

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **AYCLIFFE DRIVE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Hemel Hempstead

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117335

Headteacher: Mrs Maria Green

Lead inspector: George Crowther

Dates of inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> September 2003

Inspection number: 255396

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	311
School address:	Aycliffe Drive Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire
Postcode:	HP2 6LJ
Telephone number:	01442 404008
Fax number:	01442 404013
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T Douris
Date of previous inspection:	11 <sup>th</sup> May 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Aycliffe Drive is a large, community primary school for boys and girls who are 3-11 years old. It has 290 pupils organised in eleven classes, and a nursery class for 42 children who attend part-time each morning. The school is situated on the western edge of Hemel Hempstead, and the pupils live mainly on the Grovehill estate. The school serves families from a range of social circumstances but, taken together, these are less favourable than found nationally. Whilst an average proportion of pupils currently claim free school meals, evidence provided by the school indicates that an above average proportion is eligible. Overall, pupils' attainment when they start school is below average, though there is a wide range of ability within each age group that varies from year to year. Fifty-six pupils, an average proportion, have been identified as having special educational needs, for a variety of learning and behavioural difficulties, and four have statements to outline particularly challenging needs. All but a few pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds and none is at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. In 2003, the school gained a Schools Achievement Award for improved results in national tests.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18814	George Crowther	Lead inspector	Science, art, geography, history
9454	Deborah Pepper	Lay inspector	
27654	Robina Scahill	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, mathematics, music, physical education, English as an additional language
30244	Roger Tapley	Team inspector	English, design and technology, information and communication technology, religious education, special educational needs

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

## OVERALL EVALUATION

Aycliffe Drive is an improving school whose current effectiveness is **satisfactory**. Over the past year, the headteacher's good leadership, well supported by senior staff and governors, has improved a number of aspects of the school's work and raised standards, particularly in Year 6. Whilst pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall, progress is still variable between subjects and classes. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with some strong features. The friendly, purposeful atmosphere around the school supports pupils' learning well. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- standards have risen at the end of Year 6 and are above average in English and science, but need to improve further in mathematics;
- good leadership has enabled the school to improve provision significantly, but some of these improvements are not yet fully effective;
- pupils who have special educational needs achieve well;
- the school provides a positive climate for learning and for pupils' social development;
- there are weaknesses in the quality of teaching in some lessons;
- provision for the development of pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects is not good enough.

Since the school was inspected in 1998, improvement has been **good**. Standards in national tests have fluctuated, but the good results in Year 6 for 2003 confirm an improving trend. Almost all of the key issues identified in the previous inspection have been tackled. Planning the curriculum is much better, evaluation of the school's performance by senior staff and governors is more rigorous, and the school improvement plan provides clear direction for change. There are better systems for assessing pupils' progress, but the information is not yet used consistently.

## STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

**Pupils' achievements are satisfactory.** Many children start school with skills that are not as good as those expected for their ages. In the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception classes) children achieve well because the wide range of well-planned activities stimulates their learning, and adults provide good teaching. However, a significant minority do not reach the goals expected nationally by the end of reception. In Years 1 to 6, achievement is satisfactory overall, and good in English and science for the older pupils. In the current Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are average, but they have varied. For example, the 2003 test results were much lower because the current Year 3 has a large proportion of lower-attaining pupils. By Year 6, standards are above average in English and science, but average in mathematics. Achievement in mathematics has been unsatisfactory in the past but has improved recently, owing to a determined effort by the school. Pupils who have special educational needs do well. Pupils' achievements in learning ICT skills are satisfactory, but they do not use and apply them sufficiently in work in other subjects. Achievement in religious education was unsatisfactory at the last inspection but is now satisfactory.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are well nurtured.** Pupils are well behaved, friendly and they enjoy activities in school. In lessons, many pupils need motivating to really give of their best; when the teaching does not do this, pupils

make less progress. The school provides lots of opportunities that develop pupils' social skills and it is a moral community in which pupils learn about right and wrong. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance is average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory.**

The quality of **teaching and learning is satisfactory**, with some strong features. Teaching for children in the Foundation Stage is good, well organised and provides many valuable learning experiences. As a result, the children are happy and confident and make good gains in learning. Throughout the rest of the school, teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects, and good in science. Teaching has strengths in detailed planning, the lively rapport between teachers and pupils in many classes, and the good contribution made by teaching assistants. In almost two-thirds of the lessons observed teaching was good or better, which resulted in pupils working hard and making good gains in their skills. In a few lessons, however, teachers were not confident enough about the subject they were teaching, activities were not well matched to the existing attainment of the pupils and the pace of learning was too slow. As a result, pupils were not challenged by the work and did not make enough progress.

The curriculum is well planned and provides an appropriate range of activities. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress are extensive. At whole-school level these are already effective, but at classroom level teachers do not make enough use of the information they have to plan suitable work. The school provides good care and support for its pupils and has created a good partnership with its parents and the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership of the school is good.** In a fairly short time, the headteacher has injected an urgency into improving aspects of the school's work, and hence standards, which has motivated both staff and governors. She has a clear vision about what the school should be aiming to achieve. The senior staff team, fairly recently formed, is playing a key role in seeing through improvements. Governance is good. The governing body is knowledgeable, well organised and plays a full part in formulating school policies and monitoring how well the school is doing. Its strong support for the school, coupled with a determination that the school can do better, is an asset.

**Management of the school is satisfactory.** Whilst significant progress has been made to raise standards, many of the developments are not yet fully effective. There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, in the use of assessment, and in the work in some subjects that are holding back further improvement. At this stage, management of change has been effective, but existing initiatives now need to be consolidated.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents have positive views of the school and the great majority feel that their children are making good progress. Pupils say they like school, find lessons interesting and fun, and have to work hard.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- ensure that recent development in the school's work are implemented consistently;
- improve the quality of teaching where there are weaknesses;
- raise standards in mathematics, as planned;
- raise standards in ICT by ensuring that pupils use and develop their skills in other subjects.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Pupils' achievements are **satisfactory** overall. Children in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception classes) achieve well but, as many start school with low levels of attainment in their language and social skills, they do not reach the standard expected for their ages by the time they join Year 1. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. At the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are currently average. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory, and best in Year 6. Standards at the end of Year 6 are average overall, but were above average in English and science at the end of last year. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve well.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 improved significantly last year
- Children achieve well in the nursery and reception classes
- Pupils who have special educational needs achieve well
- Achievement in mathematics has improved, but is still not good enough
- Pupils skills in ICT are average, but they do not use and develop them enough in other subjects

#### Commentary

##### National test results and other performance data

1. The school's pattern of national test results, at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, is complex and has often depended as much on the attainment level of a group of pupils as on the quality of the teaching or the best endeavours of the school's leadership. At the end of Year 2, results in reading and writing were about average for a number of years up to 2003. Last year, the group of pupils who took the tests included a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs, and fewer higher-attaining pupils than is usual for the school, so results were low. Information showing these pupils' Year 2 test results compared with their standards when they joined Year 1 indicates that achievement was satisfactory. Standards in the current Year 2 are average. In mathematics, results over a number of years have been well below average. The school has strengthened provision for mathematics through its school improvement plan, but the 2003 results did not provide a fair test as to whether these improvements have been successful. Standards in the current Year 2 are about average. The school recognises that standards in mathematics are not yet high enough.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.1 (15.6)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	14.3 (14.0)	14.4 (14.3)
mathematics	15.5 (14.9)	16.5 (16.2)

*There were 42 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. In Year 6, results in English and science have been about average for the last few years. In mathematics, results have been well below average. In 2003, the group of pupils taking the Year 6 tests included a greater proportion of higher attainers than is usual for the school and results in science and mathematics were much better than the previous year. Although comparisons with results nationally are not yet available, it is likely that the science results are above average and the mathematics results about average. In both subjects, the school exceeded the targets it had set itself for the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4. The results match the quality of work seen in these pupils' books. In English, the school has been told that only two-thirds of the pupils reached the expected Level 4, which does not match with the school's own assessments or the quality of work inspectors saw in pupils' books, which was above average. The school is in the process of having the English papers re-marked. Given this complex picture, and taking into account



the school's own data on the progress these pupils made between Year 3 and Year 6, achievement has been good in English and science and satisfactory in mathematics. Standards have risen significantly during the past year because the school has targeted particular aspects of teaching and the curriculum for improvement. In mathematics, however, standards continue to lag behind other subjects and still need to improve.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.2 (27.0)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	25.5 (25.4)	26.7 (26.6)
science	28.4 (28.5)	28.3 (28.3)

*There were 41 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

**Foundation Stage** (nursery and reception classes)

3. When children start school, many have weak language and social skills, so they need the rich environment provided by the nursery to help them learn how to play and work with others, and how to talk about what they are doing and how they are feeling. All the children benefit from this. The wide range of activities in the nursery provides good opportunities for learning, and the adults ensure that the children have the support and encouragement to take the opportunities. For example, a very good outdoor session included play with ride-on toys, 'gardening', play in sand and water, a work bench for hammering and banging, as well as lots of other activities. This enabled the adults to interact with the children, guiding, questioning and helping. As a result of well-organised provision, the children achieve well. The reception classes provide experiences that build on work in the nursery, with opportunities for play as well as more focused sessions that build specific skills, such as those for reading. The adults assess the children's growing abilities carefully, so that activities can be matched to their needs. Good teaching and a well-planned curriculum ensure that children continue to achieve well. By the time they join Year 1, however, a significant minority of the children have yet to reach the expected standard in all areas of their learning, particularly in communication, language and literacy.

**Pupils who have special educational needs**

4. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress in most lessons and towards the targets set for them. Teachers make sure that these pupils are fully involved. Tasks are usually appropriate to their needs but, when they are required to do the same work as other pupils, they are usually well supported by the teacher or well-trained classroom assistant. This helps them to be fully involved in lessons. For example, in a good mathematics lesson for Years 3 and 4, the teacher ensured that all the pupils were included in the mental work by targeting questions to individuals. During this part of the lesson, those with special educational needs were cleverly supported by the classroom assistant. A special activity planned for the lower-attaining pupils, led by the classroom assistant, was well matched to their needs, and they learnt to double numbers as part of a dice game. This type of careful support helps pupils with special educational needs to do well. In last year's Year 6, four pupils who have special educational needs reached the expected Level 4 in national tests owing to good teaching and effective support. The school does well to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs are fully included in lessons and all aspects of school life.

**Achievement in mathematics**

5. Pupils' achievements in mathematics have been weaker than in other subjects and, during the past year, the school has taken a number of steps to raise standards. Whilst pupils' basic skills in number are satisfactory, their ability to use and apply these skills in problem-solving situations, or investigations, is weaker. During the past year, this has led to changes in teaching and the curriculum in order to strengthen pupils' skills. The school has also used 'booster' classes and extra work with groups and individuals to improve their confidence and performance. Raising standards in mathematics has been a main target on the school improvement plan and the subject leader has

played a key role in training and supporting staff. To a large extent, this initiative has been successful, with improved results in the national tests at the end of Year 6. However, the school knows that this group of pupils was more able and that it will be challenging to reach the same standard this year. Results in mathematics continue to be lower than English and science, so there is still work to be done to ensure that pupils' achievements in mathematics improve further.

### Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT)

6. Throughout the school, pupils' skills in ICT are about average and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils use computers for writing, data handling, graphics, controlling events and research. In other subjects, there are examples of pupils using and developing their ICT skills. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils used data handling programs to collect and graph their results in science, and they used the Internet to research information for history. Across the school, however, and in most of the lessons observed during the inspection, pupils made too little use of ICT to support their work. Developing pupils' capability to use ICT in many situations is an important part of the National Curriculum that is not being fully exploited at present.

### Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The school nurtures pupils' personal development **effectively**. Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Attendance is satisfactory.

#### Main strengths

- Pupils have good attitudes to school
- The school expects pupils to behave well, and they do
- Pupils respond well to the opportunities they are given to take on responsibility
- Pupils' personal development is good

#### Commentary

7. Attendance is close to the national average and punctuality is satisfactory. The school monitors attendance carefully and follows up absence rigorously, involving outside agencies as necessary. The very large majority of parents ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.1	School data	0.1
National data	5.4	National data	0.5

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

8. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are happy to learn. They are quiet and attentive during lessons but they are usually compliant rather than eager learners, except when the teaching is exciting. In a very good English lesson, pupils were very motivated by having the opportunity to use the computer projector to write a song about Henry VIII. Pupils really enjoy the school's wide programme of extra-curricular activities and there was a buzz of excitement about the 'Streetwise' programme which had just started. Pupils in reception had settled well, considering it was the third week of term.

9. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Parents agree that pupils behave well. Pupils know how the school expects them to behave and summarise these expectations in their own class rules. The 'red dots' pupils are given to reward good work and behaviour motivate them very successfully. Pupils get on well together and with adults. They work successfully in pairs, in some classes using 'speaking partners' to discuss ideas, which improves both their oral and collaborative skills. Pupils behave well in the playground, although sometimes tensions originating outside school occasionally surface. Parents and pupils agree that any bullying is resolved quickly. There have been

no exclusions in the past year. A small number of racial incidents have taken place but have been addressed and have not recurred.

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	225		
White – Irish	3		
White – any other White background	1		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1		
Black or Black British – African	3		
Any other ethnic group	1		
No ethnic group recorded	6		

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

10. A strong feature of the school’s work is the way in which all pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities. Class monitors take their jobs seriously, Year 5 ‘buddies’ help the reception children, and Year 6 have a range of tasks around the school. Pupils fulfil these responsibilities conscientiously and grow in self confidence and maturity as a result. School council representatives identified several changes which had taken place as a result of their work, for example improvements to playtime arrangements.

11. The school supports pupils’ personal development well, particularly their moral and social development. Staff help all pupils, from the earliest age, to develop an understanding of right and wrong. For example, Year 6 pupils explored how a character in *Goodnight Mr Tom* was cruel to her son, despite her apparent religious beliefs. Pupils are often kind and caring towards each other, for example to pupils who have special educational needs and older pupils towards their younger ‘buddies’. Pupils are, therefore, part of a caring community where everyone is included in activities and all feel secure and valued.

12. The school’s provision for pupils’ spiritual development has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Pupils are developing an understanding of different faiths but do not regularly have opportunities to explore feelings and beliefs in lessons. Clergy from local churches lead assemblies frequently, which make an important contribution to pupils’ spiritual understanding. These acts of collective worship, observed during the inspection, provided more opportunities for reflection and quiet thought than those led by school staff. The use of art, visiting artists and theatre groups, school productions and visits to local places of worship is an effective way of helping pupils understand their own, and other, cultural traditions. The school also draws on the cultural traditions represented within the school community to extend pupils’ experiences.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some strong features. The curriculum is well planned and provides an appropriate range of experiences both in lessons and for clubs and visits. Pupils who have special educational needs are supported well and make good progress. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress are satisfactory. Pupils are cared for well and the school has a good partnership with parents, other schools and the community.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is similar to that found at the previous inspection, but the proportion of good and very good teaching is higher. Teaching for children in the Foundation Stage is good, well organised and provides many valuable learning experiences. As a result, the children are happy, confident and make good gains in learning. Throughout the rest of the school, teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects, and good for science, with strengths in detailed planning, the lively rapport between teachers and pupils in many classes, and the good contribution made by teaching assistants. In almost two-thirds of the lessons observed, therefore, teaching was good or better and resulted in pupils working hard and making good gains in their skills. In a few lessons, however, teachers were not confident enough about the subject they were teaching, activities were not well matched to the existing attainment of the pupils and the pace of learning was too slow. As a result, pupils were not challenged by the work and did not make enough progress. The quality of assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers encourage good attitudes to learning and high standards of behaviour
- Teachers' command of the subject they are teaching is sometimes not good enough
- In many lessons, learning is fun, which motivates the pupils and helps them to be fully involved
- In most lessons, pupils try hard and work well in pairs and groups
- Plans for lessons make it clear what pupils should learn
- Work is not always well matched to pupils' existing attainment, so they do not learn enough
- Parts of some lessons are too slow, so pupils lose interest and concentration
- Assessment systems are in place, but are not used consistently

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	4 (11%)	20 (54%)	10 (27%)	2 (5%)	1 (3%)	

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

13. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage provide a good range of interesting and challenging tasks, which help children to take the next steps in learning. For example, in one session observed, the children's physical and social skills were developed very effectively by a variety of activities in the nursery outdoor area. In a more focused session in reception, effective teaching used games and then a story to develop the children's knowledge of letter sounds. Whatever the activities, adults provide positive support for learning, gently guiding children or questioning them to extend their thinking. During the past year, the school has successfully developed the curriculum and teaching for children in the Foundation Stage to address more fully the areas of learning recommended for this age group. As a result, children's achievements have improved.

14. Teachers plan work for the term systematically and each lesson in some detail. Plans include a clear statement about what the pupils should learn during the lesson, which helps to keep learning on track. The learning objective is usually shared with the pupils so that they know exactly what they are trying to accomplish. For example, in a good mathematics lesson for Years 5 and 6, precise

planning enabled the teacher to explain fairly complex methods for multiplication in such a way that the pupils understood what they had to do. The teaching assistant was equally methodical working with her group so that, by the end of the lesson, all the pupils had made good progress. Most lessons are equally well planned.

15. Pupils are well behaved in lessons and positive about their work. This owes much to good relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils. Adults relate to pupils as individuals, speak to them personally, are very positive about any contributions pupils make to the lesson, and give them a huge amount of encouragement. In many lessons, learning is fun, which motivates the pupils and helps them to be fully involved. For example, in a good Spanish lesson for Year 3 and 4, the pupils really enjoyed listening and responding to questions in Spanish, which began their day with a different and interesting activity. On the rare occasions when pupils' behaviour is not good enough, a quiet word from the teacher is usually sufficient.

16. In most lessons, the teacher is well supported by a teaching assistant. Sometimes the assistant helps a pupil who has particular special needs, or sometimes provides support for a group of pupils. These assistants make an important contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. For example, in a very good English lesson for Year 2, teaching assistants skillfully questioned groups of pupils about their books and guided them in their reading, which challenged their thinking and enabled them to achieve far more than would have been the case with only the teacher. Assistants who work with pupils who have special needs keep them focused on the lesson and provide invaluable support when these pupils are tackling activities. Teachers play their part by making sure that the assistants know what to do and valuing the part they play in pupils' learning.

17. Pupils try hard with their work in lessons and usually get a good amount done. They show a good level of interest in many lessons, but need lively teaching to get them fully motivated. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils were finding out about forces by carrying out a variety of simple experiments, such as trying to keep a balloon in the air by blowing through a drinking straw. They found the session very enjoyable and it prompted a good deal of discussion about which forces were acting at any one time. In a very active art lesson, Year 3 and 4 pupils enjoyed making patterns in a variety of ways. Even where work is more formal, pupils respond well to good teaching. For example, in an English lesson for Years 5 and 6, pupils worked well in groups considering the feelings of a World War II evacuee and the man he stayed with, whilst reading extracts from *Goodnight Mr. Tom*.

18. In the lessons that were unsatisfactory, or in satisfactory lessons where there were weaknesses, it was often the teacher's lack of expertise in the subject that inhibited the pupils' learning. For example, in a mathematics lesson where children were learning about division as the inverse of multiplication, the pupils became very confused by the teacher's unclear explanation and made little progress. In an English lesson, the teacher taught the pupils to punctuate speech incorrectly. In a religious education lesson, learning about worship was muddled by reference to many faiths and inaccurate statements about Christianity. In most lessons, teachers matched tasks well to pupils' existing attainment, so they could take the next step in learning. In a number of the lessons where there were weaknesses, tasks were either too easy or too hard, so pupils added little to their existing knowledge, skills and understanding.

19. In a few lessons, the pace and structure did not support pupils' learning effectively. The whole-class part of the lesson lasted too long, which resulted in pupils' not having enough time to complete their independent task. In some cases, the whole-class part of the lesson, pitched to meet the needs of all the pupils, did not challenge the higher attainers sufficiently. These pupils were not encouraged to make an early start on their independent activities, which would have provided a greater challenge. The management of the school is well aware through its own monitoring that there are some weaknesses in teaching and is tackling them through its performance management systems.

20. During the past year, the school has improved the assessment of pupils' attainment and the monitoring of their progress considerably, but new systems have yet to be implemented consistently. At whole-school level there are good procedures, which help the school to monitor the progress of individual pupils. For example, by looking at pupils' results in national tests and internal

assessments, the school can predict the standard they should reach by the time they leave the school. At classroom level, assessment procedures are less secure. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly, but the quality varies. In some classes, marking includes times when teachers assess the standard reached, comment about the effort the pupil has shown, and indicate how they can do better. In other classes, ticks are the norm. Where work in lessons was not well match to pupils' existing attainment, it is because information from assessment has not been used to inform planning. Pupils' involvement in evaluating their own understanding, using a 'traffic light' system, is a good recent development. The various types of target setting being used by teachers have yet to become a tried and tested part of the school's assessment strategies.

## The curriculum

The school's curriculum provides **satisfactory** opportunities for pupils' learning. Enrichment through activities outside lessons is **good**. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good
- The school makes good provision for pupils to be fully included in all activities
- Not enough activities are planned to develop pupils' ICT skills through work in a range of subjects
- The school provides a good range of activities for learning outside the school day

### Commentary

21. The curriculum is well planned, meets national requirements and is relevant to the pupils' needs. It enables pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding step by step. The Foundation Stage curriculum and national strategies for literacy and numeracy are implemented effectively. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The school has now implemented schemes of work for all subjects and improved the provision for the physical and creative development of children in the Foundation Stage. The links between National Curriculum subjects, such as those seen between art and some other subjects, enable the pupils to consolidate and extend previous work. Literacy skills are developed well across the curriculum and there are opportunities for mathematics to be used in subjects such as science. In ICT, however, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use and develop their skills through work in other subjects. The curriculum ensures that all pupils, in line with their needs, are given suitable work. The curriculum is enhanced by such innovative schemes as the 'Young Enterprise Primary Programme' and the school is a member of 'Dacorum School Sports' Co-ordinator Partnership'. As a whole, the curriculum enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily during their time at the school.

22. Provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory. A new policy and a revised scheme of work include satisfactory arrangements for sex education and attention to the potential misuse of alcohol and drugs. Good links with the playgroup that meets at the school help children to make an easy transition to the nursery. Pupils' progress is tracked as they move through the school and links with the secondary school ensure a smooth transfer. The school's links with a Beacon School have brought new ideas that have been useful in planning school improvement, such as those concerning assessment procedures.

23. Enrichment activities are interesting and appreciated by both parents and children. Pupils of all ages attend a good range of after school clubs such as football, netball, 'Streetwise', dance and recorders. A variety of visits and visitors, such as workshops for Indian dance and Tudor music, serve to enrich the curriculum.

24. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its provision for pupils who have special educational needs, and this is now a strong aspect of the school's work. These pupils' needs are identified quickly and special plans are written to show the particular learning targets towards which they should be working. These Individual Education Plans are of good quality, with targets that are clear and achievable. In lessons, both teachers and classroom assistants work hard to meet pupils'

special educational needs. Some pupils have individual support, which was very helpful in most of the lessons observed. Teachers often create a group of pupils whose needs are similar so that an adult can provide the necessary support. In the lessons seen, these group sessions usually enabled pupils who have special educational needs to make good progress. Wherever possible, teachers make sure that these pupils play a full part in exactly the same activities as the rest of the class, so that they experience the same breadth of curriculum.

25. The school has an appropriate number of qualified teachers and support staff. Teaching assistants are well trained and very effectively deployed. They work very well with teachers to enrich lessons and pupils' learning. For example, in a good art lesson for Years 3 and 4, the classroom assistant taught a group of pupils how to print, with good results. The school's accommodation is good and the school grounds are extensive, with a large well-marked field, hard play grounds and adventure play areas. Resources are adequate for all subjects and the library has been relocated and improved since the last inspection.

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

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. Pupils receive **good** support and guidance based on the school's monitoring of their progress. Pupils' views are sought and valued so that they can play a part in the work of the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships between adults and pupils are very good
- The school provides a secure and caring environment
- Health and safety issues are addressed thoroughly
- There has been no whole-staff training in child protection procedures
- The support and guidance provided for children is good, but relies too much on informal information
- Induction arrangements are good
- The school involves pupils well in its work

### **Commentary**

26. The very good relationships between adults and pupils provide the basis for sensitive and supportive care for children, especially those with special educational, or social and emotional, needs. The school provides a secure, caring environment in which pupils are known as individuals by at least one adult. Teaching assistants, in particular, provide high standards of care.

27. Health and safety issues are addressed well by the school and security matters are given close attention. Pupils' medical needs are carefully documented, all staff are first aid trained, including in the use of an epipen, and any accidents are dealt with quickly and recorded carefully. An internet security policy has been implemented.

28. Child protection procedures are in place and staff inform the head teacher when they have concerns about children. The school works closely with other agencies where children are on the 'at risk' register. Although there is a good level of awareness amongst staff about the welfare of children, there has been no formal, whole-staff training in child protection issues, and this is a weakness.

29. Overall, staff support and guide pupils well. Pupils with special educational needs are particularly well supported and staff are alert to their needs. The parent of a child with particular special needs was full of praise for the way in which the school had supported her child on arrival in the school. Pupils who find playtime difficult might be offered a job to do, for example sweeping leaves, to give them a special task and added confidence. However, staff rely too much on their informal knowledge of pupils, rather than using assessment information about pupils' academic performance or personal development. As a result, academic targets set for pupils do not

consistently match their learning needs, or are linked to what is planned in the curriculum rather than what pupils need to learn next.

30. Induction arrangements for both nursery and reception children are good. As a result, the children were settled in the routines of the school by the time of the inspection in the third week of term. The large majority of reception children come from the school's nursery and pupils are familiar with the school's environment and routines by the time they start. Other pupils have a programme of visits to prepare them for school. The school also has effective arrangements for inducting and integrating Traveller pupils, although none were in school at the time of the inspection.

31. The school involves pupils well in its work and responses to the pupil questionnaire showed that pupils are happy at school. Pupils evaluate their own work by using 'traffic lights' and write their own report using a system of smiley faces. The school council is increasingly consultative in the way it works and has brought about many changes, including the introduction of drinking water at lunchtimes.

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

The school has a **good** partnership with parents, other schools and the local community.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school's partnership with parents supports pupils' learning well
- Parents are pleased with the school and find staff approachable
- Links with the local community enrich pupils' education
- The school has good links with other schools and early years' providers

#### **Commentary**

32. The school has an effective partnership with parents, which has improved since the previous inspection. Parents are provided with good quality information, including regular newsletters and curriculum information. The guide about what each class will be learning during the term, which pupils share with their parents, is particularly good. Few parents, however, attend meetings when teachers explain particular aspects of the curriculum. The school keeps parents well informed about their children's progress. Most reports are good or very good, but some do not provide enough information about the standards children have reached or what they need to do to improve. However, learning targets are shared with parents at consultation evenings. Teachers are often available informally at the end of the school day or contact parents through reading record books. The school has consulted parents recently on several issues, for example about homework, and the policy is being reviewed as a result. Some parents help in school and the majority support their children's learning at home.

33. Parents are supportive of the work of the school. They say that their children are happy in school, induction arrangements are good and that the school is well led. They find the headteacher and class teachers approachable and responsive to concerns. Inspectors agree with parents' views. Some parents gave specific examples of how well the school had worked with them and their children. A few parents felt they did not receive enough information about their children's progress. However, inspectors found that the school communicates well with parents about their children's progress, both formally and informally.

34. The school's links with the community are good and enhance children's learning. Regular assemblies taken by local clergy make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Links with the HSBC Young Enterprise Primary Programme and the Greenlink recycling project extend pupils' understanding of community and environmental issues. Regular outside visits and visitors, such as a drama teacher from the local arts' centre, contribute well to pupils' learning.

35. The school has good links with other schools and early years' providers. Links with the playgroup that operates from the school's nursery premises three afternoons a week, and is run by



the school's nursery staff, are particularly strong. Children are, therefore, well known to nursery staff when they start at the school. Physical education staff from the local secondary school come into Aycliffe Drive as part of a local sports' partnership and pupils use the same school's swimming pool. Links with the school's Beacon partner have helped the school to improve standards in mathematics and provided impetus for the school council.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are **good** overall. Leadership and governance are good. Management is satisfactory, with some aspects that require improvement.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has led the school well since her appointment a year ago
- The senior management team is committed to raising standards
- Some initiatives aimed at improvement have not yet been implemented consistently
- The governing body is well organised and has a clear focus on helping the school to raise standards
- Finances are not firmly linked to the school improvement plan

### **Commentary**

36. The headteacher is a caring and effective leader, who has a clear view about what needs to be done to improve the work of the school. She has adopted a determined approach to raising standards, which has been shared by the staff, who are all playing their part in implementing new policies to boost pupils' achievements. Some improvements have had a rapid effect on raising standards. For example, more emphasis on teaching certain aspects of the mathematics curriculum in Year 6 improved pupils' results in the 2003 national tests. The re-organisation of the reception classes to best meet the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum has resulted in the school's youngest pupils making good progress. The appointment of the special educational needs co-ordinator to the senior management team has improved the quality and consistency of provision in that area. In some aspects of the school's work, however, such as assessment, developments are at an early stage, practice is inconsistent, and procedures are not yet contributing significantly to improving pupils' achievements. The headteacher is well respected and well supported by a hard working staff team. As a result there is a good emphasis across the school on promoting higher achievement. Better leadership, firmly focused on raising standards, is an improvement since the last inspection.

37. The headteacher and key staff monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in lessons, and the information gained has enabled them to determine how the curriculum should be developed. Most teaching is effective, but more could be done to take steps to improve that which is not. Subject leaders in subjects such as English and ICT are not given enough opportunities to develop the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects, and so some weaker aspects of the school's work have not been identified and tackled.

38. Since the appointment of the headteacher, the governing body has made an increasing contribution to the leadership of the school. Governors are committed and support the school well. They carry out their statutory duties effectively and are aware of, and respond to, changes in legislation. For example, they recently reviewed the policy for pupils' personal and social education to include developments in the provision for citizenship in primary schools. Many governors, particularly those who are more experienced in the role, know the school well. They visit the school, spend time in lessons and meet with teachers in governors' committees to discuss school policies. Governors analyse the school's national test results. As a result, collectively, the governing body has a good grasp of the school's strengths and the areas in which it needs to improve. Governors do not accept without question all that the headteacher proposes. They provide a good balance of support and challenge so that the school is accountable for the standard of education it provides.

39. The school day runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and they are generally followed. The school improvement plan outlines the school's priorities for development appropriately. For example, each subject has detailed priorities that are clearly set out and have specific targets. It correctly identifies the raising of standards in mathematics as a priority resulting from analysis of national test results. The headteacher involves the governors in reviewing plans, but they are not sufficiently involved in formulating them. Their monitoring role is not identified in the plan itself, which makes it difficult to see where their responsibilities lie in tracking improvements. The plan is not being linked closely enough to the school finances.

40. Budgets are set in accordance with statutory requirements. It is some considerable time since the local authority carried out a financial audit. Although a mini audit was completed on the change of headteacher, it would not have been sufficient to assure governors that all procedures are followed correctly. Day-to-day management of financial matters, and the general smooth running of the school, are helped considerably by the welcoming and efficient office staff.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	732345.54
Total expenditure	706871.30
Expenditure per pupil	2142.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	63542.62
Balance carried forward to the next	89016.86

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

## AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is **good**. In children's mathematical development, their knowledge and understanding of the world and their creative development, an insufficient range of work was seen to make overall judgments about their achievements.

### Main strengths

- Good teaching and learning in all areas result in pupils achieving well
- Classes are very well organised and managed
- The staff work very effectively as a team
- Planning is good and all areas of learning are covered effectively
- Assessments are good and the information gathered is used to plan appropriate activities
- Provision has improved significantly since the previous inspection

### Personal, social and emotional development

Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

### Main strengths

- Staff place a very strong emphasis on this area of learning
- There are good procedures for settling children into school
- Very clear routines successfully encourage children to behave well

### Commentary

41. A significant number of children have very weak personal and social skills when they join the nursery. They make very good progress owing to the very good quality of the teaching in this area of learning, good relationships and the secure environment. Most of the children have been to the play group and the staff know them well. Routines are quickly established because the new children follow the example of those who have been in school longer. Children in the reception classes benefit from the good start they have had in the nursery. They respond well by listening and taking part in whole-group sessions, and by following instructions. When they start school in the nursery, children play happily alongside each other, but few play together. They become increasingly confident and develop good relationships with both the staff and each other. As a result, in the reception classes, most children play well together, taking turns and sharing. They are encouraged to make independent choices, which they do confidently, and most remain focused on their chosen activity. This is most successful where adults are also involved. Because children's personal and social development is strongly promoted in all areas of learning, they achieve very well. By the time they join Year 1, however, a significant proportion have not yet reached the standard expected for their age.

### Communication, language and literacy

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

### Main strength and weakness

- Well-planned activities reinforce whole-class lessons
- There are too few structured opportunities to develop speaking skills

### Commentary

42. Many children start school with very limited language skills. Some respond to a question with a smile and others use one word. Children who have been in the nursery for a term listen to stories and join in with repeated phrases. By the time they are in the reception classes, most use simple sentences, but when asked to explain further merely repeat the same sentence because their language skills are still below the expected standard. Opportunities are missed for teachers to help children expand on what they say by giving them examples of how to use sentences and more complex structures in their answers. Early reading skills are taught well. In a very well planned lesson to introduce a new sound and its letter formation, the teacher used a wide variety of approaches to help all children learn. She reminded them of how they had learnt the letter sound in

the nursery class. Most of them remembered and demonstrated enthusiastically. This was followed up by carefully planned tasks and the teachers working with two small groups, which consolidated the children's learning well. Quite a few of the reception children write their first names and others recognise the sounds of some of the letters in their names. Children are making good progress and achieving well considering their capabilities but, by the time they join Year 1, many still have skills that are below the level expected for their age.

### **Mathematical development**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

#### **Main strength**

- Number work is woven well into everyday activities

#### **Commentary**

43. Good emphasis is given to developing mathematical language and knowledge of numbers. Good opportunities are taken for counting in many activities throughout the day, such as counting the number of children in the group. The good variety of equipment set out for activities encourages children to recognise and order numbers, and makes them want to take part. Children in the reception classes know basic shapes but some find it hard to describe them, owing to weak language skills. Some know the names, but others indicate by drawing the shape in the air. By the time children join Year 1, standards are lower than expected for children of this age.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

Planning indicates that provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strength**

- Children become increasingly confident in using computers

#### **Commentary**

44. Children are introduced to simple programs on the computer and adults support their learning effectively. By the time they are in the reception classes, children work independently or in pairs and are becoming increasingly adept at using the mouse to control programs. With help from the teacher, more able children print out their work. Adults work with small groups of children on practical activities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the things around them. For example, children in the nursery made bread rolls and were fascinated to see how they had 'grown' before they were baked.

### **Physical development**

Provision in physical development is **good**.

#### **Main strengths**

- Children have access to a well-resourced outside area, which promotes physical development well
- Lessons are well planned

#### **Commentary**

45. The wide range of outdoor equipment, and physical education activities led by adults, help children to make good progress in the development of their physical skills. The outside area for nursery children is attractively arranged with both hard and soft play surfaces. A good selection of ride-on toys and climbing apparatus helps them to balance, run, jump and climb, as well as giving them opportunities for adventurous play. The reception area is in the process of being developed, but children's needs are fully met in well-planned lessons. In both classrooms, through a variety of construction equipment, pencils, crayons, brushes and scissors, children are encouraged to practise and develop the finer movements necessary for drawing, cutting and sticking. Children achieve well in their physical development and the provision for them to do so has improved since the last inspection. By the time they join Year 1, standards are close to those expected for the children's ages.

## **Creative development**

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### **Main strength**

- Very well equipped play areas

### **Commentary**

46. The many activities for creative play support other areas of learning. For example, imaginative play in the nursery 'Baker's Shop' involves manipulative and counting skills. In the reception classes, a group of children played at making cakes in their well equipped 'Home' corner. Children are keen to sing and enjoy action songs. They sing tunefully and have a good recall of words. They frequently sing songs to reinforce learning in other areas. The curriculum is better than reported at the last inspection.

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

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in Year 6 are above average and pupils achieved well last year
- Assessment, and planning arrangements to teach pupils of all abilities, have improved
- Pupils have good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills
- The teaching of reading is well organised
- There is too little use of ICT during lessons
- Marking does not tell pupils what they need to do next to improve

#### **Commentary**

47. By the end of Year 2, standards are average and pupils' overall achievements are satisfactory. This was also the picture reported at the last inspection. Standards have risen during the last year, especially in reading, because teaching has improved and the school has provided better reading books for the infant classes. By the end of Year 6, results in the 2002 national tests were average, but those for 2003 were much lower, which does not match the quality of work in pupils' books. The school is challenging the accuracy of the marking of these test papers and is awaiting results. Pupils' work from last year shows that standards were above average and that the pupils achieved well both in reading and writing. This was because of better teaching and learning, which ensured that work was well matched to pupils' capabilities. For example, the school focused particularly on its more able pupils, ensuring that they were challenged by the tasks they were given and, as a result, these pupils made good progress during the year.

48. Throughout the school, teachers ensure that pupils have many opportunities to develop their skills of speaking and listening. For example, pupils in the infant classes have 'talking partners', which effectively helps them when they are asked to recall and discuss facts previously learnt. During a history lesson in Year 2, the teacher encouraged pupils to use their talking partner to recall facts learnt about the different types of houses seen during a school visit earlier in the term. This helped the pupils to compose their ideas so they spoke confidently to the class. By Year 4, teachers are encouraging pupils to describe and repeat to the class a simple conversation they have had with a friend, as seen in a religious education lesson when pupils spoke clearly and with confidence about objects their friends had brought into school. By Year 6, teachers challenge pupils with more complicated tasks, such as when pupils were asked to speak to their partners in the present tense, then repeat what had been said in the past tense. The dialogue was written down each time showing pupils the differences. A good range of learning opportunities ensures that pupils achieve well in developing their speaking and listening skills.

49. The teaching of reading is well organised and managed. In the infant classes, teachers give good attention to teaching letter sound patterns and this helps the pupils to tackle unfamiliar words with more confidence. When a Year 1 pupil successfully sounded out 'cr' in the word 'cracked', but then missed the ending sound, he realised this and returned to repeat the word correctly. In Year 2, many pupils locate information in non-fiction books. For example, one girl was able to locate a library book on the human body and, by using the index, find the correct page with information on the lungs. By Year 6, the more able pupils can use a thesaurus quickly to locate suitable words for their writing, and explain its usage compared to that of a dictionary. A Year 6 pupil described a thesaurus as giving words of similar meaning, while a dictionary gave the particular meaning of the word. By Year 6, most pupils read their own choice of fiction fluently and can discuss why they have chosen the book, the plot and the characters.

50. The teaching of writing is sound with good attention given to the basic skills. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their progress and higher-attaining pupils are challenged, owing to the high expectations of the teachers. For example, at the start of an English lesson in Year 2, pupils were praised by the teacher for putting capital letters at the beginning of a sentence and ending the sentences with a full stop. All pupils were then asked to read through work that had been marked, and indicate by putting their thumbs up or down whether they had understood where they had made their mistakes. As a result, the pupils achieved well. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 6 have written imaginative accounts building suspense because the teacher will not accept the simple use of adjectives. As a result a pupil had written, 'Suddenly, one pair of midnight black ears popped up!' Year 6 pupils' presentation of their work, and their handwriting, are of good quality, which is the culmination of good progress through the school.

51. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in the way pupils are assessed and in the way lessons are planned, which has led to a better match of work to pupils' needs. For example, higher-attaining pupils are being challenged more effectively and are, therefore, achieving better results. Teachers manage whole-class sessions well, using questioning effectively and drawing on the pupils' ideas constructively. Lessons have clear learning objectives and a clear structure of activities, which ensures that the pupils know what they are expected to learn. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are well supported by both teachers and classroom assistants. The marking of pupils' work varies in quality, and much of it does not tell pupils what they need to do next so as to improve.

52. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has monitored teachers' planning but, in itself, this does not provide a good enough evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. As a result, it is not clear enough what the main priorities for improvement should be. Resources have been audited and the library has been refurbished and re-stocked, which has increased the pupils' interest in reading. Overall, provision is similar to the previous inspection, but current standards at the end of Year 6 are higher.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

53. The use and development of pupils' language and literacy skills in other subjects is satisfactory. Appropriate use is made of subjects such as geography, history and religious education to improve the pupils' language skills, particularly their writing. In subjects such as science, teachers ensure that pupils learn the special vocabulary that will help them to make progress. However, not enough use is made of ICT during lessons to develop the pupils' writing.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have improved, particularly at the end of Year 6, but are still not as high as in English and science
- There are weaknesses in the quality of teaching in some lessons
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and apply their skills in problem solving
- Recent improvements have been well led
- Teaching places insufficient emphasis on the language of mathematics

## **Commentary**

54. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 rose steadily between 1999 and 2002, but remained well below the national average. The 2003 results were even lower because this year group contains a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and fewer high attainers than is usual for the school. In contrast, standards in the current Year 2 are about average. Results at the end of Year 6 are higher than they were at the last inspection, but have fluctuated in the intervening years. For example, the 2002 results were well below the national average and well below the results gained by similar schools. The 2003 results were much better, particularly in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4, but were still below average. Standards in the current Year 6 are about average.

55. Throughout the school, pupils' achievements in mathematics have been unsatisfactory in the past, but have improved considerably during the last year. Weaknesses in the quality of teaching and in the content of the curriculum were holding back pupils' progress, but the school has correctly identified these weaknesses and is tackling them. Work is now better matched to challenge pupils appropriately and teaching is more focused on the skills that pupils need to develop, such as using and applying their mathematical knowledge in a range of situations. As a result, pupils' achievements are now satisfactory. There is, however, still some catching up to be done before standards can rise further. In most lessons, pupils are achieving in line with their capabilities. The suitable emphasis on mental calculations helps pupils complete a good amount of work in lessons. However, the application of these skills is still not used sufficiently to solve or explain problems. Not enough work is done on mathematical vocabulary, so pupils find it difficult to express their ideas. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the good support they receive in classes.

56. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In the lessons seen, however, it varied too much in quality from very good to poor. In nearly half the lessons seen, teaching was good or better. Teachers have a good understanding of the National Numeracy Strategy and lessons start at a good pace with oral and mental work. Pupils are attentive and well behaved but, in some classes, they are reluctant to answer questions or explain their working. Where teaching was good or better, teachers had high expectations and presented increasingly challenging work through systematic teaching and frequent reinforcement. Teaching was lively and the good pace held the pupils' interest throughout the lesson. Where teaching was unsatisfactory or poor, work was too hard or too easy for some of the pupils and teachers' explanations were not clear enough. In some lessons, where the pace was slow or the pupils had to listen to long explanations, they lost interest and their attention wandered. Overall, teachers have very good relationships with the pupils. Their support and praise for pupils' achievement in lessons provide additional motivation, and pupils respond by working hard. Teaching assistants are very effective in supporting pupils in their learning because they keep them on task and talk to them about their work. Marking is not consistent. The best marking has constructive comments, mistakes are corrected and praise is used appropriately. Some simply indicates what is and is not right and does not help pupils to know what they have to do to improve.

57. The subject has been well led during a period when pupils' achievements have improved, particularly at the end of Year 6. There are, however, remaining weaknesses in the management of the subject because shortcomings in the quality of teaching and learning have not been tackled rigorously enough. The school has identified further areas for development and clear plans for improvement are in place. For example, the school has analysed test results and set targets for individual pupils and groups both to promote improved achievement and to monitor the success of

the action that is being taken. Provision in mathematics is of a similar quality to the previous inspection.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

58. Pupils use and apply their mathematics skills satisfactorily in their work in other subjects. For example, pupils use their numeracy skills when recording their results in graphs and tables in science. ICT is used in the teaching of numeracy and computers are used for mathematics, such as the use of spreadsheets to carry out calculations. As yet, however, the use and development of pupils' mathematics skills in other subjects is not planned systematically so that it makes a strong contribution to extending their ability.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have risen and, by the end of Year 6, pupils' achievements are good
- Teaching is good, with a strong emphasis on developing pupils' understanding
- The older pupils do not explain their conclusions to experiments in enough depth
- Leadership of the subject is good
- Information about pupils' existing skills is not always used to match work to their needs

### **Commentary**

59. During the past year, standards in science have risen significantly. Results of the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 6 were average, but in 2003 almost all pupils reached the expected Level 4 of attainment and half gained the higher Level 5. Although national comparisons for 2003 are not yet available, these results are likely to be above average, and the work in pupils' books confirms this picture. For example, in their experiments, all of the pupils make plausible predictions, carry out fair tests with good accuracy, gather their results systematically and draw sensible conclusions. A weaker aspect of their work is that conclusions generally focus on what happened rather than explaining why it happened, making too little demand on pupils' scientific understanding. In all aspects of science, pupils learn a good range and depth of factual knowledge and develop their scientific vocabulary well. This group of pupils was of average attainment when taking the national tests in Year 2, so they have made good progress since then and, by the end of Year 6, their achievements were good. Work in Year 6 was particularly challenging.

60. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 have fluctuated. In 2003, although almost all pupils reached the expected Level 2, very few gained the higher Level 3. This was reflected in pupils' results in all subjects because the year group included a smaller proportion of higher-attaining pupils than is usual for the school. Work in these pupils' books shows a steady development of knowledge and understanding, for example about the properties of materials and how materials can be changed by processes such as heating. Early experimental work, such as finding out which child is the tallest, shows that many pupils are beginning to understand that tests have to be fair if the results are to be valid. Overall, last years' Year 2 pupils joined Year 1 with below average skills so, by the end of Year 2, achievement was satisfactory. Standards in the current Year 2 are average.

61. There are three main reasons why standards are rising. Since the appointment last year of the current headteacher, the approach to raising standards has been more rigorous, and expectations of pupils' achievements have been lifted. In science, this led to a focus on improving pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding through more practical experiments and investigations, which is reflected in pupils' recorded work throughout the school. In the lessons observed, it created opportunities for teachers to pose problems, to ask searching questions and to consolidate pupils' understanding. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, the teacher encouraged pupils to use all their senses to examine a selection of wooden artefacts, and to work out the purpose for which they are used. In Year 6, a



series of simple experiments about forces were the vehicle for exploring air resistance, friction and gravity. As a result, pupils enjoy their science and present work well in their books.

62. Changing the emphasis for pupils' learning has improved the quality of teaching, which was good in the three lessons observed. Teachers plan very carefully for lessons, making sure that what they want the pupils to learn is clear. They ensure that pupils understand special vocabulary, which also makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy skills. Learning moves at a good pace, with a variety of activities that hold pupils' attention and interest. This was seen in a lesson for Years 3 and 4 where pupils learnt about their teeth through the teacher's clear explanation, by working in pairs with mirrors and by colouring diagrams. Teachers have good questioning skills, which make pupils think hard about what they observe. A minor weakness is the tendency for some teachers to spend too long explaining concepts to the whole class before starting practical activities.

63. Leadership of the subject is good. It has provided a clear direction for improvement during the past year, with successful results. Teachers' planning, lessons and pupils' work have been evaluated to provide a picture of provision across the school, but there are still inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' work between classes, which need to be resolved. The curriculum is well planned, with an appropriate emphasis on experiment and investigation. There was little evidence in pupils' work, however, that ICT is used systematically to support science. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are satisfactory, but the information gathered is not used consistently to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. The system of individual learning targets for pupils is new and the school plans to monitor its effectiveness closely. Good improvement since the previous inspection places the school in a good position to raise standards further.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' achievements are satisfactory, which is an improvement since the last inspection
- Resources have improved, but are still not good enough
- Not enough opportunities are made to teach ICT skills through other subjects
- It is difficult to evaluate how much progress pupils are making

### **Commentary**

64. Only one lesson was observed and, therefore, no judgement has been made on the overall quality of teaching. Judgements on standards and pupils' achievements have been made after talking with pupils and teachers, observing pupils working independently on computers and scrutinising work on display.

65. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach average standards and their achievement is satisfactory. They are confident using the mouse to control programs and are developing their keyboard skills. For example, their word processed accounts of The Great Fire of London show that they can type and set out a piece of writing, and that they know how to use different sizes of print. By the end of Year 6, using ICT for writing is developed further and pupils cut and paste pictures into text and type script into paragraphs for a Power Point presentation. Using these skills, work seen based on the book *The Hobbit* by J.R.R Tolkein was of good quality. Overall, by the end of Year 6, standards and pupils' achievements are satisfactory, and better than at the previous inspection.

66. In the one lesson observed for Years 5 and 6, the quality of teaching was satisfactory. The pupils learnt how to control a set of traffic lights using the computer. The teacher's technical expertise, clear explanation and helpful demonstration on a laptop computer helped the pupils to understand what they had to do. After completing a series of written instructions, many of the pupils were ready for the practical task, but a lack of equipment meant that pupils could not try out their ideas immediately, which held back their learning. Those pupils not involved in the practical task did not achieve as well as they could.

67. Sound leadership has ensured that new resources have been purchased to help pupils to make progress, such as the small 'mice' for use in the infant classes and 'Robo Lab to cover the teaching of control in the junior classes. As there is no room for a computer suite, plans are being made to lease 16 laptops for class use. The school is beginning to develop a more rigorous assessment of what pupils can do, but this is in its early stages and is not yet enabling teachers to keep track of the progress pupils are making. There has been little monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, so the school does not have an accurate picture of standards or whether pupils are achieving as well as they should.

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

68. The use and development of pupils' ICT skills in other subjects is unsatisfactory. While there are some examples of ICT being used effectively, this largely depends on individual teacher's expertise rather than formally planned opportunities. For example, in science, pupils have used a data handling program to display and analyse their results in an experiment about friction, and they used sensors to measure the temperature of materials. For their history topic about Britain since 1940, pupils used the Internet to research and gather background information. Despite these good examples of ICT skills being used and developed in other subjects, opportunities were not taken in many of the lessons observed during the inspection.

## **HUMANITIES**

In religious education, three lessons were observed, inspectors talked to pupils and teachers, and pupils' work from the previous year was scrutinised, which provided a secure evidence base for what is said in the report. In history only one lesson was seen and a little pupils' work from the previous year, which provided insufficient evidence to evaluate pupils' achievements. Geography was not inspected.

### **Religious education**

Provision in Religious Education is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' achievements have improved since the previous inspection
- The subject is well led and managed
- The quality of teaching varies too much

#### **Commentary**

69. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a sound understanding of the meaning and significance of festivals. They know that Harvest is thanking God for crops that are grown, and that the Christingle services celebrated in Christian Churches at Christmas symbolise the goodness of a loving eternal father. They have visited churches and studied architecture that promotes spirituality like the rising spires of church towers. By Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of various religions and can compare and contrast religious routines of different faiths like Islam and Sikhism. Drama provides interesting ways for pupils to identify and respect the values of other cultures.

70. In the three lessons observed, the quality of teaching was very good in one, good in one, but unsatisfactory in the other. In a very good lesson for Year 3 and 4, about signs and symbols, the teacher's very good questioning and explanation drew out all that the pupils already knew about symbols, and then took them on to consider what feelings a symbol might provoke. Very good paired discussion led to pupils explaining with some clarity how articles such as a watch might remind them of a dead relative. In a good lesson for Year 1, pupils thought about the groups to which they belong, and what it means to them. In the unsatisfactory lesson, about worship, the teacher's subject knowledge was weak. Too many unfamiliar examples from various religions, and incorrect statements about Christianity, confused the pupils and so they learnt little.

71. At the previous inspection, the curriculum did not meet the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. Good improvement since then has ensured that it does now. Appropriate plans are in place to develop the subject further and to assess the quality of pupils' work by using national attainment targets. Resources are satisfactory overall. There is a good number of religious artefacts to support learning well in the six main faiths, but there are too few books to support teaching about religions.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

In art, two lessons were observed and a good deal pupils' work from the previous year was seen, both on display and in photographs, which provided a secure evidence base for what is said in the report. In design and technology, whilst two satisfactory lessons were observed, the subject was not a focus for the inspection and little pupils' work was available. As a result, no report is made on the subject. Music and physical education were not inspected.

### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils complete a good range of work
- Art is used well to support work in other subjects
- Ideas are not sufficiently developed through a series of techniques and media
- The school keeps too few examples of pupils' work to show their quality

### **Commentary**

72. Based on the work seen, standards are close to those expected for pupils' ages and their achievements are satisfactory. At this early stage in the school year, pupils had completed little art work. Whilst work on display from the previous year provided some evidence of standards, the lack of a portfolio of past work made it difficult for the school to prove that pupils produce work of higher quality.

73. In Year 1, pupils' work about 'Pattern in nature' started with observational drawings of wild flowers in the school grounds, in pencil and coloured pencil, which are of a typical standard for their ages. The pupils then looked at the shapes of the petals and leaves, and compared them with floral fabric designs by artists such as William Morris, before creating their own patterns. An extension of this work, a class floral pattern montage in the *art deco* style is of good quality. Work in Year 2, both last year and currently, focuses on texture and pattern. Linked to work in science, pupils examined the textures of different materials before making attractive collages with various types of paper. Currently, a topic about buildings has included making rubbings of the texture of building materials, observational drawing in the locality, and will lead to printing inspired by the patterns in buildings. Work this term in Years 3 and 4 is focusing on pattern and, in two lessons observed, pupils experimented with a variety of ways of making patterns using paper shapes, printing and stencilling. Paintings using pattern making techniques from Aboriginal art are particularly striking.

74. Last year the school organised an art exhibition in which all the pupils could enter a piece of art work for display and sale. This good idea stimulated considerable interest amongst both pupils and parents, raising the profile of art, and motivating pupils to produce some good quality work. For example, oil pastel drawings based on paintings by Van Gogh, by pupils in Years 3 and 4, show controlled use of the medium. Water colours and oil pastels by pupils in Years 5 and 6, drawing on images from the work of Hockney and Cezanne, are also of good quality.

75. In the two lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good in one and satisfactory in the other. Teachers explained tasks very clearly, and demonstrated skills methodically, so that the pupils knew exactly what to do. During the practical work, teachers and classroom assistants worked effectively with the pupils, supporting and guiding them, but letting pupils find out for themselves. In

the satisfactory lesson, the pace of work was rather slow, which resulted in the pupils becoming restless, and then having insufficient time for the practical work. In the good lesson, lots of practical activities were happening at the same time and, whilst this meant that the pupils were highly motivated, the quality of work in some of the groups suffered because an adult was not readily on hand to offer advice.

76. The curriculum includes a good variety of work, from drawing and painting to work in three dimensions, such as the breeze block face sculptures crafted when an artist visited the school. There are also examples of well-made clay work, such as the Ancient Egyptian mummies and sarcophagi that were made in support of a history topic. Throughout the school, art is used successfully to support work in other subjects. For example, painted portraits of the six wives of Henry VIII are part of an attractive display in Years 3 and 4. There are few examples, however, of teachers taking one visual idea and developing it through a series of techniques (drawing, painting, printing, fabric work) so that pupils can compare the effect of each one. Management of the subject is satisfactory and the subject leader has a good overview of work across the school. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

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

No lessons were seen in this subject and there was no past work completed by the pupils that could be used to evaluate the standards achieved. As a result, it was not possible to make judgements about pupils' achievements or the quality of teaching and learning. The curriculum section of this report evaluates provision for pupils' personal, social and health education as **satisfactory**.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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