

INSPECTION REPORT

ASTBURY ST MARY'S CE (AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Astbury, Congleton

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111333

Acting headteacher: Neil Garbett

Lead inspector: Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

Dates of inspection: 1st – 3rd December 2003

Inspection number: 255383

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	131
School address:	School Lane Astbury Congleton Cheshire
Postcode:	CW12 4RG
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Appropriate authority:	Local education authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A McCormick
Date of previous inspection:	6 th July 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Astbury St Mary's Church of England Aided Primary School is situated in Astbury, a small village on the outskirts of Congleton. Pupil numbers are increasing, at the previous inspection of July 1998 there were 107 pupils in the school. There are now 131 pupils (small school). Ten per cent of pupils are on the special educational needs register (below average) and four per cent of pupils have statements of special educational need (well above average); eight per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals (well below average). Attainment on entry is very variable but is average overall. There is a very small group of mixed white and black African pupils who do not have English as an additional language and have full access to the curriculum. Very few pupils join or leave the school during the course of the school year. Socio-economic circumstances of the area are favourable. This year the school received its Healthy Schools award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19938	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley	Lead inspector	Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage
			Provision for pupils with English as an additional language
			English
			Science
			Art and design
			History
			Music
19443	Nancy Walker	Lay inspector	
20301	Peter Isherwood	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs
			Mathematics
			Information and communication technology
			Design and technology
			Geography
			Physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Astbury St Mary's C of E Aided Primary is an effective school which is well placed with its present complement of staff to become even better. Pupils are well prepared for secondary school, standards are high in English, mathematics and science, pupils achieve well and, overall, teaching is good with very good features. The acting headteacher had only been in post several weeks prior to the inspection and has inherited weaknesses in previous management, which, with the help of the governors, are being rectified. The leadership of the school is satisfactory, governance is good but management, whilst satisfactory overall, has weaknesses. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well, standards are high in English, mathematics, science, geography and observational drawing in art and design. Children in the Foundation Stage exceed the early learning goals in all areas of learning.
- Assessments in English, mathematics and science are good.
- The curriculum is enriched with very good extra-curricular activities.
- Medium term planning does not clearly identify expectations of pupils in mixed age classes.
- The achievements of higher attaining children in the Foundation Stage, and pupils in foundation subjects in the infants and juniors, whilst satisfactory overall, could be higher with improved assessment procedures and their use.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning, behave very well and relationships are excellent due to the overall very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development.
- The quality of teaching is good with examples of very good practice seen in Years 1/2, 4/5 and 6.
- Resources need to be improved in information and communication technology (ICT) and in the Foundation Stage of learning. More multicultural resources are needed.
- There are weaknesses in present management systems, such as monitoring of performance management, the underdeveloped role of the deputy headteacher and monitoring of the curriculum. These are being addressed by staff and governors.

Since the previous inspection of 1998, the school has made patchy progress but, overall, improvement has been satisfactory. Standards have risen, teaching has improved, assessment in English, mathematics and science is very good. However, the school development plan is not sufficiently focused in prioritising the main targets for improvement, success criteria are too vague, and there is still work to be done in developing aspects of curriculum planning.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

The overall achievement of pupils is good. Pupils are well prepared for their next stages of education. Attainment on entry to the reception class is average and the 2003 national test results show that, by the time pupils leave school, their attainment is above the national average in mathematics and well above average in English and science. The results in English place the school in the top five per cent when compared to similar schools. Children in the Foundation Stage

exceed the early learning goals in all areas of learning and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment, but higher attainers could be challenged even further. In Years 3/4, pupils' achievements are satisfactory in English and science but are good in mathematics. Inspection findings show that standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are above those expected nationally in English, science and geography and are well above average in mathematics. Pupils' achievements in Years 1/2, 4/5 and 6 are good. In art and design, pupils attain high standards in observational drawing. In history, art and design and ICT, pupils attain national expectations by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and their achievements are satisfactory but could be better in the control and modelling aspect of the ICT programme of study. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their individual education plans. **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal qualities including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good** and they behave very well across the school. Relationships are excellent and the school is a happy community.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good overall. Teaching is good with the best teaching seen in the mixed Year 1/2 class, in the Year 4/5 class and in Year 6. Teaching is good in English, science and geography and is very good in mathematics. In non-core subjects seen, teaching is satisfactory. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and for children in the Foundation Stage of learning is good and pupils learn well, but higher attainers could be challenged further in the Foundation Stage and in the infants and juniors in foundation subjects. Teaching, especially in the upper juniors and in Years 1/2 is imaginative and exciting, and pupils assimilate new knowledge quickly. However, best practice is not sufficiently well shared among staff due to a lack of rigorous management systems. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enriched very well by visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. Pupils are well cared for by a hard working staff.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory but the school development plan is not sufficiently focussed on identifying the main priorities and success criteria. In spite of inherited weaknesses in previous management, which are being addressed rapidly, the governors, acting headteacher and key staff are doing their utmost to maintain high standards. The leadership of key staff is good when taking into consideration their heavy workloads but they need to be more involved in the strategic management of the school and monitoring of teaching and learning. The governance of the school is good because governors are fulfilling their duties as critical friends of the school and comply with statutory requirements but need more guidance on monitoring of the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are very happy with what the school offers and their views are sought and acted upon. Pupils love coming to school and are very fond of their teachers.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve resources in ICT and in the Foundation Stage of learning.
- Develop procedures to assess pupils' progress in subjects other than English, mathematics and science and ensure teachers' medium planning clearly identifies the expectations of pupils of all abilities so they are consistently challenged.
- Identify opportunities in teacher's planning for pupils to use ICT across the curriculum in lessons.
- Develop the roles and responsibilities of the deputy headteacher and subject leaders in the strategic development of the school, including monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- Ensure the school development plan is clearly focused on identifying main priorities for the school linked to success criteria.
- Develop and clarify the role of the governing body in monitoring the progress of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Generally pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment; standards are above average overall and pupils are well prepared for their next stages of education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage of learning exceed the early learning goals in all areas of learning and their achievements are very good in personal, social and emotional development.
- Higher attaining pupils could be stretched even further in the reception class and in Years 3/4. Whilst their achievements are satisfactory over time, they could be even better.
- Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are well above national averages, pupils' achievements are very good. In English and science standards are above average and pupils achieve well. The best rates of progress are in the infants and upper juniors due to very good teaching.
- Pupils achieve well in aspects of the creative arts such as singing, performing and observational drawing.
- In geography pupils achieve well to attain standards that are above national expectations.
- Pupils' progress in subjects other than English, mathematics, science and ICT is satisfactory but it could be even better if medium term planning and assessment procedures were developed more rigorously.

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.1 (15.9)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.9 (15.5)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	17.7 (16.4)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 20 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 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.8 (27.9)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.2 (27.5)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.2 (27.9)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 15 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1 The 2003 national tests and teacher assessment results show that in comparison with all schools nationally standards for pupils at the end of Year 2 are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics, and in comparison with similar schools standards are above average in reading and mathematics and well above average in writing. There has been a whole-school emphasis on developing writing and it is paying dividends.

2 In the 2003 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6, in comparison with all schools nationally, pupils attained well above average standards in English and science and above average

standards in mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, based upon pupils' prior attainment, pupils attain in the top five per cent nationally in English and well above average in mathematics and science. Higher attaining pupils achieved particularly well in English, mathematics and science in both Year 2 and Year 6. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points for English, mathematics and science was broadly in line with the national trend. The school consistently meets its targets. There are no differences in attainment by gender.

3 Inspection findings show that standards are above average in English and science, and well above average in mathematics in Year 2 and in Year 6. Pupils' achievements are good in English, science and geography and very good in mathematics. In Years 3/4 pupils' achievements are satisfactory in English, science and history but they could be better as, at times, high attaining pupils are not sufficiently stretched due to inconsistencies in marking, use of assessment and short-term planning. In lessons seen, pupils have good skills of experimental and investigative science by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 but above average attainers, whilst making satisfactory progress, could be achieving more.

4 The school is working very hard at raising standards and improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Staff recognised that standards needed to improve, especially in science, and this year standards in science have risen from below national averages in Year 6 in 2002 to above national averages in 2003. Since the previous inspection pupils' achievements have improved in the Foundation Stage and are now good. Furthermore they have also improved from being satisfactory to good in English, mathematics, science and geography in both the infants and the juniors. In ICT, pupils achieve satisfactorily to attain the expected standards but, due to lack of resources in the juniors to support control and modelling, this aspect of the programme of study is weaker and is unsatisfactory overall.

5 Children's attainment on entry to the reception class is broadly typical for their age, although there are several children who have well developed language and mathematical skills. In the Foundation Stage of learning, whilst children exceed the early learning goals in all areas of learning, and overall achieve well in relation to their prior attainment, there are occasions when higher attaining pupils could be achieving even more, especially when they have finished formal tasks set by the teacher. Too often in independent play, they choose to participate in activities that are insufficiently demanding and do not stretch them enough, such as doing jigsaw puzzles and matching initial letter sound cards. Whilst this consolidates learning, it does not challenge them enough. Resources are barely satisfactory and the school has recognised the need to purchase more equipment for structured play, including extending provision for outside play. Overall children in the Foundation Stage are confident learners because they are extremely well cared for by their teacher and support staff. A very secure learning environment is established right from the start and pupils become competent learners. Good rates of progress are maintained in the mixed Year 1/2 class, resulting in pupils attaining above average standards in speaking and listening, reading, writing, mathematics, science and geography.

6 In Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are confident speakers, they write clearly and precisely using a good range of vocabulary and sentence structures, written work is clearly punctuated. In mathematics pupils use the four rules of number very well, they have quick skills of mental recall and know which strategies to use to problem solve. In science pupils are making good gains in experimental and investigative science, they set up their own experiments and record their findings accurately but, in the juniors, opportunities for using logo control and modelling, especially the use of sensors, are underdeveloped and this restricts pupils' progress in these aspects of learning. The school has recognised this as an area for future development.

7 Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good gains in learning because of the very hard work of the special educational needs support teacher. Pupils also achieve well because teachers set work at levels which meet their needs and ensure they receive good support. For example, in a very good Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils made very good progress because a support assistant worked alongside individual pupils on a computer program, which was well matched to their needs, and as a result very good gains were made in learning. During the

week of inspection, there were no differences identified in attainment by gender, boys achieve as well as girls. In the creative arts, pupils achieve well; they are confident performers, they sing well and they are making good gains in art and design, especially in observational drawing.

8 The factors contributing to the overall good rates of pupils' progress are due to:

- improved teaching (new staff have been appointed since the previous inspection);
- the very hard work of co-ordinators for English, mathematics and science in raising standards in their subjects;
- the appointment of a part-time teacher to help raise standards;
- the recent very good assessment procedures in English, mathematics and science devised by the newly appointed assessment co-ordinator;
- the previous headteacher's focus on developing teaching and learning;
- the determination and hard work of staff, as evidenced by their heavy work loads, encouraged by the governing body to raise standards, in spite of inherited weaknesses in management systems, brought about by lack of continuity due to absence caused by illness;
- the very good levels of support given to the majority of pupils by their parents;
- the very good guidance and support pupils receive from their teachers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal qualities are very good. They have very good attitudes to school and to their learning and they are very well behaved. Attendance is very good and well above the national average. Punctuality is also very good. The provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall and contributes positively to pupils' very good personal development. The school has made good progress in maintaining the high standards since the previous report.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are excellent between pupils, and between pupils and all adults.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about school, they enjoy participating in lessons and their behaviour in lessons and around school is very good.
- Attendance rates are very high and punctuality is very good.
- The provision for spiritual, moral and social development is very good and good for cultural development but more emphasis could be placed on ensuring that pupils learn more about the other ethnic minority cultures in England.
- The school values pupils with special educational needs and effectively develops their self-esteem.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (96.5%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.5	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

9 Attendance is very high compared to the national average. There was no unauthorised absence last year. The school works very hard to maintain this consistent very high level of attendance and this has a positive effect on learning. Punctuality to school is also very good and contributes to the high standards that pupils attain.

10 There have been no exclusions in the previous year.

11 From the moment that they arrive, pupils are enthusiastic about school. In the playground each morning or on coming into school pupils are happy. They enjoy coming to school. This

enthusiasm extends into the classroom where there is always a buzz of excitement apparent. Pupils in the Foundation Stage of learning develop very good attitudes to learning because of the high level of care, dedication and well meaning devotion of the staff to ensure that they all achieve well. In Years 3/4 standards of presentation of pupils' work are variable and, whilst satisfactory overall, books are not as well presented as they are in other classes.

12 The pupils' behaviour is very good. In the classrooms, the playground or in the hall at lunchtime there is consistently very good behaviour. There was no indication whatsoever of any unsociable or racist behaviour during the inspection. Parental responses to the questionnaire were very positive about this aspect of school life.

13 Relationships within the school community are excellent. Astbury St Mary's School is a very happy school where all pupils respond very well to the guidance that adults give them. The impact of these very high quality relationships is that all pupils are fully included in all school activities. Pupils are eager to talk about their work at school. They love participating in school productions and think that their teachers are wonderful. One pupil in Year 6 said that he had learnt so much in Year 6 that his brain would burst!

14 Pupils with special educational needs enjoy school and show very positive attitudes to learning. This is because tasks they are given are very well matched to their ability, and they experience success in their lessons. Because of this and the good quality support they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants, they gain confidence and are willing learners. The excellent relationships that exist in the school enable them to tackle the tasks they are given without fear of failure.

15 The school provides very good opportunities for its pupils to develop self-knowledge and a spiritual awareness. There is a strong Christian ethos in the school which permeates all aspects of school life. The Rector is a regular visitor to the school and the pupils eagerly await the visits of both himself and his dog, which is used as a valuable teaching aid. All pupils are valued and there are many opportunities to develop an understanding of the wonder and beauty of the world. In classrooms the playing of quiet music instils an air of spirituality and calmness. Notices in classrooms reinforce spiritual awareness: 'To Love God: To Love my Neighbour.' Pupils are given good opportunities to reflect on what they are learning. They listen to music and reflect on the plight of those less fortunate than themselves. Prayers are used very effectively to develop an understanding of a greater being.

16 In lessons such as science and design and technology teachers use resources, such as exciting programs on the Internet, that light up pupils' eyes and there is a sense of awe and wonder. In a Year 6 science lesson one pupil gasped when he realised how difficult it would be to find out how much salt there is in the sea. The provision of moral and social development is very good. All pupils have a very clear idea of right and wrong and they relate in a very good way to each other and work very well in group activities. They take their responsibilities very seriously. Older pupils look after the younger ones and read to them, and the playground is a joy to behold when all pupils behave very well and courteously to one another. Provision for cultural development is good. The school teaches pupils to understand and appreciate their own culture, with many visits out from school, including the opera, and visitors to school include artists and musicians. There are many opportunities to learn about other countries and the traditions of different faith groups, especially in religious education, but as yet multicultural resources in other subjects are too few. As part of their citizenship curriculum pupils are starting to learn about living in a diverse society but this is not as well developed as other aspects of cultural understanding, especially their very good understanding of the traditions of the village and their own culture, particularly May Day celebrations.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good and at their best in the upper junior classes and Year 1/2. The quality of teaching is good with very good features and pupils learn well in the core subjects of English and science, and very well in mathematics.

Whilst medium term planning requires some attention in foundation subjects, which does not fully identify what is expected of different groups of pupils in mixed age classes and subject specific skills progression, overall pupils receive a sound, balanced curriculum which is very well enriched with visits, visitors, trips and after school clubs. Staff help pupils to mature in a caring learning environment and there are very strong links with the parents and the community.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with examples of very good teaching seen in all classes. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The best teaching is based upon high expectations, good pace and excites pupils.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and classrooms are an orderly learning environment.
- Pupils with special educational needs are taught well and make good gains in learning. Individual education plans are of good quality with clearly defined targets to be followed by all staff.
- Teaching in English and science is good and is very good in mathematics, and pupils learn well.
- Marking is not consistent throughout the school, planning, whilst satisfactory, is variable and pupils' standards of presentation in Years 3/4 are not as good as they are in the rest of the school.
- Assessment procedures, overall, are very good in English and mathematics and good in science. In the foundation subjects assessment procedures are just satisfactory. As a result, higher attaining pupils are not always consistently challenged and staff have not all had sufficient training in using assessment to inform the next stage of pupils' learning.
- Subject specific skills are not fully identified in planning, and expectations of what pupils should achieve in mixed age classes are not sufficiently clear.
- Relationships are excellent throughout the school.
- Support staff are used well to support pupils' learning and pupils with special educational needs receive good quality teaching which has a positive effect on learning.
- At present there are no systems in place for staff to learn about the latest practice in the school.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	15	8	5	1	0	0

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

17 The previous leadership of the school had placed a high emphasis on developing the quality of teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good in this aspect but, due to weaknesses in management, performance management systems had not been put securely in place, although this is now being dealt with; as a result, there are at present no systems in the school available to staff to learn from each others' best practice to improve teaching even further. This is now being tackled by the present acting headteacher and governors, with support being given by the local education authority.

18 Teachers throughout the school have good subject knowledge and they share learning objectives well with their pupils, this results in good learning because pupils are clear about what is expected of them. In a very good science lesson in Year 1/2, the class teacher told pupils that, when setting up an experiment you need to be able to collect evidence, answer questions, make

predictions and write about what you have found out. Pupils made very good gains in learning because they knew what was expected of them and their thinking was challenged.

19 Teachers' planning is satisfactory overall but variable throughout the school. It is good in the top juniors, where teachers take great care to ensure that pupils who are below average attainers and those who have special educational needs are appropriately catered for. In lessons, expectations of what pupils can achieve are high in Years 1/2, 4/5 and 6. In the Foundation Stage and in the Year 3/4 class, expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the higher attainers, are sometimes not high enough and this slows down the rates of progress. This is largely due to the unsatisfactory management systems where staff have not been sufficiently well informed and trained in using data from assessment rigorously to identify ways of moving pupils on in their learning. Furthermore, a lack of helpful evaluation from management of teachers' planning, especially relating to identifying extension activities which challenge pupils, results in some above average attainers not being stretched sufficiently.

20 Pupils love learning, this was demonstrated by the way in which pupils in all classes ask questions to deepen their understanding. In a satisfactory history lesson in Year 3/4, pupils were excited by the class teacher's presentation of the history of Astbury. They really enjoyed asking questions of how the land was used many years ago and how the environment has changed over the years.

21 The teaching of English and science is good. Teaching is very good in mathematics and satisfactory in ICT, with examples of very good teaching. Teachers know what they need to do to ensure that pupils acquire the basic skills of literacy and numeracy but opportunities for using ICT are a bit hit and miss, once again because of weaknesses in management systems which have not been sufficiently rigorous in improving medium term planning. The teaching of children in the Foundation Stage is good overall but resources are limited and this slows down pupils' rates of learning, especially when they are engaged in independent learning. The resources they use are not sufficiently challenging and are also scarce in number and, as a result, do not always challenge their thinking. Pupils are taught correct phonics and letter and number formation which gives them a good start to their education but, sometimes, pupils who are above average attainers, are not given enough extension work to put into practice the knowledge and skills acquired in the formal part of lessons. The school has recognised that this is an area to be addressed. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well, despite the present lack of a special educational needs co-ordinator. The part time support teacher ensures that pupils with special educational needs have good opportunities to work on targets related to their individual education plans. For example, in one very good lesson seen a pupil from the upper juniors made very good gains in learning because the support teacher helped her identify syllables and beats in a word and this helped with correct identification of vowels. The pupil's face glowed as she overcame her barriers to learning and very good progress was made. Support staff make a very valid contribution to pupils' learning in all classes. The co-ordination of art work, undertaken by one of the staff, is having a very positive effect on pupils' learning and several pupils win local art competitions due to their good observational drawing skills. The co-ordinator ensures that all staff are aware of the units they need to cover and that resources are plentiful.

22 The quality of marking is satisfactory but is inconsistent throughout the school. The best marking is in Years 1/2, 4/5 and Year 6 classes. The best marking enters into dialogue with pupils, where pupils are asked to improve the quality of their work, but explain the parts that they struggled with. Where marking is less effective, as in Year 3/4, pupils are not shown how to get better at what they are doing; they do not have opportunities to practise correct spelling patterns, presentation skills are untidy and there is too much unfinished written work. This slows down pupils' rates of progress over time, especially those of the higher attaining group who are not always being sufficiently stretched and challenged. In an unsatisfactory lesson seen in literacy, guidelines for the literacy strategy were not adhered to and pupils were unsure as to what was expected of them and did not make sufficient gains in practising instructional writing.

23 Teachers plan work effectively for pupils with special educational needs. It meets their particular needs, for example, by using equipment to allow pupils to overcome their visual or hearing impairment. Targets on individual education plans are almost all very specific and easy to measure. The targets are very effectively linked to the English and mathematics aspects of the National Curriculum. This, coupled with regular monitoring of targets by the special educational needs teacher and visiting specialist teachers, ensures pupils make good progress in their learning.

24 Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Several new teachers have been appointed and there is a higher percentage of good and very good teaching in the school.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory. Very good opportunities for enrichment are provided, including a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The quality and quantity of the accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum are very good. There is an interesting range of visits and visitors and extra-curricular activities are very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Provision for performing and expressive arts is very good.
- Since the previous inspection, national guidance for curriculum planning in foundation subjects has been put in place, but continuity in progressions cannot be fully assured in mixed-age classes due to a lack of rigorous monitoring of the curriculum.
- All pupils have full access to the curriculum.
- Resources and accommodation are satisfactory overall, with the exception of some resources for children in the Foundation Stage.
- The hall is too small for teaching aspects of physical education.
- There is a lack of resources in ICT to deliver aspects of logo, control and modelling in the juniors.

Commentary

25 The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for its pupils however, the lack of monitoring of the curriculum means that skill development is not fully guaranteed in mixed age classes. At present the curriculum relies too much on the expertise of individual teachers to ensure that there is step-by-step skill development. Planning is variable and is satisfactory overall but is not consistent, for example, some aspects of medium term planning in Year 3/4 are too brief. The best planning is in Years 1/2, 4/5 and 5/6. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in all subjects. All pupils are fully included in all aspects of the curriculum. The present acting headteacher is aware that there has been no regular monitoring of the curriculum or planning to improve provision and, whilst schemes of work have been put in place (and this is satisfactory improvement on previous inspection findings) expectations of what different groups of pupils should achieve and identification of subject specific skills progression are not made sufficiently clear. As a result, pupils sometimes repeat work previously covered and consolidate learning rather than acquiring new insights. Staff have recognised this but, as yet, only the science co-ordinator has drawn up suggested plans for improvement. Her analysis is good and provides an effective model for the remaining subjects. Previous management had not addressed this issue sufficiently.

26 However, aspects of innovative practice have been implemented, such as themed weeks where the whole school is involved in learning about different countries through art and design, music and drama, but insufficient emphasis has been placed on how these learning experiences can be progressively built upon and fully integrated into whole school curriculum planning.

27 The curriculum for the Foundation Stage of learning is satisfactory. It covers all areas of learning but the weaknesses in resources prevent children from using their senses in many aspects of learning. For example, the lack of textured letters, use of a variety of different media such as shaving foam, prevents the youngest pupils from exploring a range of writing skills. Displays are of satisfactory quality but are not sufficiently interactive.

28 There are sufficient teachers to meet the pupils' educational needs in the Foundation Stage, the infants and the juniors. The number of support staff is satisfactory but additional support could be allocated depending on the activities being carried out as there are certain times of the day when the children would benefit more from having adult support especially in the Foundation Stage of learning. The accommodation, whilst satisfactory, is in the process of being improved. At the time of the inspection there was no specific area for Foundation Stage play although this is at present being addressed by the governing body. The hall is too small to allow the full range of gymnastic activities for older pupils. The school does compensate for this by increasing other physical activities and using the village hall for physical education lessons.

29 All aspects of the personal, social and health education curriculum are fully covered, including drugs, alcohol and sex and relationships education. This is a very positive aspect of the school curriculum. The school sensitively manages all aspects of the programme. There is a very good citizenship programme in place which includes topics on the environment, living in a diverse community and taking personal responsibility.

30 The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory, but these are not formally identified in planning and happen as a result of teachers knowing how to make these links in lessons. Teachers develop literacy skills by giving pupils opportunities to read and write about subject-specific topics. Mathematical skills are developed appropriately in science, design and technology and geography. The use of ICT across the curriculum is sporadic, ranging from being unsatisfactory to good. Overall it is satisfactory, but there have been some limitations because of lack of appropriate resources such as those used to develop logo control and modelling. The school has recognised this and is taking action to remedy it. There are plans in place for purchasing more computer software and staff are about to develop schemes of work further, ensuring that formal opportunities for literacy, numeracy and ICT are identified.

31 Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils with special educational needs are included in all aspects of the curriculum. Most of their learning takes place within the classroom. When they are withdrawn it is as part of a well thought out programme related to individual need. This support ensures that they are better able to access the whole curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the learning opportunities offered and achieve well in the school because targets from individual education plans are linked to both the English and mathematics aspects of the curriculum.

32 A wide range of visits out from school enhances the curriculum very well. Visits are made to museums, aquariums and to the opera. There are a large number of visitors into school including artists and musicians, such as the recent drumming and percussion workshop which held the whole school spellbound, but as yet these are "one-off" events and not sufficiently woven into the fabric of rigorous curriculum planning. Performing and expressive arts is a strong element of the school curriculum. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in a large range of very high quality extra-curricular activities including many opportunities to play sports and take part in musical performances, both in school and in the local community. Pupils throughout the school support these activities very well and this has a positive effect on developing academic and social skills for example, a mathematics club, held for two terms per year, has a positive effect on pupils' standards in mathematics, and the very well attended art club, run by a support assistant, has been over-subscribed because of the enthusiasm of pupils wanting to join. The art club contributes to high standards in observational drawing in both the infants and juniors. There are regular theme weeks, exploring life in different countries. Whilst these are thoroughly enjoyed by the whole school community, they are 'one-offs' and the learning cannot be sustained as, at present, the school lacks systems for ensuring that subject-specific skills are incrementally developed in all classes.

33 Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education. They are confident, articulate and attain high standards. There are very good curriculum links with local secondary schools and this ensures easy transition.

34 Since the previous inspection, the school has made satisfactory improvement in ensuring that there is an overview of what is to be taught by implementing national guidelines. There is further work to be done in ensuring that clear expectations are defined in mixed-age classes, subject specific skills in non-core subjects are identified and pupils have more opportunities to use ICT across the curriculum, and that the curriculum is regularly monitored to avoid repetition, especially in science, art and design and history.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides a good level of care for the physical and emotional needs of its pupils; this has been well maintained since the previous inspection. The school provides good support, advice and guidance to its pupils and it totally involves its pupils in school life by seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good procedures are in place for health and safety and child protection procedures have recently been put in place, however, not all staff have been fully briefed in child protection procedures.
- Good procedures are in place to support, advise and guide pupils.
- There is good support for pupils with special educational needs and they are valued for their uniqueness by the whole of the school community.

Commentary

35 The school looks after its pupils very well. All adults provide a good level of care to pupils. This care is underpinned by the excellent relationships in school and the very good knowledge that all staff have of the pupils.

36 The school takes seriously its responsibility for health and safety. Appropriate records are maintained of risk assessments and first aid, fire drills and accident recording. The procedures for child protection are satisfactory, although not all staff have been fully briefed on procedures. The acting headteacher and governors are aware of this and already staff have been signed up to courses.

37 There is a good level of provision for the pastoral support, advice and guidance of all pupils. This is based on the very good knowledge that all adults have of pupils and the excellent quality of trusting relationships that exist between children and adults within the school community. Weekly target setting sessions involving all pupils ensure that there is a good method of monitoring pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils know what they have to do to improve because they are actively involved in setting and evaluating their own targets. Pupils know that the school will listen to their concerns. The school council is highly valued in the school and has an impact on influencing what happens in school. For example, pupils decide which charities they will support and how they will improve the outdoor area. All staff ensure that all pupils are fully involved in all activities and that they have a voice in the provision that is made for them, such as the toys and games they use at playtimes.

38 Early identification of pupils with special educational needs ensures that the school puts in programmes to aid learning as soon as possible. Very good links with outside agencies, including the visual and hearing impaired services, have a very positive effect on learning and, in lessons, advice from experts is implemented ensuring that pupils receive continuity of support. The good levels of care have been maintained since the previous inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has improved its links with parents and they are now very good. Links with the community are very good. There are very good links with other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have very positive views about the school and know that their children are well looked after.
- Parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning as evidenced by the very informative comments in the home-school link books.
- The parent/teacher association is very effective and has purchased valuable resources for the school.
- The school provides very good information for its parents.

Commentary

39 The school promotes itself very well to its parents. Most of those who responded to the questionnaire or who attended the meeting had very positive views about all aspects of school life.

40 Parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning. They are actively involved in ensuring pupils carry out their homework and listen to them read. There are good opportunities for parents to be involved in helping pupils with special educational needs develop their learning. Individual education plans show clearly how a parent can help their child at home. This good quality advice is closely linked to the child's individual target. There is a hard working parents and friends association which organises events that raise considerable sums of money for such things as computers for classrooms, and these have a major impact on pupils' learning. The school values the contribution that all its parents make to school life.

41 The quality of information provided for parents is very good. Newsletters, including the curriculum information in the regular newsletter, 'Forward Together', are informative, annual reports on progress are appropriately personalised and parents are made aware of curriculum topics and targets in additional information. There are regular opportunities for parents to comment on how the school is run and curriculum evenings have been used to show pupils what methods are being used to teach their child.

42 Community links are very strong and a strength of the school. The school makes very good use of local facilities including the village hall. Strong links with the church have a positive impact on the community and the rector is a regular visitor in school. The school choir performs in the local community and there is full involvement in community activities such as the annual May Day celebrations and switching on Christmas lights. Wider community links include working with a visually impaired artist as part of the 'European Year for the Disabled'. Links with local companies are very strong with a good level of sponsorship organised by the acting headteacher that has a direct effect on improving learning.

43 There are very good links with local high schools. This ensures that pupils in Year 6 are able to make the move into the next stage of their education without any concerns. These links have had a particularly good effect on developing pupils' knowledge in science. Pupils who are gifted and talented benefit from the special programme run in conjunction with a local high school and sports centre. There are good links with other primary schools via a cluster group and the school competes against them in sports activities and takes parts in arts activities. The regular meetings of these cluster groups have had a particularly positive effect on developing provision for pupils with special educational needs.

44 The school has maintained its high levels of partnership with parents and the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory the acting headteacher has only been in post several weeks but, nevertheless, there are weaknesses in management which the school is addressing. The governance of the school is good and the leadership and management of subject leaders is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governance of the school is good. Governors have played a key role in ensuring that staff have been effectively supported during the absence of the previous headteacher, but they need clearer guidance as to how best to use their expertise to support the school.
- Staff are getting on well as a team.
- Subject leaders fulfil their duties well. They analyse standards effectively, are dedicated to their work and are trying very hard to raise standards but are not yet fully monitoring skills progression in their areas of responsibility and the monitoring of teaching and learning is at a very early stage of development.
- The school's finances are run tightly and the budget is managed judiciously to improve provision.
- The role of the deputy headteacher (now acting headteacher) had not been sufficiently well developed under previous leadership. He has not been sufficiently involved in the strategic management of the school.
- Performance management has only just started to be put in place due to the sharp insight of the governing body. Until very recently, staff have not had targets set to improve their practice.
- Management of the school, whilst satisfactory overall, has weaknesses.
- Provision for special educational needs is good due to pupils' good achievement, but the lack of monitoring and the present absence of a special educational needs co-ordinator leave it vulnerable to change.

Commentary

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	321 431	Balance from previous year	39 332
Total expenditure	309 589	Balance carried forward to the next	51 174
Expenditure per pupil	2 438		

45 The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The acting headteacher has only been in post several weeks and is caretaking the school until a newly appointed headteacher takes over. School self-evaluation is satisfactory and key staff (who perform their duties well) and governors know what needs to be done to move the school forward. There are, nevertheless, weaknesses in management systems that need to be addressed. The school is unusual in that pupils achieve well in spite of flaws in management which the present acting headteacher has inherited. Previous leadership and management had been interrupted due to the illness of the headteacher and, as a result, a solid foundation for management has not been fully established.

46 The following weaknesses have been identified:

- Not all key staff have been sufficiently involved in the strategic management of the school, especially the deputy headteacher;

- There has been a lack of overview of whole school curriculum planning and teachers' planning has not been sufficiently monitored to ensure that skills in mixed age classes are progressively taught;
- There is, at present, an inequitable distribution of responsibilities among staff and there has been a lack of support for staff managing excessive workloads for example, art and design is led by a member of the support staff who is very hard working but has not received subject leadership training;
- There is an absence of systems to support the integration of "one off" learning opportunities such as themed weeks, visits and visitors into well-structured learning experiences;
- There are no systems in place for staff to learn from one another and share information gained from courses;
- Key staff have not been sufficiently trained in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and performance management has only just been put into effect but progress in relation to pupils' progress objectives is not being monitored;
- The school development plan has weaknesses in that there are too many priorities identified and success criteria are too vague;
- Communication systems between staff and governors have not been as effective as they should be and governors have not received sufficient guidance as to what the headteacher expects of them, in spite of fulfilling their roles well, there has been a blurring of boundaries.

47 Just prior to the inspection, many issues had been resolved due to the perseverance of the governors in ensuring that the professional relationships between staff and governors improved and that all pupils would receive their full entitlement. The governors, through their expertise, have managed to create a happy, empowered staff and communication systems have improved.

48 The leadership and management of special educational needs and the Foundation Stage are satisfactory with good features. Staff are very hard working and ensure that pupils are well cared for.

49 The role of special educational needs co-ordinator was carried out by the headteacher who recently left the school. The part-time teacher of special educational needs has worked very hard to produce good documentation in spite of the few hours she has at her disposal when working at the school. She has produced individual education plans and arranged annual review meetings. She does not have time to monitor the implementation of individual education plans in the classroom. This implementation relies too much on the individual expertise of the staff. Governors have recognised that this is an issue which needs urgent attention. At present it is in the process of being resolved. The special educational needs support teacher is undertaking the responsibilities of special educational needs co-ordinator. She does not have sufficient time to combine teaching and administration tasks and, whilst pupils with special educational needs are well cared for, the present situation is not as good as it could be.

50 Senior managers have contributed significantly in doing their very best to raise standards. Their hard work has not yet been sufficiently developed into operable systems which are sufficiently focused at maintaining high standards. Staff get on well as a team and the school's success is largely attributable to the very hard work and professionalism of staff not to let the children down. The present high standards achieved in English, mathematics and science are largely attributable to the good, and very good, teaching in these subjects, rather than as a result of strategic management aimed at improving on best performance.

51 Governors meet the challenge of managing such a small school with commendable commitment. The school fulfils its statutory duties and has implemented a race relations policy. There have been no racist incidents and correct procedures are in place should an event like this occur. The race relations policy is monitored effectively. The school's finances are tightly run and the budget is managed judiciously to improve provision. Governors use the principles of best value well with all of their purchases. The present under-spend is fully accounted for; a new classroom is being built and the outdoor play area for the Foundation Stage is due to be constructed. The chair of governors is totally devoted to the school and has given freely of his time to support staff under

difficult circumstances. All governors fulfil their duties well. They are thoughtful in their questioning of the school's performance, but they will need clear leadership from the newly appointed headteacher to define the dividing line between leadership and governance, to show what the headteacher is responsible for and what is the duty of governors, as at present there is too much overlap.

52 Overall the improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The best improvement has been in the developing role of the governing body, which fulfils its duties well. Management systems have slipped, but the acting headteacher is aware of what needs to be done in order to improve management. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

53 Provision is **satisfactory**. Children in the Foundation Stage are taught in a mixed-age class with Year 1 pupils. Attainment on entry is very variable, ranging from above average to below average. This year, attainment on entry is average overall. By the end of the Foundation Stage of learning, the vast majority of children exceed the early learning goals and make very good progress in personal, social and emotional development because of the good routines set up in the classroom and the very good level of care they receive from their teachers. In other areas of learning they achieve well. A contributory factor to children's good achievement is the very good quality of parental involvement in their children's learning and the good quality teaching of basic skills.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children exceed the early learning goals in all areas of learning, achievement is good and it is very good in personal, social and emotional development.
- There is a lack of resources to extend the learning of above average attainers.
- There are too few interactive displays and resources, including multicultural resources, to develop children's awareness of their senses.
- Teaching and learning are good and pupils are supported well by teachers and support staff.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- Whilst planning is satisfactory with good features, structured play activities do not always have rigorously identified learning objectives and at times above average attainers are not challenged sufficiently.
- Children's linguistic skills could be developed further by more adult intervention in the role play area.
- The outdoor provision is unsatisfactory but plans are already in place to rectify this deficiency.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Commentary

54 Children are on course to exceed the expected early learning goals at the end of their time in the reception class. Their achievement in this area is very good because of the quality of care, guidance and support given by the teacher and support staff. Relationships between children and adults are excellent and this makes children feel confident and secure. Parents are actively involved in children's learning through a planned series of visits, when children are settling in to the reception class and receive very good communication about their child's learning. This helps to consolidate and extend children's skills of sharing and co-operation. Children have good opportunities to make choices and think independently through different curriculum areas, and routines at the beginning and the end of the day help to encourage confidence in making their needs known. The reception teacher and staff are good role models for children and manage behaviour very well. As a result, children have very good attitudes to their work and behaviour is very good.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Commentary

55 Children enter the Foundation Stage with a wide range of communication and literacy skills. Their language and literacy skills are average overall and by the end of Foundation Stage they are on

course to exceed the early learning goals and achieve well. Parents are very supportive and help out at home. Teaching is good and gives many well-developed opportunities for children to learn to speak confidently and to listen attentively. The teacher is a very good role model. Children learn how to look at a book, recognise the title and learn initial sounds of words. They learn subject-specific language, such as *small*, *smaller* and *smallest*, in mathematics, and words such as *lower case* and *noun* in English. Children have a good knowledge of initial letter sounds, spelling strategies, letter formation and presentation, but higher attaining children are not sufficiently challenged at times and have few opportunities to extend their learning. When they finish their work they go and play, often choosing activities which do not stretch them enough. Further well planned extension activities, linked to the focused work that they have undertaken in literacy lessons, could provide better opportunities for them to learn. A small minority of the higher attaining children are ready for more formal teaching of aspects of the literacy strategy.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**

Commentary

56 By the end of the reception year, all children will exceed the early learning goals in mathematical development. Teaching and learning are good and children learn well because many good opportunities are provided which extend their mathematical experiences and knowledge well, for example, in story sessions, number rhymes and in group tasks.

57 Children learn to double numbers up to five in mental mathematics and learn to add and record low numbers. They learn to recognise basic shapes, such as squares, circles and triangles, and basic mathematical language. The teacher has good subject knowledge and makes sure that there are sufficient opportunities for children to correct their work. However, the lack of resources to support extension activities means that often there are too few opportunities for higher attaining children to practise, consolidate and extend their work.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **satisfactory**

Commentary

58 By the end of the reception class children will exceed the early learning goals in knowledge and understanding of the world and their achievements are good. Children are fascinated about the world around them and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. They have good knowledge about the May Day traditions in their village and they can recall the most important events leading up to the birth of Jesus. A good number of pupils have access to computers at home so they feel confident about using computers in school. Nearly all of the children can work the mouse, click accurately and drag objects to new spots. They can distinguish between old and new toys and know that their parents were “young” a long time ago. They can describe features of the village, and know their way around the school grounds. Teaching is good and staff ensure that all children are actively involved in the activities provided to them.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**

Commentary

59 Children are well co-ordinated and by the end of the reception year they will have exceeded the early learning goals in physical development. No teaching of physical development was

observed during the week of inspection but pupils can hold pencils accurately, create appropriate matches when finding missing pieces of jigsaw puzzles, thread beads, cut paper and use paintbrushes effectively. They develop good hand-eye co-ordination when they sew, paint and thread beads. By the end of the Foundation Stage they will have exceeded the early learning goals and the achievements are good.

60 The staff are aware that the lack of a well-structured outside learning environment restricts children's access to maximising use of the environment but plans are in place to rectify this issue, and building work is about to start.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**

Commentary

61 In their creative development pupils achieve well and, by the end of the reception year, will have exceeded the early learning goals because of good teaching. They love working with colour and demonstrate good knowledge of colour and shape and confidence in working collaboratively. They paint recognisable faces, mix colours appropriately and take great care in ensuring that they create regular patterns. They love singing and in singing practice they sing their little hearts out. They use percussion instruments to tap out the syllables in their names and eagerly join in singing number rhymes. In the role-play area they take on appropriate roles of characters and, when acting out the nativity story, they readily take turns and listen attentively to one another whilst Mary gives instructions to the angel Gabriel to shut the door behind him! The role-play area would benefit from more multicultural resources such as ethnic dressing up clothes. However, there are too few interactive displays, and resources are not varied and interesting enough to stimulate children's imagination and develop their awareness of sight, sound, touch and scent.

62 Overall pupils learn well because the class teacher is knowledgeable, but, at times, the teaching has less effect than it might because opportunities are not best used for adults to intervene and upgrade children's linguistic structures in the role-play area. Rightly, children are offered a balance of self-chosen and teacher-led activities but sometimes they would benefit from guidance when undertaking play activities. At times developing their independence is treated too much as simply letting them choose an activity which has not been underpinned by a clear learning rationale, this leads to higher attaining pupils not being sufficiently challenged.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain standards which are above the national averages and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Pupils speak clearly, read avidly and their writing is well constructed.
- Pupils in Year 6 are well prepared to cope with secondary school.
- Pupils' presentation skills could be better and higher attainers could be doing more difficult work, especially in Years 3/4.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent. While it is satisfactory overall, it is very good in the oldest classes.
- The very good analysis of assessment data by the assessment co-ordinator is starting to pay dividends and pupils know what they need to do in order to improve.
- The leadership and management by the co-ordinator are very good.

Commentary

63 The school's results show that, in relation to their prior attainment, pupils are doing well. They are confident learners who are well prepared for their next stage of education. In 2003, in comparison with similar schools, pupils' attainment in Year 6 rose significantly and this put the pupils' standards achieved in the top five per cent nationally.

64 Pupils' achievements in speaking and listening in the infants and juniors is good by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to talk with one another and in group situations; pupils are polite, courteous and take their turn. In Year 6, pupils are challenged to give detailed explanations of reasons behind their thinking. For example, in writing up a sports report based upon journalistic writing, the class teacher challenged pupils to use a range of connective and short sentences so that the tone of the writing reflected the atmosphere of a sports report. He deliberately challenged pupils' thinking in order to gain detailed and precise writing. Pupils listened attentively to the work of their friends as they read it out, and amended their writing in the light of emerging knowledge. The good opportunities in lessons to develop speaking and listening enable pupils to speak clearly and confidently; they know how to use language according to purpose and context.

65 Standards in reading are above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils love reading. Younger pupils devour books avidly and cannot wait to get a new reading book. In both the infants and juniors, most pupils have very good support from their parents and very quickly become independent readers. On leaving school, they are familiar with many authors and love poetry. They have good research skills and know how to find information, including using CD-ROMs. Pupils marvel at the way authors use adjectives to describe settings and develop characters, and in their own writing they try to emulate them. This was seen in Year 6 pupils' work on *Why the Whales Came*.

66 Standards in writing are above national averages by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils' achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. They are being stretched and generally work to their full capacity. This is due to the effective modelling of writing by the class teachers. Teachers use texts very well to help pupils develop their writing skills. In the infants, the teachers give pupils a firm grounding in the skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation. By the end of Year 2, pupils are producing correctly punctuated stories such as their accounts of the Great Fire of London, they enjoy writing and confidently attempt even complex spellings. Their punctuation is nearly always correct and they have good knowledge of rhyming words. By the end of Year 6, pupils write well and choose

their words correctly to engage the reader. Very good examples of play scripts were seen in the juniors, where pupils linked their knowledge of historical events to developing writing skills. When writing about the Roman invasion, one pupil wrote: *We stared at their ships, watching them float nearer to the shore. We saw the soldiers jumping out of their ships and wading to the shore with their heavy armour which weighed them down.* A particular contribution to the high standards of writing is the emphasis placed by teachers on teaching their pupils how to plan their writing and how to choose words correctly for their significance to arouse the readers' interest.

67 Inspection findings show that the achievement of most pupils is good, but in some lessons, especially in the lower juniors, higher attaining pupils could be pushed further in their learning. In the Year 3/4 class pupils' approach to their written work is too casual and results in untidy presentation of written work. Pupils spell well, but in Year 3/4, their spelling and presentation of work lacks rigour and is untidy. This is because marking, whilst regular, does not inform pupils on how to improve the quality of their work. Expectations of what pupils should achieve are inconsistent and the principles underpinning the National Literacy Strategy are not always adhered to, resulting in planning not being sufficiently rigorous to maintain good progress. For example, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to base the structure of their writing on texts studied and, as a result, pupils' rates of progress slow down and higher attainers are not always sufficiently challenged.

68 Pupils have very good attitudes to learning because teaching overall, is good with very good features. As a result pupils learn well. Teachers give clear explanations, use time effectively and have good questioning skills. There is no room for slacking because time is used well, lessons are interesting and generally teachers have high expectations, pupils are kept on task and, as a result, achieve well.

69 Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. They make good gains in learning, especially in breaking down syllables to help them with their reading. They access the curriculum well.

70 The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Test results are analysed and improvements are made to the curriculum. The co-ordinator has undertaken an audit of standards and very good assessment procedures have been introduced; this is starting to have a positive effect on raising standards.

71 Satisfactory improvement has been made since the previous inspection, as the quality of teaching has improved and standards have risen.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

72 Provision for pupils to use their language and literacy skills across the curriculum is good. Whilst the school has not yet formally identified opportunities in medium term planning for pupils to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum, this is nevertheless happening because of the skill and expertise of the staff. For example, pupils undertake report writing in history and factual accounts in science and extended research in other subjects. This enables them to have experience of using their skills in many different contexts.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well throughout the school because of the good quality of teaching and very good support of parents.
- Standards of attainment are well above average at the end of the current Year 2 and Year 6.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject.
- Assessment overall is good but marking could be used more effectively to develop learning.

- The subject leader is an effective numeracy teacher committed to raising standards, but he has not had time to monitor teaching and learning in the classroom and identify opportunities for numeracy in other subjects.

Commentary

73 National test results show that over time pupils have achieved well in mathematics in Year 6. Standards in 2003 improved on last year's performance from being average and are now above average. This is due to the high emphasis placed on challenging the above average attainers who were taught in small groups based upon their capabilities. This has been effective in raising standards. Pupils make good and at times very good progress throughout the school. Achievement is very good because teachers build on what pupils already know and understand, and parents help out with homework. The quality of teaching is good overall and in particular it is very good at the end of both key stages. Teachers plan their lessons very effectively. They follow national guidance and use assessments well. Mental mathematics sessions are brisk and keep the pupils on their toes. Work is planned at different levels to meet the needs of all pupils. The mathematics co-ordinator has worked with small groups of pupils in order to raise standards. This specific focus has been effective, as evidenced by the 2003 national test results which were above average at the end of Year 6 and well above average at the end of Year 2. Pupils with special educational needs receive different work when appropriate and this, linked with good support, ensures that they make progress in line with the rest of the class. In the inspection period there were no observable differences in the achievement of boys and girls.

74 Pupils in Year 2 show a much better than expected understanding of number. The majority recognise and name two digit numbers. Low attaining pupils carry out addition of two and one digit numbers. Average and higher attaining pupils carry out simple multiplication. Almost all pupils have a better than expected understanding of money. Higher attaining pupils carry out problem solving at a higher than expected level, knowing which number operations to use. Many pupils measure accurately to the nearest centimetre. Pupils recognise and name common two and three-dimensional shapes.

75 By Year 6, pupils have built on their previous knowledge and made good progress. Almost all pupils work confidently with numbers above 1000, with several working with six and seven figure numbers. They have a good understanding of the four rules of number and apply them very well. There is particularly good knowledge and understanding of ratio and proportion. Pupils understand and use the language of probability, using the probability scale. In work on area and space, pupils show good understanding of angles and use protractors to measure. In data handling pupils collect information and record using a variety of charts and graphs including straight-line graphs. Older pupils use computers to work effectively on spreadsheets. Pupils have very positive attitudes to mathematics. They enjoy the subject and work together very well. This allows teachers to concentrate on imparting knowledge and giving support to those pupils who need it.

76 There is very good management of the subject. The subject leader is committed to raising standards in the subject. A leading mathematics teacher, he was partly responsible for raising last year's standards. There has not been time to monitor teaching and learning in the classroom to identify areas of strength and areas for development to raise standards even further. Assessment procedures are good. There is regular target setting which enables pupils to understand what they have to learn. Very good analysis of national tests allows the school to identify areas for development and effectively address issues raised. Teachers' marking, whilst satisfactory overall, misses opportunities to develop learning by the use of comments, such as 'Can you think of another way to do this?' without actually modelling what could be achieved.

77 There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning have improved, as have assessment procedures, and this has led to a rise in standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

78 There is satisfactory use of mathematics across the curriculum. Whilst it is not rigorously identified in planning and it relies on the individual expertise of individual teachers, it is nevertheless effective because teachers are knowledgeable and know where to make effective links between subjects. It is done best in Year 1/2, Year 4/5 and Year 6. Pupils see the links between mathematics and other subjects when they talk about measuring and recording in science. They use scale in geography and plot co-ordinates. In design and technology they use measurements accurately when designing and making articles. Mathematical programs are used in information and communications technology and pupils use computers to record graphs and carry out work on spreadsheets.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- National test results show that the very hard work and good teaching of the co-ordinator has paid off and pupils are attaining very high standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Pupils are making good gains in learning and, by the time that they are 11, they have a good understanding of the principles of fair testing.
- Teaching is good and overall pupils learn well.
- Assessment procedures are good but they need to be developed further so that teachers can ascertain the gains pupils make in scientific skills as well as knowledge of facts. Higher attaining pupils could be given more opportunities to extend their learning.
- Resources are barely satisfactory.

Commentary

79 In the 2002 national test results for the end of Year 6, standards were below the national average. In 2003 they are well above national average due to the very hard work of the co-ordinator and dedication of staff in raising standards. National test results were analysed and a very high emphasis was put upon developing pupils' skills of experimental and investigative science. By the end of Year 2, pupils attained standards which were in the top five per cent nationally. Higher attaining pupils did well and achieved the higher levels that they were capable of.

80 Inspection findings show that standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above those expected nationally and pupils' achievements are good. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils know how to set up experiments and record their findings in a variety of ways. They understand the principles of fair testing. Pupils in Year 2 know how animals move and can identify forces, they know that the wind is a force and they can readily explain the difference between transparent, translucent and opaque. They have good skills of prediction, hypothesis and synthesis and, when presented with the question of: *Do you think that the strongest legs will have the longest jump?* Pupils are able to keep an open mind until they test their results. They are fascinated when their results do not match their initial predictions.

81 By the end of Year 6, pupils in role as scientists eagerly apply their knowledge and skills of principles underpinning evaporation to help the fictitious Cheshire Salt Company to solve their flooding problems. Using their literacy and numeracy skills very well, they advised the firm on optimum conditions for evaporating the water caused by a recent flood. Pupils have good knowledge of fair testing, know how to write up experiments, but do not always evaluate their findings with the initial hypothesis. Pupils in Years 3/4 make satisfactory progress overall, but scrutiny of their work reveals a lack of recorded work. However, during the week of the inspection, when taught by a supply teacher, the pupils made rapid gains in learning when finding out the secondary colours of light. In this lesson, ICT was used very well to support learning and pupils researched their tasks on three Internet sites. When the bell went for the end of the lesson, they were reluctant to stop and wanted the lesson to continue.

82 Pupils at the end of Year 6 are familiar with scientific vocabulary and have covered all the programmes of study in sufficient depth. However, the use of day-to-day assessment is variable. Marking is regular and satisfactory overall but in the lower juniors it does not always tell pupils how to improve their work. The best marking is in Years 1/2, 4/5 and 6. Whilst teaching is good with very good features, especially in the upper key stage over time, it does not always push the higher attainers to achieve their full potential. They make satisfactory progress overall but they could be achieving more. In spite of the high percentage of pupils achieving the higher levels, more challenging tasks could be presented in lessons. This is because, at present, in science there has been insufficient time to develop a whole-school approach to using the good assessment data to plan the next steps of learning as the good assessment procedures have only recently been introduced. The school has recognised this as an area to be developed further, as, at present, the school does not have sufficient information on the scientific skills attained by the pupils, although the information on scientific knowledge covered is good. The assessment co-ordinator has analysed test results very well, but this data now needs to be shared with all staff so that higher attaining pupils can be challenged even further to extend their learning.

83 Pupils love learning. They are very grateful to their teachers for the exciting learning opportunities provided. They are not afraid to ask searching questions. For example, one boy asked the Year 6 teacher 'How can we measure the amount of salt in the sea?' This type of eager fascination is typical of the learning of pupils in this school.

84 The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The newly appointed co-ordinator has received good support from the previous co-ordinator and together, they have raised standards very well. However, a recent audit revealed that more resources are needed, such as magnets, electrical circuits and force meters.

85 Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection and, due to the good complement of hard working staff, including support staff, it is very likely that standards will continue to rise.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 broadly meet the expectations of seven and eleven year olds.
- There are gaps in the software available for use, especially in simulation, logo and control technology.
- Opportunities to use ICT in other subjects are satisfactory but they could be more rigorously identified in teachers' medium term planning.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject.
- Teaching is satisfactory with good elements.
- Specialist information and communications technology equipment is used very effectively with pupils with sensory impairment.

Commentary

86 In Year 2 and Year 6 pupils attain at the expected level. Their achievements are satisfactory. Pupils use word processing skills, editing, saving and print their work. They use computers to produce good quality art work. In the juniors pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their word processing skills and using the computer to access information. Incompatibility of resources has meant that pupils have had too few opportunities to use control technology and sense physical data. As a result of this, pupils' rates of progress in the juniors are

not as fast as they could be. The school has recognised this short-coming and has started to address it. Only a very small amount of teaching was seen in the inspection period. It was of satisfactory quality with some very good features. Work was well matched to pupils' individual needs. Higher attaining pupils were suitably challenged in a lesson writing instructions. Methods, including a mathematics quiz based on a popular television programme, captured the pupils' imagination and kept them on task. Pupils show very good attitudes to the subject. They are eager to learn and talk confidently about the use of ICT. ICT resources are used very effectively for pupils with sensory special educational needs. A Year 4/5 lesson, linking a computerised temperature probe to a closed circuit television system ensured that a pupil with visual impairment was fully involved in a scientific investigation.

87 The management of the subject is satisfactory. There is a commitment to raise standards and the subject leader has prepared a sound plan to address the issues of improving resources and monitoring of the use of ICT across the curriculum but it will take some time for this to come into effect. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

88 The use of ICT across the curriculum is not sufficiently well developed and monitored but it is satisfactory overall because teachers are knowledgeable and make satisfactory links with other areas of the curriculum. There are some good examples particularly in aspects of English and mathematics but these are inconsistent. Pupils are given opportunities to access the Internet and to use CD-ROMs to find information. In science opportunities to use sensing equipment such as computerised temperature probes has been limited and not enough has been done in this aspect due to a lack of suitable resources in the past. Under the present leadership this is being urgently addressed.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are above expected levels.
- Pupils achieve well because of the good quality of teaching.
- Good use is made of field trips to develop geographical skills.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes.
- Assessment systems, as well as aspects of curriculum planning, need developing.

Commentary

89 Pupils in both the infants and juniors make better than expected progress and achieve well based on prior attainment. Standards are above expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. In Year 2 pupils show a better than expected understanding of different climates. They use geographical words to describe the weather, including rain and wind. They compare and contrast their own area with that of Lacey Green. Pupils have a good understanding of other countries. By the end of Year 6 pupils show a good understanding of environmental geography. They have a better than expected understanding of the geography of France and can talk about land uses and climate. Pupils use their geographic mapping skills very effectively to describe the topography of areas and compare the local area with Colsterdale in the north Yorkshire moors. Work set at different levels and additional support ensure that pupils with special educational needs learn at the same rate as their classmates.

90 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan their lessons well and make lessons lively and interesting by using resources, including maps, very effectively. Trips out from school give pupils opportunities to develop their observational skills very effectively when analysing land usage. Pupils respond very well to their high expectations of behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good with pupils demonstrating good skills of collaboration. The development of assessment is at an early stage, and, at present, it does not guarantee step-by-step development of skills as pupils move through the school. Whilst schemes of work have been developed using national guidance, the school has not fully identified what different groups of pupils in each year group will be learning. Pupils exceed the national expectations of 7 and 11 year olds and achieve well in relation to their own prior attainment because many of them have travelled abroad with their parents, and teachers are really focusing on ensuring that pupils use appropriate geographical vocabulary and research skills. In lessons questions are challenging and, as a result, pupils develop their thinking skills well. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are several weaknesses in the overall curriculum planning.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' skills of literacy and research are developed well through history.

Commentary

91 Standards meet the national expectations of both Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

92 Coverage of historical skills is patchy, ranging from satisfactory to good but overall it is satisfactory. Long term planning ensures adequate coverage but medium term planning lacks identification of the progressive development of subject specific skills of chronology and interpreting of evidence. In mixed age classes, whilst pupils make good gains in acquiring historical facts, their acquisition of skills is less secure and is only satisfactory overall. For example, insufficient emphasis is placed on developing pupils' skills of using secondary sources, presenting their findings in a variety of ways and making comparisons. However, opportunities for developing writing are good. In Year 2 pupils wrote detailed accounts of the Great Fire of London and have related it to the present time, giving detailed answers to questions as to why somebody might want to blow up the queen. This focus contributed well to their personal development and they explored issues of materialism, greed and misuse of power. By the end of Year 6 pupils know about invaders and settlers, why the Romans came to Astbury and they have a good understanding of the customs and practices of the Egyptians and Greeks. They know many facts about World War II and about life in Victorian times. In the juniors good examples were seen of pupils using their research skills in extended study of their history topics.

93 Pupils have very good attitudes to learning; they are interested in their work and enjoy researching topics using CD-ROMs and the library which is adequately resourced.

94 The leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory overall. Assessments are being developed, teachers have a secure knowledge of what facts pupils know, and are now focusing on assessing their skills. Overall assessments are satisfactory.

95 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, especially in Year 3/4 and use their own interest in the subject to motivate pupils. A strength of the teaching is the way in which teachers make good links with literacy and develop pupils' skills of literacy.

96 Pupils' learning is satisfactory and all groups of pupils are effectively supported.

97 Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and improvement has been satisfactory because national guidelines have been implemented when previously there was no scheme of work.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

98 Insufficient evidence was available to make secure judgements in the quality of provision in design and technology, music and physical education. However, from looking at pupils' work, teachers' planning folders and displays around the school, it is evident that these subjects contribute appropriately to pupils' literacy skills and personal development.

99 In **design and technology**, design skills are at the expected level in both Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils plan and sketch what they are going to make. They adapt plans if necessary and when they have completed their model they evaluate and look for ways to improve it. In the lesson observed the quality of teaching was very good because the teacher used a wide range of 'pop-up' books with some very effective 'mechanisms'. The pupils effectively evaluated these in preparation for producing their own 'pop-up' book based on a history topic. Pupils were enthusiastic in the lesson and responded very well to the teacher's very high expectations of behaviour. In **music**, pupils' performing skills are good and they are confident singers. The school places a high emphasis on music and learning opportunities are enhanced by musicians visiting the school. The curriculum is broad and balanced and many staff are accomplished musicians who set a good role model for their pupils. The use of a parent's expertise in assisting singing sessions is helping to raise standards. Only two aspects of **physical education** were seen in gymnastics and athletics. In gymnastics pupils meet the national expectations and pupils in Year 2 performed at a better than expected level showing good awareness of space. They linked movements together building very well on the skills they had been practising earlier in the term. Pupils show good co-ordination when they jump, roll and travel. In Year 6 pupils show better than expected skills in athletics. They pass the baton well and perform triple jumps to a high standard. The quality of teaching seen in the lessons was very good. Particular attention is paid to correct technique and skill development. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their performance. A visiting athletics coach uses assessment effectively. The coach has a very good impact on raising standards in athletics. The small hall restricts gymnastic activities for older pupils but the school makes the best possible use of the village hall. Good use is made of the village hall to compensate for the school hall. Swimming was not observed but discussion shows that the majority of pupils attained above the expected standard before they leave the school. A very good range of extra-curricular activities including football, tag-rugby, cross-country and athletics enhance the curriculum very well.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning.
- The art club makes a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
- Pupils in both the infants and juniors have good observational skills.
- The displays around the school are of good quality and this contributes to an effective learning environment.
- Assessment at present is being developed in assessing pupils' skills acquisition, the support assistant co-ordinates the subject and, whilst she works very hard, she is not yet fully versed in the demands of the curriculum and has not had sufficient support from previous management.

Commentary

100 Pupils meet the national expectations in Year 2 and Year 6 but their skills of observational drawing are good. Pupils pay attention to detail and have a good sense of perspective. They respond creatively using their imagination and have a secure understanding of tone, form and space, depicting shadows, lightness and darkness in their work. Pupils' representation of portraits in Year 1/2 is very realistic and already pupils are showing that they can use a full range of colour, including shading. They have a good sense of perspective. They have studied the work of Matisse, Van Gogh and Monet and they know the work of these artists well. Their still life drawings are well presented, with correct shading and use of colours. Pupils have worked alongside artists and have produced good quality batik and illustrations. The school offers a broad range of opportunities, such as a well attended art club run by a very hard working support assistant, this makes a valuable contribution to pupils' design skills. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning because the teaching challenges their imagination. Teachers have good subject knowledge but medium term planning does not fully identify how skills will be developed incrementally. This limits the quality of teachers' planning as some skills, such as colour mixing and shading, are repeated. The school recognises that this issue needs to be addressed.

101 The subject is co-ordinated by a support assistant who is knowledgeable in art and design but is not fully aware of the demands of the curriculum. Whilst she does everything possible to develop this subject, she has not received sufficient guidance from previous management and should not be solely shouldering this responsibility as she is not contracted to do it. However, she has produced good quality displays which enhance the learning environment and her hard work is appreciated by staff, parents and pupils, especially the very well attended art club that she runs.

102 Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and improvement overall has been satisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

103 Learning opportunities offered for **personal, social and health education** and **citizenship** are good. Very few lessons were observed but overall the teaching is at least satisfactory with several good features, such as the use of drama to develop pupils' skills of emotional literacy. Work in these subjects was scrutinised by the inspection team along with evidence from planning. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about what they had learned. The school produces well-rounded individuals who are concerned about the environment and the need to be true to their values of integrity and justice. The school's personal, social and health education and citizenship is still in the early days of development but staff are aware that more work needs to be done in preparing their pupils for life in a multicultural society. Already pupils have been studying multicultural art and are learning about major faith religions. In the infants pupils cover various themes of caring, sharing and staying healthy, in the juniors an appropriate programme of sex education, relationships and drugs education is taught. Over arching themes of healthy eating and living are also tackled throughout the school and pupils are taught how to look after themselves and stay safe. The school has received its Healthy School Award and all pupils are aware of the components of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are making good gains in developing their emotional literacy because teachers help pupils identify their emotions through drama, music and good quality text.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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