

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BLACKFORD C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Blackford near Carlisle

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112300

Headteacher: Mr P L Bunner

Lead inspector: Mr C Smith

Dates of inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> January 2004

Inspection number: 255529

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 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	28
School address:	Blackford Carlisle Cumbria
Postcode:	CA6 4ES
Telephone number:	01228 674614
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Steel
Date of previous inspection:	May 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Blackford is a very small voluntary aided primary school that serves a rural community, 4 miles North West of Carlisle. There are 28 pupils, 13 boys and 15 girls. All of the children are white and almost all are English speaking. However, two Dutch children have recently arrived and are learning English. Pupil numbers have fallen slightly over recent years but this has happened in the past and has picked up again. Currently, there is little movement of families into and out of the area. Only six per cent of children receive free school meals. This low figure suggests that the children are from privileged backgrounds. However, the social conditions in the area are typical of the region as a whole and this is reflected in the broadly average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, which is 14 per cent. Two pupils have statements. The children's special educational needs are related to difficulties in learning. Children enter school with a wide range of levels of attainment but for the majority it is typical for their age.

The school is distinctive because of its close links with the church and the local community. Falling pupil numbers and reduced budgets over recent years have had a significant impact on the school. The headteacher is now a full time class teacher, which makes his managerial role so much the harder. The number of teachers and classroom assistants has also reduced. The school is part of a healthy school and local schools sports initiative. Currently, there is only one child of reception age in the school, therefore it is not possible to make a full evaluation of teaching, learning and children's achievements in the Foundation Stage.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25211	Mr Colin Smith	Lead inspector	Mathematics
			Science
			Information and communication technology
			Design and technology
			Music
			Physical education
9572	Mrs Katherine Anderson	Lay inspector	
23887	Mr Peter Nettleship	Team inspector	English
			Religious education
			History
			Geography
			Art and design
			The Foundation Stage
			Special educational needs
			English as an additional language

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>8</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>21</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Blackford C of E is a fairly effective school** and offers sound value for money. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in the junior class. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well. Pupils achieve steadily overall and they make good progress in Years 3 to 6. The headteacher and governors provide sound leadership and management of the school.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching enables junior pupils to achieve well and reach high standards in mathematics and science.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress.
- Some of the more able pupils are not achieving their potential in English (or in science in Year 2).

Sound improvements have been made since the last inspection. Teaching is now stronger in the junior class. Consequently, pupils' are achieving higher standards in mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). However, ICT has not improved enough in the infant class. Pupils' spelling and handwriting has improved, along with the teaching of art and design and music, and stronger provision is now made for children in the reception class.

**STANDARDS ACHIEVED** (*There were only eight pupils in Year 6 when the tests were completed in 2003. Such small numbers make the interpretation of the information unreliable.*)

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

**Pupils achieve steadily overall.** There is only one child of reception age; therefore it is not possible to evaluate achievement in the Foundation Stage. Infant pupils achieve steadily. They make solid progress in reading, writing and science and achieve well in mathematics. Junior pupils achieve well in a number of subjects, including mathematics, ICT and in aspects of physical education and design and technology. Science, results were in the top five per cent nationally. Most pupils achieve steadily in English. The vast majority reach the levels expected in reading and writing. However, more able pupils do not achieve the higher levels in English (or in science in Year 2) of which they are capable.

**Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.** Pupils respond very positively to the very good provision made for their moral and social development. As a result, they are eager to learn, behave well and are able to learn independently. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

### QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education provided is sound and teaching is satisfactory overall.**

**Teaching in the infant class is satisfactory.** Pupils receive a good grounding in the skills of reading, writing and handling numbers. They apply themselves very well and work extremely hard

for their age, which raises their achievement. Teaching in the junior class is mainly good. Pupils learn at a quick pace. Challenging lessons make them think and pupils' different learning needs are well catered for in most subjects. ICT is seldom taught in the infant class but good teaching in the juniors enables pupils to catch up. The teaching of English is satisfactory but the more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently in reading or writing or in science, in the infant class.

Pupils are very well cared for and their personal development benefits from good support and guidance. The curriculum is satisfactory. Links between different subjects and good opportunities for out of school visits and activities enables junior pupils, in particular, to benefit from a diverse range of learning experiences. The school maintains a satisfactory partnership with parents and good links with the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The school is soundly led and managed.** The headteacher leads by example in teaching well and promoting pupils' academic and personal development successfully. However, his full time teaching commitment creates difficulties in checking on teaching and on how well pupils are learning throughout the school. Governance is **satisfactory**. Governors provide good support and are seeking ways to take on more responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, partly to help to reduce the headteacher's workload.

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

Parents' and pupils' views are gathered, although not formally. Parents think highly of the school. They provide good financial and social support and, although they do not help in classrooms, many parents regularly call in to talk with teachers. Pupils appreciate the school, their teachers and the opportunities they have to learn.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

### **The school meets all of the statutory requirements**

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

- Provide a greater degree of challenge to enable the more able pupils to reach the higher levels in English (in both classes) and science (in the infant class).
- Ensure that computers are used regularly in the infant class to improve pupils' achievements and enable them to reach the standards expected in ICT.
- Check teaching and learning more systematically to ensure that intended improvements are made.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Pupils achieve steadily overall. Infant pupils make satisfactory progress and most achieve the standards expected for their age, as they did at the time of the last inspection. However, the more capable Year 2 pupils do not reach their full potential. Junior pupils achieve well overall and standards at the end of Year 6 are rising at a good rate.

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

- Junior pupils achieve well and reach high standards in mathematics and science.
- There is scope to improve the achievements of the more able pupils in English in both classes and in science in the infant class.
- Infant pupils do not reach the standards expected in ICT but good teaching enables junior pupils to catch up.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress.

#### **Commentary**

##### ***Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2003***

The tables have been omitted because there were fewer than 10 pupils in Years 2 and 6.

1 Good teaching in the junior classes enables pupils to achieve well in most subjects. This is reflected in the upward trend in national assessment results and the high standards achieved in mathematics and science. Challenging targets are set and usually reached. Junior pupils achieve well in all aspects of mathematics. They have good recall of number facts and develop a clear understanding of operations such as division. They respond well to the many challenges to apply their skills to solve mathematical problems. This gives them confidence to tackle unfamiliar tasks and develops their thinking strategies successfully. Junior pupils' achievements in science are most impressive in the areas of knowledge and understanding. They study living things, materials and forces in depth, which helps them to acquire a good command of scientific language and a firm grasp of ideas such as adaptation. Frequent experiences of sorting and classifying plants and animals, teaches them to think logically. Their skills in planning and carrying out scientific experiments are typical for their age. Junior pupils also achieve well in aspects of physical education, such as swimming and sport, and in elements of design and technology.

2 English results attained by pupils in Year 6 are rising, although not as quickly as in the other subjects. Standards in English are average, rather than good. Most pupils achieve steadily. Although virtually all pupils reach the levels expected in reading and writing, the proportion reaching the higher levels is far fewer than in other schools. These differences in achievement between English and the other core subjects are well understood by staff and governors. This is because pupils' learning is accurately assessed at the end of each school year. Progress is carefully tracked and any change in performance becomes apparent. English has been rightly identified as the key area to improve. In the junior class, pupils are now encouraged to read widely and regularly. This is a sensible approach, not least because many junior pupils have hitherto not regarded reading as an enjoyable activity and their knowledge of authors and books is still sparse. However, there is still more to do to teach the more capable pupils, particularly, to interpret what they read, using the skills of inference and deduction. Infant pupils receive a good grounding in the basic skills. As a result, they tackle unknown words systematically by blending letter sounds and recognising parts of words. However, although they read accurately, more could be done to fuel their interests and promote wider reading, particularly for the more able ones. Similarly, infant pupils write clearly and accurately but opportunities for writing are sometimes restricted to filling in the missing words on worksheets.



This does not enable the more able pupils, particularly, to learn to express their ideas fluently and at length. Junior pupils' spelling and handwriting have improved since the last inspection. Their technical skills are more than adequate. However, very few pupils are able to write creatively and imaginatively, holding the reader's attention. This is partly because they do not discuss their ideas sufficiently before writing or talk about how to redraft and improve their work, later.

3 Infant pupils make a slow start in ICT and make little use of computers in any subject. Consequently they do not reach the standards expected by the end of Year 2. However, they achieve well in the junior class, largely because computers are used in almost every subject, including physical education. Pupils become confident and competent in operating computers independently. Their skills improve and they reach the standards expected by Year 6. Their knowledge of using computer programmes for modelling and designing is good.

4 Pupils with special educational needs benefit from learning in small and clear steps with good levels of adult support. This enables them to learn successfully and achieve the targets specified. A very small number of pupils with English as an additional language have recently entered school. Good opportunities are provided for them to interact with other pupils and the work they receive is suitably adapted to their language needs. Consequently, they are also making good progress.

**Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils’ attitudes, values and personal development are good. Attendance is very good and pupils arrive punctually. There have been no incidents of bullying in recent years. Provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are eager to learn and behave well in class and around school.
- Pupils show initiative, work independently and willingly accept responsibilities.
- The school is successful in promoting pupils’ spiritual development and the provision made for their moral and social development is very good.

**Commentary**

**Attendance**

***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (95.9%)***

Authorised absence	
School data	4.1
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

***Ethnic background of pupils***

***Exclusions in the last school year***

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	24	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Information not obtained	2	0	0

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

5 A calm and purposeful atmosphere pervades the school. Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities school offers. They work well on their own and in collaboration with others. Older pupils show maturity in the way they organise themselves and work independently, without waiting to be told what to do. They persevere with difficult tasks and understand that making mistakes is part of learning. Infant pupils have very good attitudes to work. They listen intently, show confidence in answering questions and work with very good concentration and application for their age. Their very positive attitudes make a significant impact on their achievements. Pupils behave well in the classroom and around school and they show respect, politeness and consideration for staff, visitors and each other. Bullying and harassment are virtually unknown. Pupils take pride in their work and presentation has improved since the last inspection.

6 The school promotes pupils' moral and social development very well. Through their work in subjects such as science, pupils learn to care for each other and the environment. They are encouraged to discuss their feelings and beliefs and develop respect for those of others. They become aware of world issues such as poverty and protecting endangered species. Pupils are learning to play their part in the school community well. Their willingness to take on a wide range of responsibilities, such as helping at lunchtime and with school assembly, is impressive. As a result, pupils develop a feeling of self worth. Pupils' spiritual awareness is well provided for. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their actions and take responsibility for their school. For example, they have recently been involved in designing a garden area. Christian festivals are celebrated in the parish church and visits are made to theatres. Pupils have good opportunities to study their own cultural heritage, through visits and joint events with other schools. It is harder for the school to raise pupils' awareness of cultural diversity in such an isolated community. However, this is done adequately through religious education and the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme where pupils are asked to consider issues such as gender and racial stereotyping.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of the education provided is satisfactory. The curriculum is well planned and enriched by a good range of extra curricular activities.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching is satisfactory overall, as it was at the time of the last inspection. However, most of the teaching in the junior class is good and this is why standards have improved. The headteacher has introduced good assessment procedures to measure the rate of pupils' learning. However the information gathered is not used consistently to provide work that fully extends the learning of the more able pupils, particularly in English.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching in the junior class enables all pupils to learn successfully in most subjects.
- Satisfactory teaching in the infant class helps most pupils to achieve their potential, apart from the more capable Year 2 pupils.
- Although satisfactory, there is scope to improve the teaching of reading and writing in both classes and ICT in the infant class.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 12 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	5	6	1	0	0

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

7 Most subjects are taught well in the junior class. This is attributable to the headteacher's expertise in subjects such as mathematics, ICT and physical education, combined with high expectations of the pupils and the provision of challenging work that moves their learning on. Pupils are well managed and lessons are particularly well organised to cater for their different learning needs, within the four year groups. The headteacher has been successful in teaching pupils to learn independently. They use their initiative and tackle new learning robustly. This gives the headteacher quality time to concentrate on different year groups, which all receive regular and valuable attention. Pupils' learning is frequently checked on. Any misunderstandings are quickly spotted and remedied. The pace of the lessons is quick, not least because pupils are set time limits within which to complete their tasks, knowing that they will be expected to discuss their learning later. As a result, pupils work hard with good application. Resources are used well. The headteacher is well aware that pupils' learning is stronger when they can visualise new ideas. In one lesson, for example, good use was made of ICT to illustrate how rounding up and down made calculating with large numbers easier. The learning of pupils with special educational needs is carefully nurtured. The tasks they are given are precisely tailored to their specific learning needs and they benefit from good levels of support. The school has recently welcomed a very small number of pupils with English as an additional language. In response to sensitive handling and careful grading of their work, they have adapted quickly to their new surroundings. Their spoken and written language is progressing well.

8 Teaching in the infant class is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and meticulously organised. Resources are carefully prepared and ready for use. The teacher maintains very good relationships with the pupils. The atmosphere for learning is disciplined and industrious. Pupils thrive on this and work with determination and perseverance that belies their years. They are highly productive. The key skills of reading, writing and handling numbers are thoroughly taught. For example, pupils in Year 1 need no reminding to sound out letters to help them to read any unfamiliar words. In mathematics, they know when to use counters and how to check their answers. This gives infant pupils a good grounding and puts them in a strong position to use their skills in learning in other subjects. That said, the level of challenge in the work provided for the Year 2 pupils is not always sufficiently demanding to move their learning on. This is particularly the case in English and science. For example, pupils are sometimes asked to fill in missing words on a worksheet when they could be writing about their experiences and improving their command of language.

9 Improvements in assessing what pupils know and understand have enabled teachers to identify some weaknesses in progress in English. In the junior class, reading is now receiving more attention. Pupils are reading more regularly from a wider range of material. However, there is still more to do to teach them how to read between the lines to improve their comprehension skills. The infant teacher does a good job in teaching important reading skills such as phonics but the right balance has yet to be achieved between reading accurately and cultivating the enjoyment of reading. The teaching of spelling and handwriting have improved since the last inspection but the more able pupils in both classes are not always challenged enough, particularly in relation to planning and improving their written work. ICT is taught well in the junior class but computers are not used enough in the infant class for pupils to gain the skills expected.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory overall but good in the junior class because it caters for the needs of all pupils well, in virtually all subjects. Good opportunities for junior pupils to enrich their learning are provided through a diverse range of extra curricular activities and out of school visits. The infant curriculum is satisfactory overall but there are weaknesses in ICT and the provision for the more able Year 2 pupils in English and science. Although the school is very small, the accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Curriculum planning has improved since the last inspection to ensure that pupils can build on what they have learned previously.
- Pupils' personal social and health education is well provided for.
- Good provision is made for pupils who find learning difficult or have English as an additional language but in English, the needs of the more able pupils are not taken into account sufficiently (and in science in the infant class).

### **Commentary**

10 At the time of the last inspection the curriculum was not as well structured as it is now. Considerable thought has been given to what pupils should learn in each year and how any gaps or duplication can be avoided. In this respect, curriculum planning throughout the school has moved on significantly. A strong feature of curriculum planning, is the way in which Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 pupils are so well catered for in the one classroom. In the junior class, pupils' learning in one subject is enhanced by the good links made with another. For example, a valuable project, designed to improve playground facilities, involved geographical mapping, mathematical measuring, the skills of designing and the use of the computer-generated modelling programme to enable pupils to experiment with different ideas. For many junior pupils, and some infants, learning continues beyond the school day. Visitors bring new and exciting experiences to the pupils, such as close encounters with birds of prey. Visits to places of interest, particularly the residential outdoor activity experience, makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. A good number of pupils attend the daily after school club and enjoy a wide range of activities. Pupils with a particular aptitude for sport benefit from extra curricular opportunities to nurture their talents. Despite the small number of pupils, good coaching in sports, such as football and cricket, enables them to compete with, and sometimes defeat, larger schools.

11 Pupils' personal, social and health education is an important part of the school's provision. Participation in the 'Healthy Schools' programme is raising pupils' awareness of diet and exercise. Pupils' self knowledge and understanding of others develops successfully through specially arranged class discussion sessions where specific topics, such as the dangers of smoking, are considered.

12 Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. Their learning is carefully assessed and well-conceived individual education programmes are provided to enable them to meet the targets specified. In all lessons, they are well supported and encouraged. The very small number of pupils with English as an additional language are well provided for. Their specific language needs are always taken into account, for example, by ensuring that adults and other pupils work alongside them to help them to understand any unfamiliar words. The provision made to extend the learning of the more able pupils, although effective in mathematics, does not enable them all to fulfil their potential in English. Lack of opportunities for infant pupils to work with computers holds back their learning in ICT and the more able ones are not catered for sufficiently in science.

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

The school provides very well for the health, safety and care of its pupils. Staff provide good support, advice and guidance for them. Pupils' views are taken into account informally, through class discussions. Therefore it is possible that the views of all pupils are not known.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Governors are very safety conscious and make frequent safety checks and risk assessments.
- Trusting relationships with adults and the well-conceived PSHE programme ensures that pupils receive the guidance and support they need.
- Targets to enable pupils to know what they need to do to improve are in the early stages of being developed.

### **Commentary**

13 Adults ensure that pupils are safe and secure in school. Governors check the buildings regularly and teachers supervise pupils conscientiously. Good procedures are in place to identify pupils who may be in need of protection and effective systems for recording accidents and administering first aid are very well established.

14 The nature of this small, family school means that teachers and support staff know the children very well. The headteacher comes into contact with every pupil every day. Consequently, their development is well understood and carefully nurtured. The PSHE programme teaches pupils to become confident, responsible citizens and to live healthy, independent lives. For example, they are encouraged to eat fruit every morning, take regular exercise and consider the needs of others.

15 Pupils' learning is measured and their academic progress is carefully tracked. Their work is marked thoroughly and although there are relatively few comments of praise, teachers provide pointers to show pupils the way forward. A recent initiative has been introduced to provide targets to highlight exactly where pupils are and how they can reach the next levels. This is a promising development but it is too early to judge the impact on pupils' progress.

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

The school has established satisfactory links with its parents and neighbouring schools and good links with the community.

### **Main strength and weaknesses**

- Parents think highly of the school and provide good support.
- Communication between home and school is satisfactory but there is scope to inform and involve parents more.
- There are good links with the community, which enriches pupils' learning.

### **Commentary**

16 The school enjoys good support from parents who say that their children enjoy school and praise its work. They feel that the teaching is good and that their children are expected to work hard. Parents have a high regard for the leadership and management of the school. They are made to feel welcome and know that their interests and concerns are taken seriously. Parents work hard, through fund raising activities and social events, and donate generous sums of money for additional resources.

17 Parents receive satisfactory information through the prospectus, letters, annual reports and reports on their children's progress. These are all informative and helpful. Parents also receive information on the subjects that their children will be studying, but ways in which parents can help are not always made explicit. Many parents visit school regularly and enjoy frequent opportunities to

discuss their children's work and school events. However, for parents who work long hours, one formal parents' evening is not really enough to keep tabs on their children's progress. All parents feel that staff are approachable and handle any concerns sensitively but the school has no formal systems in place to survey parents' views. The provision of homework is adequate. Diaries provide an effective means of communication between home and school in the juniors but are not used in the infant class.

18 Productive links with the community mean that the school is the centre of village life. Various groups, such as an after school club and playgroup, use the facilities. Sports teams take part in inter school competitions with some success. A number of visitors into school and visits out serve to increase pupils' understanding of the wider community and enrich learning. The school enjoys close links with a neighbouring primary school and takes advantage of joint events.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The governance, leadership and management of the school are sound. With a full-time teaching commitment, the headteacher currently faces significant constraints, both in terms of fulfilling his administrative responsibilities and monitoring standards in the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Governors support the school well and are eager to play a greater role in evaluating its work.
- The headteacher leads by example and has created a popular school.
- Infant and junior teachers tend to work in isolation, which makes it harder to check for consistency and make improvements in teaching and learning in the two classes.

### **Commentary**

19 Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met and provide sensitive support for the headteacher. They are well aware of the headteacher's heavy workload and are eager to alleviate this by taking on more responsibilities themselves. For example, they have accepted greater accountability for checking that school policies are carried out and reviewed when necessary. Governors recognise that they need to make a greater contribution to monitoring the work of the school. They already discuss the school's performance and have gained a good awareness of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors want to make their visits to school more purposeful, for example, by checking that the school priorities, identified in the school development plan, are leading to improvements. They have good involvement in financial planning and decision-making. For example, when forced to make budget cuts last year, they managed the staff reductions amicably. Financial planning is prudent and resources are targeted well to achieve educational priorities. For example, standards in mathematics and science have improved significantly, largely, as a result of more rigorous planning and the purchase of resources that can be adapted to the needs of mixed age groups in one class. Governors are strongly committed to the school's future development.

20 The headteacher provides sound leadership and management and runs the school efficiently, despite teaching a class full time. He has a clear vision for the future and is determined to raise standards. He leads by example, through teaching his own class well and involving pupils in wider community events. During his time as headteacher, standards at the end of Year 6 have risen quickly in mathematics and science and significant improvements have been made in the provision for pupils' personal and social development. The effective provision for pupils with special educational needs is attributable to the headteachers' expertise and commitment.

21 With no release time from class, the headteacher faces considerable difficulty in improving teaching and learning and ensuring consistency between the infant and the junior classes. Assessing pupils' learning and tracking their progress helps. Lessons are observed in the infant class and pupils' work is examined. However, these strategies tend to be too informal and lack a sharper edge. Whilst standards are rising in the juniors, there has been little change in the infants

over recent years. The headteacher's influence has not been strong enough to ensure that the more able infant pupils are challenged sufficiently to raise their levels of achievement and that infant pupils gain the necessary skills in ICT. With the many pressures that exist in teaching the National Curriculum to mixed age groups, the headteacher has opted to manage the work of the infant and the juniors separately. Consequently, the two classes tend to work in isolation. There are drawbacks to this arrangement. Firstly, it is difficult to ensure consistency in teaching and learning through the school. Secondly, where deficiencies exist, it is harder for them to be recognised and corrected. For example, in a subject where the school has identified a need to improve, such as English, no one has oversight of what is happening in the other class. This makes it harder to ensure that both teachers are working to the same end.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	126,581	Balance from previous year	11,772
Total expenditure	142,152	Balance carried forward to the next	-3,799
Expenditure per pupil	3,948		

22      Governors have taken national advice to use their building funds to make up the shortfall in this year's budget. Despite the high cost per pupil, which is typical of schools of this small size, the school provides sound value for money.

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

23 The school has improved its provision for children in the Foundation Stage since the last inspection. The appointment of a nursery nurse ensured that the appropriate curriculum was extended, especially in the areas of children's creative and physical development in which there had been shortcomings. Extra equipment was purchased and links were extended with the local playgroup that meets in the school. Some stimulating and challenging climbing apparatus has been installed and a small outside play area has also been established. Even though there is currently only one child of reception age, the school is now adequately equipped to provide for young children's needs in terms of staffing expertise and resources. Younger children also continue to benefit from their contacts with the pupils in the infant class

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

#### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**

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

- Spelling and handwriting have improved since the last inspection.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress.
- Virtually all pupils reach the standards expected in speaking, listening, reading and writing for their age, but not all of the more able ones reach the higher levels of which they are capable.
- It is harder to raise standards in English because no one teacher is responsible for checking and improving teaching and learning in both classes.

#### **Commentary**

24 Standards in English are satisfactory throughout the school but are markedly lower than those in mathematics and science. This is something that staff and governors recognise and are beginning to address. For example, both spelling and handwriting have improved since the last inspection following concerted action to teach these skills. However, there is still room to improve pupils' reading comprehension skills and the content and flow of their writing.

25 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The work provided is accurately matched to their individual needs and pupils receive regular, skilled support from classroom assistants. They are encouraged to express their opinions, both verbally and on paper. Consequently, they gain in confidence from the praise that they often receive. Pupils with English as an additional language also receive good support. They have made remarkable strides, especially in the development of their spoken language.

26 Standards of speaking and listening are satisfactory throughout the school. Most pupils participate in the discussions. They speak with confidence, knowing that their contributions will be valued. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards in reading are average. Infant pupils become proficient in reading difficult words by breaking them down into smaller parts. They are encouraged to practice reading at home. The teacher insists on accurate reading, which has value. However, this is not balanced by encouragement to read as much as possible and some pupils do not progress to the higher levels of which they are capable. Throughout the juniors, pupils continue to work their way through an extended reading scheme. This ensures that they continue to practice their reading but because they are not in the habit of reading children's novels, few pupils develop a real passion for reading or for the books of particular authors. Fortunately, new books are currently being introduced to widen pupils' reading experience. Pupils often read for information and they read fluently. However, they do not find it easy to read between the lines and make inferences. This is a



skill that the more able ones, particularly, should acquire, to enable them to achieve higher reading levels.

27 The school has rightly targeted writing as the key area of improvement. Infant pupils become fluent writers and have good opportunities in English lessons to express their ideas. However, in other subjects, such as science, pupils are sometimes asked merely to fill in missing words. Such tasks do not give them practice in writing at length and for different purposes. Although they print neatly, they do not begin to join their letters. Junior pupils learn to write for a wide range of purposes. For example, they write evaluatively, explaining their likes and dislikes, in design and technology. However, these opportunities are not afforded in all subjects. Junior pupils do not have enough opportunities to write creatively, through story or poetry writing. They rarely produce extended work and not enough use is made of discussion to enable pupils to plan their work or improve it later. However, good assessment procedures have been introduced to measure pupils' progress in English and pupils are now given specific targets to help them to know how to reach the next level. However, there still remains a problem in checking that improvements are having the desired effect. Responsibility for the subject is shared between each teacher. Consequently, no one gains a sufficiently clear overall view of the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.

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

28 Pupils develop their speaking and listening as well as their reading skills across a range of subjects. Research skills, through using computers, are cultivated well in the junior class. The development of writing skills through using them in other subjects, however, is patchy, most notably in science. Attempts are increasingly being made to link work in literacy to that being undertaken in other subjects, particularly with ICT in the junior class. For example, literacy hour work on 'Greek Myths and Legends' is currently complementing pupils' history studies on 'The Ancient Greeks'. Such links make the work more relevant, purposeful and interesting in both subjects.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching in the junior class is good in all areas of mathematics.
- Infant pupils show maturity and perseverance, which raises their achievement.
- Effective leadership has driven standards higher over recent years.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress.

### **Commentary**

29 Pupils achieve well to reach standards that are well above average and higher than at the time of the last inspection, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The headteacher's good subject knowledge and sophisticated organisational skills are evident in the junior pupils' rapid rates of learning. The difficulties of teaching such a wide age and ability range are made to look easy as the headteacher works very effectively with one group and then another throughout the lesson. His success is underpinned by detailed planning, very good relationships with the pupils and an effective partnership with support staff. No time is wasted. The teaching is always challenging. Numbers and shapes are seldom taught in isolation. Invariably, there is an element of problem solving. Pupils have to think hard, in response to the teacher's probing questions. This approach is particularly successful in enabling pupils to experiment with different methods. They are encouraged to explain their ideas and this gives them confidence and develops their mental strategies well. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils were asked to crack a code. Pupils were able to gather clues, rather like completing a crossword puzzle, and eventually they were able to identify the value of each letter.

Pupils were intrigued by the task and highly motivated to solve the problem, which subtly developed their understanding of algebraic formulae.

30 Teaching in the infant class is sound. Pupils receive a thorough grounding in the basic skills, such as adding and multiplying. The teacher has a non-threatening approach that enables pupils to suggest answers without fear of making a mistake. The teacher makes good use of small whiteboards on which pupils can quickly write responses to her questions. This is helpful because it enables the teacher to check at a glance whether pupils have grasped the idea or need additional support. Games, such as snakes and ladders, are used effectively, for example, to help pupils to count forwards and backwards to and from 100. Although well organised and thoroughly prepared, the work provided for the more capable Year 2 pupils is not always challenging enough. However, the atmosphere for learning is very positive. Pupils work extremely hard (and happily) for their age. They are highly productive in completing many practical tasks and calculations, which enables them to achieve well and reach good standards.

31 Mathematics has been the focus of attention in recent years. The size of the school means that it is imperative that teachers become skilled in managing different year groups in the one class. In this respect, the headteacher has been particularly successful in selecting materials that can be adapted for this purpose. Pupils' learning is accurately assessed and their progress is carefully tracked. Any slippage in pupils' learning is quickly noticed and reversed.

32 Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good levels of support. They learn successfully in small steps with an adult on hand to guide their understanding, reinforce their learning and develop their confidence. This helps them to make good progress. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language have adapted rapidly to the school's methods of teaching. They thrive on discussions and group tasks, which improves their spoken language and their mathematical skills.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

33 Mathematics is used well in the learning of other subjects in the junior class. In science, for example, pupils calculate results and in design and technology they measure angles and lengths before cutting materials. There are good links with ICT and geography, which enables pupils to conduct their own surveys and design new playground facilities.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching enables junior pupils to acquire very good knowledge and understanding, however their scientific skills do not develop to quite the same degree.
- Although satisfactory overall, the teaching of the more able infant children is not challenging enough to enable them to fulfil their potential in reaching higher levels.
- Opportunities are missed to develop and improve pupils' writing of scientific reports.

### **Commentary**

34 Junior pupils achieve well overall to reach high standards by the end of Year 6, which represents a considerable improvement since the time of the last inspection. An unusual but effective approach is taken to the teaching of science in the junior class. Much of the science is contained in a series of workbooks, which pupils complete under the careful direction of the headteacher. One advantage is that all pupils study the same topic to gain their interest, but the levels of difficulty are sensitively adjusted using more complex workbooks to match pupils' different ages and levels of understanding. The scheme covers each science topic in considerable depth by setting challenging tasks and raising key questions, designed to make pupils think. For example,

pupils are frequently required to devise and use classification keys to sort different plants and animals, according to their characteristics. This approach significantly develops their skills in logical reasoning and makes a valuable contribution to their good scientific vocabulary. The units are also well sequenced, which enables pupils to build securely on what they have learnt previously. Their knowledge and understanding develops rapidly. For example, pupils in Year 3 have already acquired a good grasp of food chains and those in Year 6 are familiar with advanced ideas, such as filtration. At specific intervals, the headteacher introduces practical investigations. Through these, pupils learn to make predictions and observations, measure outcomes and draw conclusions. The older Year 5 and 6 pupils understand what it means to carry out a fair test, but are still unsure of the meaning of constants and variables. Their skills of investigation are typical for their age, although their knowledge and understanding of science is very good.

35 Infant pupils achieve steadily to reach the levels expected by the end of Year 2. Teaching in the infant class is satisfactory for the most part. Pupils' written work over the term indicates that they are achieving steadily in response to regular science lessons, which provide sufficient practical investigations and opportunities to predict and observe what happens. However, the one lesson observed was unsatisfactory. Pupils experimented with a range of toys to investigate push - pull forces. The seesaw was particularly valuable in prompting Year 1 pupils to consider how leaning back and forward affected the movement. However, Year 2 pupils did not learn anything new. In particular, the task of labelling pictures with the words 'push or pull' did not make sufficient demands on their learning.

36 There is scope to improve pupils' recording of their work in both the infant and the junior classes. Infant pupils are often required to draw a picture and fill in the missing words. The Year 2 pupils, in particular, are capable of writing their own explanations but this is not done enough. Similarly, in the junior class, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to practice and improve their writing of factual accounts. This matters, because the school has identified writing as a priority for improvement.

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

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching enables junior pupils to achieve well.
- Infant pupils do not achieve as well as they should and the headteacher has not been able to influence developments.
- By Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of how to use computers to improve their learning in other subjects.

### **Commentary**

37 Junior pupils achieve well and, by the end of Year 6, standards are at the levels expected, which is an improvement on the last inspection. The headteacher has good expertise in ICT and operates an effective system of teaching all four year groups in the junior class. Each afternoon session begins with a focus on using computers. The headteacher works with each different year group in turn, teaching the essential skills through adept demonstration and questioning. Pupils learn effectively, for example, how to search the Internet to find the answers to particular questions. They use the various search engines and menus competently to download extracts and to print them out for future reference. Pupils have good opportunities, later in the week, to apply and improve their skills and techniques in learning other subjects. This approach has proved successful in enabling pupils to gain knowledge, understanding and skills in word processing, using spreadsheets and databases and combining text and graphics to produce leaflets, posters and information sheets. Pupils' understanding of using electronic sensors and operating control programmes does not progress as quickly. This is partly attributable to lack of specific equipment, although the sensing

equipment is now available and pupils do have opportunities to use simple the logo programmes where they learn how to sequence commands.

38 In complete contrast, computers are seldom used in the infant classroom and pupils' achievements in ICT are unsatisfactory. This is partly because the older machines are not always reliable but the problem is mainly attributable to the teacher's lack of confidence and subject knowledge, despite recent training. Infant pupils acquire only the very basic skills, such as how to use the mouse and keyboard to make changes on the screen, for example, to type and edit short passages. Infant pupils also have opportunities to operate a programmable toy but there is little beyond this and their learning is very restricted. For example, Year 2 pupils do not load their own programs or know how to save and retrieve their work. Standards are lower than they should be and this is an issue to improve. Despite setting a good example of using ICT in his own class, the headteacher has not been able to influence the course of events in the infant class and this is why the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection have not been remedied.

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

39 The very limited use of computers in the infant class is to a large extent compensated for in the juniors, where ICT is used in the learning of almost all other subjects. An enterprising project is underway whereby junior pupils are considering improving a piece of land within the school grounds. To do this, the headteacher has introduced a program to enable pupils to model various layouts, for example, of an adventure playground. Junior pupils achieve particularly well in this area of ICT. They also make frequent use of ICT in English, mathematics, geography and history and regard computers as a natural and effective tool for learning.

### **HUMANITIES**

40 The subjects of history and geography were not a focus for the inspection. As only one lesson was seen in geography and no lessons were observed in history, an overall judgement on provision cannot be made. However, teachers' planning and pupils' work was examined and discussions with teachers and pupils took place.

41 **History and geography** are taught alternately and pupils' learning is stimulated by educational visits. In **history**, for example, the rich Roman heritage on their doorstep is exploited well to fire their imaginations. Teaching in the one **geography** lesson seen was imaginative and produced high interest levels, as the infant pupils studied a video of Barnaby Bear's mountain adventure in Wales. The school's *own* Barnaby Bear had also been taken to the same mountain and had photographs to prove it! Exploring environmental issues enables older pupils to form caring and responsible attitudes for their surroundings, such as in the planning of a leisure space to be built in the school grounds. The school is, rightly, beginning to develop more specific links between literacy and these subjects.

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

42 The subjects of **art and design**, **design and technology** and **music** were not a focus for the inspection and insufficient evidence was collected to enable a firm judgement to be made on overall provision. However evidence was available from one design and technology lesson, school displays and past work in art and design. In addition to this, discussions were held with teachers and pupils about all three subjects.

43 In **art and design**, it is clear from displays and the portfolios of work that standards have risen since the previous inspection. For example, pupils' work inspired by the paintings of LS Lowry, captures vividly the hunched figures, cowering dogs and desolate landscapes that he loved to portray. Good sketches, in a range of media, have been made of the nearby church and three-dimensional collections of visually appealing objects, arranged in decorated boxes by the pupils, have been used to inspire effective water-colour paintings.

44 Pupils enjoy **design and technology** and experience all aspects of the subject. The headteacher's good expertise ensures that junior pupils tackle some challenging and ambitious projects, such as the making of moving models incorporating cams and electric motors. Pupils benefit from carefully sequenced teaching.

- ⇒ They examine various objects to gain design ideas.
- ⇒ Next they practice specific skills which will be required in the making, for example, mitring and gluing the corners of a picture frame.
- ⇒ They are then encouraged to experiment with different design ideas, which gives their work individuality and originality.
- ⇒ Pupils respond well to encouragement to measure accurately and they work with care.
- ⇒ They provide step by step instructions and evaluate their completed work. This improves their writing skills.

45 Unfortunately, pupils do not keep an organised record of their work and this makes it harder for the teacher and the pupils to reflect on their progress.

46 The school employs a specialist **music** teacher who provides separate music lessons for infant and junior pupils. As a result, pupils now have regular experiences of composing and performing, which were identified as weaknesses at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' singing is typical for their age. In school assembly, for example, they sing clearly and in tune, with expression and feeling. However, opportunities are missed to broaden their understanding of music from other times and cultures, by not having music playing when they enter and leave school assembly.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good in the junior class.
- Involvement in a joint primary - secondary school programme is improving pupils' skills and understanding.
- Good opportunities to participate in swimming and competitive sport improves pupils' achievement.

### **Commentary**

47 The headteacher's coaching expertise is evident in the quality of pupils' learning. Pupils' fitness levels are increased through vigorous and stimulating warm up activities, such as chasing other pupils to snatch the coloured tags held on their waistbands. Good use is made of demonstration to show pupils, for example, how to pass a rugby ball quickly and accurately. They are then encouraged to practice and perfect the technique. The importance and value of teamwork is constantly stressed. As a result, pupils achieve well in these aspects of physical education and develop a good awareness of position and tactics and learn to work together as a team. A specialist physical education teacher from a nearby secondary school makes weekly visits. Pupils look forward to these sessions. In particular, they learn skills and strategies related to a wider range of team sports, such as netball. In addition, junior pupils have good opportunities to improve their gymnastics skills.

48 Although standards in physical education are at the levels expected at the end of Years 2 and 6 overall, pupils achieve well in swimming and in sport. Considering its small size, the school competes very successfully in inter-school sporting activities. Pupils are fortunate in having a good range of extra curricular opportunities to develop their physical prowess. Intensive summer swimming courses for all junior pupils results in 100 percent success. All pupils reach the 25 metres standard and many gain advanced distance and survival awards. Coaching in games skills,

supplemented by opportunities to compete against other schools, makes a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of sportsmanship. Residential visits to an activity centre in Scotland enable pupils to experience a wide range of outdoor activities, such as climbing and canoeing. This helps pupils to develop lifelong interests and boosts their personal development.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHCE)**

The provision in personal, social and health education is **good** and in citizenship **satisfactory**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Planning for PSHE and citizenship is thorough.
- Pupils have good opportunities to discuss their ideas and they learn to make well-informed choices. However, there is no school council for pupils to experience how society functions.

### **Commentary**

49 The school's PSHE programme effectively includes citizenship, sex and relationships education and attention to alcohol and drug misuse. Many of these aspects are taught as discrete topics, or through subjects of the curriculum, such as science, when appropriate.

50 Pupils have good opportunities to discuss their own views about subjects such as the importance of having rules. In class discussion times, pupils learn to listen to and respect the opinions of each other. In one lesson, for example, the teacher showed pupils different packed lunches and asked them to comment. Pupils were quick to point out the ones which contained healthy foods and which were bad for them. Good teaching enabled them to learn to make choices about healthy lifestyles. Despite these good features, there is no school council, therefore pupils do not experience some aspects of citizenship first hand, such as electing representatives and running democratic meetings.

## 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	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
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	2
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	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	0
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).*