depth of experience or understanding observed in this area in boys and girls in similar schools.

26. The school's very good facilities are used to good effect to give children opportunities to experiment and practice moving in a range of environments, outside and in, to enhance their **physical development**. All move confidently around the 'play' areas and match their older Year 1 classmates in their movements in physical education in the hall.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good overall;
- The subject is well resourced, other than in books for older pupils who find reading difficult;
- Reading does not have a high enough profile throughout the school but guided reading meets the needs of most pupils in Years 3 to 6;
- The teaching of handwriting is unsatisfactory.

#### **Commentary**

27. Teaching is good overall, especially for the older pupils but the planning for mixed age classes is not always as good as it could be. Expectations are not high enough for the older, more able pupils in some classes and work is not matched accurately to their ability. Despite the good quality of teaching, standards for pupils in Year 2 this year are below average but this is a small year group and several pupils have learning difficulties. Standards for pupils in Year 6 are average, which is an improvement on previous years. The school sets individual literacy targets each term and this has a motivating influence. Tracking procedures indicate that all pupils are making satisfactory progress, year on year. Listening skills are good throughout the school which greatly helps teaching and learning. Pupils are enthusiastic and willing to contribute to discussions and contribute ideas but many pupils are not as articulate as expected for their ages with a limited vocabulary and range of experience to call on. Despite very definite improvements in provision, this is a similar position to that which was reported at the last inspection.

28. The profile of reading throughout the school is not high enough. Guided reading meets the needs of most of the pupils in Years 3 to 6 but some pupils reading below the expected level have books that are more suitable for younger pupils rather than high interest/low readability books to increase their motivation. Although some parents listen to their children read at home, this practice is not as regular as in other schools and does not have the same impact. The use of home/school reading diaries is inconsistent. The younger pupils need to be heard to read more frequently and the lack of teaching assistants makes this difficult to achieve, but parents and volunteers, with some training, can enhance reading opportunities. Guided reading is managed well; teachers keep careful records and pupils work conscientiously in these sessions. Pupils' records of their own reading are scrappy and indicate that many pupils do not read at school or at home.

29. The teaching of handwriting is unsatisfactory with too much emphasis on practising handwriting and insufficient systematic teaching. Many pupils, even the oldest ones, do not use a legible joined script. This needs to be a priority for the youngest pupils to improve presentation throughout the school. At present this is poor and generally inhibits pupils' writing in class. Good use of the literacy hour ensures that pupils are learning all the strategies and techniques to improve the content of their writing, and some good examples were seen of teachers modelling writing tasks resulting in good learning.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

30. Literacy is used well across the curriculum and pupils develop their literacy skills well in ICT, history, geography, religious education and science. However, limited handwriting skills sometimes mean that the presentation of written work in other subjects is unsatisfactory.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Through the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, thorough and systematic planning and good resources are having a positive impact on standards;
- Good teaching and learning are raising standards year on year;
- Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good and pupils are nearly always fully engaged and on task during lessons;
- Work is not always appropriately set at different ability levels nor sufficiently challenging for higher attainers in the class;
- Many pupils' less than instant recall of number facts and the poor presentation of their work inhibit progress in mathematics.

### Commentary

31. Standards in mathematics are improving and, since 2000, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of 11 year olds reaching the standards expected in national tests. Although pupil tracking shows pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2, attainment of seven year olds is well below average using the same comparisons. Results at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 are consistent with the evidence obtained during the inspection from lesson observations, talking to children and analysis of work. However, pupils' instant recall of number facts is not as good as that found in many schools and the poor presentation of their work sometimes leads to pupils making mistakes when working out 'sums'.

32. Through the successful introduction of the numeracy strategy and the accompanying improvement in provision, particularly teaching, most pupils are now making appropriate progress throughout the school. As a result achievement in mathematics is satisfactory overall and all teaching is at least satisfactory. Pupils respond enthusiastically, particularly in mental mathematics, and are eager to volunteer answers or explain the strategy they are using. They are nearly always fully engaged and interested in their work.

33. The teaching of mathematics is good overall. In a very good lesson the teacher combined careful explanations and direct teaching with challenging objectives for the lesson. In a lesson where teaching was satisfactory the work was not sufficiently matched to the range of abilities in the class, with the result that the pace of learning was slower. The oral and mental sessions are conducted at a brisk pace and different resources, such as number sticks, number boards and number cards enable each child to be fully involved. The main teaching activities involve pupils practising their skills and in this part of the lesson teachers manage pupils and resources efficiently. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. Teaching assistants, where available, provide very good support and are an integral part of pupils' learning.

34. Mathematics is well led by an experienced, well qualified subject co-ordinator. Well targeted training to raise subject knowledge, and the monitoring of teaching and learning are already helping to raise standards. Resources for mathematics are good, with enough equipment to resource the implementation of the numeracy strategy properly.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

35. Appropriate cross-curricular links have been established with other subjects, particularly in ICT, science and design and technology often allowing pupils to use and practise their mathematical skills in practical situations.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Almost all pupils in Year 6 have achieved expected levels in the last two years in national tests. The present Year 6 are expected to do at least as well;
- Well chosen activities ensure pupils are given lots of 'hands on' opportunities to learn. Pupils have a very good attitude to the subject, tackling practical activities with enthusiasm;
- Pupils' ability in scientific investigation is as good as the knowledge based areas of the curriculum;
- A two year rolling programme based on the national scheme of work provides teachers with clear learning objectives, activities and expectations;
- Lesson planning does not provide for higher attaining, older pupils to extend their learning beyond the common objectives.

### **Commentary**

36. Strong leadership over the years has meant that science has been the school's strongest subject with eleven year olds achieving average and above standards in four out of the last six years. However, other subjects have now caught up. The national scheme of work has been well adapted to the needs of the school with two year rolling programmes and a strong focus on investigations, enquiry and the use of scientific method and language. This was observed in lessons and in pupils' books although in some cases, poor presentation limits the impact of work that is otherwise accurate. Pupils' progress books which have been in operation for some time, give a good indication of the range of pupils' work, progression year on year, and the priority given to investigations and experiments as key learning activities. This, combined with the few lessons observed, shows good learning and indicates that overall teaching in science is good. This shows solid improvement since the last inspection. However, as yet these examples are not being used to match pupils' work to national standards to track progress.

37. In discussion, pupils in all classes show they know about the concept of fairness in testing and older pupils can say how to achieve this. The use of a common format for recording the conduct and results of investigations means that pupils are able to describe the sequence of actions an investigation usually entails, including prediction and evaluation.

38. Important factors in the planned curriculum are the good use of the environment and the way teachers are ever ready to exploit opportunities to use other subjects to support or communicate work in science. Young pupils explored the grounds looking for and classifying materials. Years 4 and 5 use the school's data-logger to record temperature changes in the classroom. This involves pupils in using a plan view to locate hot and cold spots. Year 6 evaluating bread products use younger pupils as 'guinea pigs' to evaluate the bread they made themselves in design and technology.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good** and greatly improved since the last inspection.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The well equipped computer suite is well used by staff both in ICT lessons and as a resource in other lessons;
- All teaching and support staff are well trained and confident when using the computer suite or the extra computers around the school. Teaching is consistently good;
- Good use has been made of the national scheme of work to provide structured progression and increase expectations as to what pupils can achieve in the subject;
- Boys and girls are able to use the suite several times a week if required for work across the curriculum;
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about working in ICT and use their initiative. They share what they know equally well.

### **Commentary**

39. Thanks to the previous ICT co-ordinator, the school made very good use of the opportunities presented by the national focus on improving provision in the subject in the past few years. As a result the quality of provision and the standards now being achieved by pupils of all ages have improved way beyond what was thought possible just a few years ago. Simple word processing has been replaced by the use of Word (an adult programme) by quite young pupils and the Internet has become a first choice source of information and answers for older pupils. The new co-ordinator has quickly picked up the reins and is already ambitious to improve provision and outcomes further by fine tuning the curriculum and introducing a user-friendly way of keeping records of what individual pupils can do.

40. The snapshot of the inspection gave a good indication of the range of activities in which pupils are involved. Some are indicated below. Others observed included pupils 'programming' a cursor and predicting its path; using the Internet to find and listen to various instruments of the orchestra and classify them; and investigating 'yes' or 'no' questions as a source of data.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

41. Many examples of ICT being used in other subjects were noted during the inspection both during ICT lessons and at other times when the focus was, for instance literacy (making recipes more attractive by changing fonts), and numeracy (interpreting graphs). This is much aided by the fact that the five classes have a dedicated suite easily and regularly available for 'casual' use as well as ICT lessons.

## **HUMANITIES**

Humanities, the arts and physical education were not areas of particular focus for the inspection team and so, in this smaller than average school, few lessons were observed in each subject and less time was spent on looking at pupils' previous work or talking to them about it. However, from the evidence gathered it can be said that all the strengths and weaknesses noted in RE apply across all the remaining subjects. It is true to say that, although judgements cannot be made about overall provision, in each subject including religious education, the quality of the learning opportunities provided are much better than they were at the time of the last inspection.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall provision in religious education (RE) is **good**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils are achieving expected levels;
- Most teaching observed was good and better with the wide range of interesting activities provided much enjoyed by pupils;
- The planned curriculum is well developed in with good links made to other aspects of humanities;
- Informal assessment procedures are used, but few formal records are kept;
- The knowledgeable and experienced co-ordinator provides very good support for colleagues.

### Commentary

42. The co-ordinator has worked hard this year adapting the locally agreed scheme of work for religious education (and for history and geography for which he is responsible) to make learning more relevant. The local environment and the community are used well. Good cross-curricular links have been established across humanities. Festivals, such as Chinese New Year, Pancake Day, and Easter are celebrated. Due attention is given to the beliefs, ceremonies and celebrations of other faiths with, for instance pupils in Years 1 and 2 learning about Rama and Sita and acting out their story. In discussion older pupils were able to discuss the Torah and the features of a Shabbat meal. Good displays around the school promote these and other RE topics, and raise the profile of the subject throughout the school.

## GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

43. The school's main focus for development in geography and history has been the increased use of the local and surrounding area by tailoring the curriculum to fit what is available close by or on visits further afield. The school is planning a Humanities Week next year along the lines of the successful Arts and Book Weeks held this year. A link has been formed with a school in Jamaica and the co-ordinator hopes to visit next year to strengthen this link. In discussion, pupils show real enthusiasm for the activities planned for them in humanities with several able to talk about their own research into the various topics.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

This curriculum area was not a main focus for the inspection but the following comments are the result of sampling aspects of the school's work.

44. **Art** has a strong profile in the school. Staff are strongly committed to providing a wide range of educational activities and opportunities in art to develop pupils' visual perception and explore ways of communicating their thoughts, observations and emotions to their environment. During Arts Week visiting artists run workshops for pupils and share their expertise to help widen pupils' skills and knowledge. The display of pupils' art work is seen as an important way of celebrating effort.

45. In **design and technology (DT)**, pupils really enjoy designing, making and evaluating a variety of different items to solve practical problems for different audiences. Many pupils have a natural aptitude for the subject and several examples of high quality DT are on display around the school, such as costumes for carnival, box kites and Egyptian masks. Good cross-curricular links are made with other subjects which provide a focus for designing and making.

46. **Music** is very well led by a music specialist who ensures that her colleagues have the resources, planning, advice and support to provide a full music curriculum. The subject is well resourced. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to learn a range of instruments and to sing and

perform regularly both in school and in the community and enjoy music making. Performance is seen as a means of raising pupils' self-esteem.

47. **Physical education (PE)** has seen a substantial input of extra funding, resources, ideas and support over the past few years thanks to the school's partnership in a sports initiative with its local secondary school. All staff, including midday staff, have been involved in appropriate training. As a result, activity levels and participation levels for pupils have increased greatly, as has the school's involvement in a wide range of sporting activities in the local community.

#### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

48. Only one lesson was seen in this area of the school's work and so no judgements are made about overall provision. The school sees pupils' personal development as an important part of its work. The programme for personal, social and health education is good and includes work on diet, health, sex, drugs and personal safety. Much is planned and taught through the main curriculum, but a regular programme of circle times gives the opportunity to focus specifically on aspects of pupils' personal development appropriate to their current needs. This helps pupils develop a safe and healthy life style, and gain confidence and interact with others. It is well supported by visits from outside agencies and by whole school events and assembly topics.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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