

INSPECTION REPORT

BYTHAMS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Little Bytham

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120506

Headteacher: Mrs P. Eccles

Lead inspector: Mrs W. Knight

Dates of inspection: October 6th – 9th 2003

Inspection number: 255692

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
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	75
School address:	Creeton Road, Little Bytham Grantham
Postcode:	NG33 4PX
Telephone number:	01780 410275
Fax number:	01780 410338
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr P. Candler
Date of previous inspection:	June 22 nd 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school serves a rural community of villages in Lincolnshire – Little Bytham, Castle Bytham, Creeton, Careby, Aunby and Couthorpe. Although about 60% of pupils live in privately owned homes there are also less advantaged families in the community. Bythams is a small school - there are three classes for the 75 pupils aged from 4 to 11 but following two more intakes of reception children the roll is expected to rise to 87 at Easter. Children are admitted in the term after their 4th birthday to an Early Years programme. Due to a large number of families with a parent who commutes there is a significant proportion of mobility for a small school. The pupils are all classified as white, and there are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. No pupil was eligible for free school meals, but as the school does not provide a cooked lunch this is not a true reflection of entitlement. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is broadly average. The school aims to be fully inclusive, including integrating travellers and pupils from the local special school.

Attainment on entry varies each year. It is at least average, but some year groups, including the current reception class are above average. The school admits a significant number of gifted and talented pupils for whom it makes additional provision.

The school has been awarded Rural Academy status in March 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
12172	Wendy Knight	Lead inspector	English, science, information and communication technology, geography, design and technology and music; special educational needs.
11041	Marvyn Moore	Lay inspector	
20230	Jenny Clayphan	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, mathematics, art, history, physical education and religious education.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is **good and becoming increasingly effective**. Most pupils have achieved satisfactorily over the long term. Pupils are achieving well in English and the oldest higher attaining and gifted pupils are achieving well. Although there is some underachievement amongst lower attaining pupils in Years 4 and 5 as a result of the necessity for temporary teachers due to prolonged staff absence they are now making regular progress. Standards in English, mathematics and science are currently above average. Teaching and learning are currently satisfactory overall but better in reception and Years 5 and 6. The school is very well led by the headteacher and soundly managed with some strengths. It gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The vision and drive of the headteacher.
- The very good teaching in Years 5 and 6.
- Very good provision is made for gifted and talented pupils in Year 6 in mathematics, science and information and communication technology.
- Pupils' readiness to learn, form constructive relationships and take responsibility for their actions.
- Some lower attaining pupils in Years 4 and 5 are underachieving in mathematics and science but are now making better progress.
- Teachers in Years 1 to 4 make insufficient use of information about pupils' learning to plan lessons and give guidance on how work can be improved.
- The curriculum is not sufficiently well organised in Years 1 to 4.
- There are very good opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities and community projects.

The school has improved satisfactorily since the time of the last inspection because standards in tested subjects have risen and provision for design and technology has improved. The subject co-ordinators are more actively involved in developing their subjects but are still not fully accountable for raising standards.

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*	A	A	A
mathematics	A	B	C	D
science	A	B	D	E

*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. Care should be taken in interpreting these results as, with only 7 pupils in the group, each pupil represents a significant percentage.*

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Too much reliance should not be placed on any individual year's results because the number of pupils is small. Most children reach the goals they are expected to reach by the end of reception, and achievement is satisfactory. In English pupils in Year 2 achieve well and standards are above average in reading and writing. In mathematics by the end of Year 2 standards are above average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Standards in English are also currently above average by Year 6 and pupils are achieving well. Although Year 6 test results in mathematics were average in 2002, standards are above average in the current Year 6. In science, results were average in 2003 and are currently above average. Most pupils listen attentively and

speak maturely. They read suitable texts confidently, expressively and with good comprehension. Pupils write competently and accurately. In mathematics most pupils calculate accurately, but some lower attaining pupils do not comprehend what they are doing well enough and there has been underachievement which is now being addressed. There is also some underachievement amongst lower attaining pupils in science. Pupils know essential science facts, and higher attaining pupils in Years 3 to 6 apply them well, but lower attaining pupils sometimes lack understanding. By Year 6 standards in information and communication technology are above average. **Pupils' personal qualities are good.** Pupils' attitudes are very good and their behaviour is good. Attendance is average. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is satisfactory but with significant strengths. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory overall**, very good in Years 5 and 6, satisfactory in Year 1 – 4 and good in reception. Teachers manage pupils well, teach speaking and basic reading skills effectively and plan interesting activities. Because of this, pupils are interested and concentrate well. Greater challenge is provided in Years 5 and 6 and pupils work much harder. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but feedback does not always lead to sufficient improvement in Years 1 to 4. The curriculum is sound overall with strengths in provision for gifted pupils, extra-curricular activities and links with the community. Planning for many subjects is not well enough balanced and time is not always spent wisely in Years 1 to 4. The care and support given to pupils are very good. Procedures are comprehensive and thorough and pupils know they are well looked after. The school's partnership with parents is very effective. Parents are actively involved, including in shaping the school's work, very well informed and valued for their contributions.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The work of the governing body is good. The headteacher's leadership is very good. She inspires governors, staff and pupils with a clear vision for the school and has made many improvements since she was appointed. However the impact of her leadership on teaching and co-ordinators' management has been much restricted by prolonged staff absence. Subject leaders' leadership is generally satisfactory. Although they have become increasingly more involved in planning and monitoring their subjects, they currently have a limited impact on standards. Management is sound overall but is becoming increasingly effective. Information about the school's work is identified, used to decide on what needs to be done, and effective action is decided on. Where a particular long-term objective is set, the headteacher has a range of effective strategies to ensure it is met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are happy with the school because they are working in genuine partnership with the staff and governors to provide the best for their children. Pupils like the school because it is a happy, friendly place and their ideas are valued.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Eliminate underachievement amongst some lower attaining Year 4 and 5 pupils, particularly in mathematics and science, by raising the standard of teaching to that of the best.
- Improve the use made of assessment and marking to ensure work is matched to the needs of all pupils and guidance is regularly provided to pupils on how to improve.
- Ensure all time is used effectively during each day and for each National Curriculum subject, and that co-ordinators monitor outcomes rigorously and take effective action.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards in core subjects are above average. Most pupils have been achieving satisfactorily over the long term but as a result of the headteacher's systems for tracking progress many are now achieving better. In English pupils achieve well and gifted and talented pupils also now achieve well, but there is some underachievement by lower attaining Year 4 and 5 pupils in mathematics and science as the result of prolonged absence of some teachers. This is being assiduously addressed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are mature, articulate speakers.
- Pupils read confidently and with expression.
- Gifted and talented pupils are achieving well in mathematics, science and information and communication technology in Years 5 and 6.
- Some lower attaining Year 4 and 5 pupils are underachieving in mathematics and science.

Commentary

1. In national tests Year 2 pupils were above average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2002, and Year 6 pupils were well above average in English, average in mathematics and below average in science compared with schools nationally. Compared with similar schools Year 6 pupils were below average in mathematics and well below average in science, but, since just seven pupils took the tests, this comparison is not reliable since each pupil represents a large percentage in the calculation. Results improved in 2003 for all tests in Year 2 but were not maintained in mathematics in Year 6, whereas all pupils reached the expected level (level 4) in science. Standards in English, mathematics and science have improved since the last inspection when they were judged to be average and the trend in national test results has been broadly average. Attainment on entry, based on nationally compared data, shows certain year groups to be above average when pupils start school while others are average. The school's 'value added' data indicates overall progress to be satisfactory but certain pupils are now regularly making good progress. Because of the high proportion of gifted pupils in the current Year 6 standards are higher than in previous years. Parents were unanimous in believing their children make good progress throughout the school.
2. Children achieve the early learning goals by the time they reach the end of reception. Children listen well to stories and questions and already know some letter sounds. They can count satisfactorily and match shapes. Children know about the names and different tastes of exotic fruit, and they use the computer confidently. Many children are agile, and they are able to control pencils and paintbrushes well.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.3 (17.0)	15.9 (15.8)
writing	15.9 (15.4)	14.8 (14.4)
mathematics	17.4 (17.0)	16.4 (16.5)

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

3. By the end of Year 2 most pupils read confidently. Pupils use letter sounds to tackle unknown words, pictures and context to help them understand the text. Most pupils read with expression

and good comprehension. Higher attaining pupils predict what might happen in the story and use the contents to find relevant pages on a subject. Lower attaining pupils use single letter sounds confidently but not longer letter strings. They are less confident about recalling details of a text. Most pupils also write readily by the end of Year 2. They express their thoughts in a series of relevant sentences, which are demarcated by full stops and capital letters, and also use capital letters for names. Common words are usually spelt correctly and errors of grammar are unusual. Many pupils join their letters and write neatly during handwriting practice, but few do so in all their daily writing. Higher attainers use a range of structures to write on a range of topics, and are already using more interesting vocabulary. Lower attainers use punctuation less consistently, and make more spelling errors but are still willing to commit their thoughts to paper.

4. In mathematics pupils count to 100 including in 10s and 2s. They add and subtract numbers to 20 using appropriate mental strategies. They can use coins to make given amounts of money, and give the correct change. Pupils recognise common two-dimensional shapes and know some simple properties. They can use suitable standards measures of length and capacity.

There is no table of results for Year 6 in 2003 as there were only 7 pupils in the year group.

5. By the end of Year 6 pupils read confidently for a variety of purposes. Lower attaining pupils apply word building skills when necessary, and are often able to correct their own mistakes when they realise what they have read does not make sense. Average and higher attainers summarise effectively and refer to the text when discussing a particular question. Higher attainers quickly locate relevant information by scanning and deduce information about a likely event in a story from what they know about a character. However, pupils do not confidently use context to work out meanings of unknown words or phrases, and some higher attaining pupils are not appreciating the depth of meaning in a whole fiction book because their reading material is often not challenging enough when they read independently. Pupils generally write accurately for a particular audience or reason. Lower attaining pupils are less accurate and briefer while higher attaining pupils use more complex sentences and a wider vocabulary.
6. In mathematics most Year 6 pupils know their multiplication tables, and use the four rules confidently to do calculations, but lower and average attaining pupils are less confident about knowing which calculation to make when dealing with word problems. Higher and average attaining pupils use decimals to two places and recognise equivalent fractions. Pupils identify range, mode and median in a sample of data and enter statistical data to a spreadsheet; the gifted pupils confidently display the results of the entered data in a range of graphs. Some lower attaining pupils fail to understand the work in mathematics well enough to reach competency and subsequent work does not provide enough consolidation, so a significant proportion of these pupils underachieve. Due to circumstances beyond the school's control, pupils now in Years 4 to 6 were taught by a number of temporary teachers in Years 3 - 5. This had an adverse effect on progress and has contributed to the underachievement even though steps are taken to help them to catch up in Years 5 and 6 and intervention programmes provide targeted support.
7. Pupils throughout the school listen attentively and speak confidently and all pupils make good progress in this area. Year 2 pupils ask pertinent questions and offer an opinion. They read work aloud clearly and audibly. By Year 6 most pupils respond to discussions with relevant contributions of their own, including using appropriate technical vocabulary. Higher attaining pupils generalise, while gifted pupils confidently refute each other's arguments and offer opposing points of view to stimulate debate. Higher attaining pupils are aware of an audience, tackling formal presentations of their work and informal discussion equally confidently.
8. Standards in science are average in Year 2 but above average by Year 6. Year 2 pupils have appropriate scientific knowledge and carry out practical investigations satisfactorily, recording their work in simple tables and on worksheets. While Year 1 pupils achieve well, the work often fails to challenge Year 2 pupils in the same class as the older pupils do not generalise or

increase their understanding. Greater challenge in Years 3 to 6 results in above average results by the end of Year 6, although some lower attaining pupils sometimes fail to understand key scientific principles. Because of the gifted pupils in Year 6, standards are higher now since these pupils are already working beyond the expected level at National Curriculum level 5, and are targeted to reach level 6. While this group and higher attaining pupils generalise results, use the correct scientific vocabulary and draw their own conclusions, a proportion of lower attainers and average attainers in Years 3 to 5 fail to record results fully and do not draw relevant conclusions from their investigative work.

9. Standards are average in the Year 2 and above average by Year 6 in information and communication technology and the oldest pupils achieve well. In Year 2 and Year 6 standards in religious education, design and technology, geography, history and physical education are average. Pupils' skills in sport are good and many pupils swim confidently.
10. Throughout the school pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills regularly in other subjects. Pupils read a range of texts to support learning, particularly in geography, history and religious education and write accounts of work done in science, geography, history and religious education. Some writing incorporates specific skills taught in literacy, such as bullet points to indicate important features in geography. Appropriate measurements are taken in science and geography, and data is recorded using graphs. By the end of Year 6 pupils use a range of information and communication technology skills confidently to support their learning in other subjects. Typically, pupils produce booklets on topics particularly in personal, social and health education and in history, access information from CD-ROM and the Internet and design and create attractive posters for school events. Gifted pupils confidently use information and communication technology skills to collate and formally present information.
11. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. When work is well matched to specific targets on their individual education plans, progress in lessons is good; similarly, when they work in groups for additional support, progress in basic skills is evident. In most lessons, where an additional adult is present, pupils are able to complete similar tasks to their peers with support, and teachers effectively include them in plenary sessions so that they are able to see what has been achieved. However, work is not necessarily closely enough matched to their needs to enable them to use build on prior learning consistently.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Their personal development is good overall, with moral and social development being very good, cultural development good and spiritual development satisfactory. Behaviour is good. In the reception class it is usually very good. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are keen to come to school, enjoy it and try very hard to do their best.
- Good standards of behaviour contribute to the quality of learning throughout the school day.
- There are good procedures for raising attendance levels and for promoting good behaviour.
- The school is successfully promotes personal development.
- Opportunities for pupils to reflect and to raise their spiritual awareness are sometimes missed.
- Independent learning is sometimes developed, but not all pupils think opportunities are regular enough.
- Nearly all pupils are punctual.
- Procedures for monitoring attendance are very good.

Commentary

12. As at the time of the last inspection, the pupils' positive attitudes enhance the warm

atmosphere of the school and contribute to the way they achieve. Reception children are likely to achieve the expected goals in personal and social development before they reach Year 1. Boys and girls are enthusiastic about school activities and nearly all of them say they enjoy attending. They relate well to adults, are polite and friendly to visitors and show an interest in the needs of those less fortunate than themselves, when, for example, they raise money for charities. They listen attentively in lessons and answer questions in a mature way. Parents were unanimous about the good behaviour exhibited by pupils and pupils are keen to receive rewards for good behaviour and for effort. Inspectors confirm the parents' view that the school helps to ensure that pupils become mature and responsible individuals. The very rare instances of bullying are dealt with rapidly and effectively.

13. All adults consistently promote the principles of right from wrong and the school has very high expectations about how its pupils should behave. This, together with a very caring ethos, provide the basis for the good behaviour that is seen in classrooms, around the school and in the playgrounds. Rewards and sanctions are well understood and well accepted by the pupils. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils with special educational needs are usually similar to the rest of their class, but when those with emotional difficulties have problems with particular activities they are supported well so that they can resume normal activities alongside their peers.
14. Through class discussions the pupils are taught to reflect on their own and others' actions, they learn to be considerate of each other and to respect others' views. There is good social inclusion within the school and happy relationships which contribute to the warm, "family" atmosphere that exists throughout the school. Pupils usually work well on their own or take turns when they are in groups, and they are keen to offer help to others who need it. Break and lunch times are pleasant and harmonious when boys and girls play happily together and take turns with the playground small equipment. There have been no exclusions. Despite pupils' positive attitudes there are not enough opportunities for them to take the initiative and be independent learners, although when they do take the initiative most teachers actively encourage them. Over a quarter of pupils did not think they were trusted enough to do things independently, and the inspectors agree that pupils would respond well to greater challenges in this respect.
15. The school provides a daily act of worship which meets statutory requirements. At the time of the last inspection, arrangements for developing pupils' spiritual awareness were good. The inspection team judges opportunities for deep reflection and for pupils to consider what they have learnt and how it impacts on their daily lives to be satisfactory in assemblies.
16. Pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils have a range of opportunities to learn about their own and other traditions. They hear stories from other cultures and religions, study other religions, learn about the history and geography of other countries and of Britain, and they look at the work of a range of artists. These raise pupils' awareness of customs and traditions in their own and others' lives and prepare them effectively for life in a multi-cultural society.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	5.5
National data:	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0
National data:	0.5

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

17. Attendance is in line with the national average and there were no instances of unrecorded absence last year. Punctuality in the morning is very good. Procedures for promoting attendance are also very good, and registration is carried out efficiently including procedures to deal effectively with any unexpected absence.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is sound with some significant strengths. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, and the day-to-day curriculum includes appropriate work in all National Curriculum subjects. The provision of extra-curricular activities is very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is satisfactory overall, but there is too much variation in quality between year groups. While pupils in Year 5 and 6 receive very good teaching and reception children are taught well, only a small proportion of lessons were better than satisfactory in the Year 1, 2 3 and 4 classes. Learning is commensurate with the quality of the teaching, so progress in lessons is often rapid in Years 5 and 6, but only steady in Years 1 to 4. Assessment is unsatisfactory because although data is collected systematically and used to track progress, it is not used sufficiently well in planning work or providing constructive feedback in Years 1 to 4.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All the very good lessons were observed in Year 5 and 6; teaching in reception is often good.
- Basic reading skills are thoroughly taught in Years 1 to 2 and well applied by pupils; speaking and listening skills are promoted effectively.
- Effective methods are used by all teachers to interest pupils and sustain their concentration.
- Pupils are well managed throughout the school.
- Expectations of pupils in Years 5 and 6 are high and pupils make much effort to rise to the challenges they are set.
- Pupils are not given enough guidance on how to improve their work, including showing sufficient pride in their work.
- Evidence of pupils' previous learning is not used to plan precisely enough for the differing needs in the class.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 21 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	4	8	9	0	0	0

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

18. While the proportion of lessons that were good or better is similar to that reported after the last inspection, it is now unevenly distributed across the school. The best lessons were all in Years 5 and 6, while the teaching in Years 1 to 4 was seldom better than satisfactory. However, one of the classes was taught by a temporary teacher during inspection week. In reception successful management of the children, skilful questioning to promote speaking and well-planned activities stimulated effective learning in most lessons. Parents responding to the questionnaire judged teaching to be good, and particularly praised arrangements for homework which allowed them to opt in to receiving tasks for their children, or not as they chose. While the strengths identified in the previous inspection report of managing behaviour and teaching speaking and basic reading skills successfully have been maintained, assessment of the different needs of pupils within Years 1 to 4 is less effective.
19. Throughout the school, teachers expect pupils to behave well, pay attention and work conscientiously. They use appropriate praise and encouragement to remind pupils of class rules, and usually deal sensitively with any minor misdemeanours. As a result, pupils seldom

lose any lesson time for re-establishing order, and most are able to work unsupervised when this is appropriate.

20. In Years 5 and 6, expectations of pupils are always high, and the pace of lessons is brisk. The headteacher is setting a good example, and establishing high expectations for other teachers to emulate. Pupils respond to challenges with enthusiasm, and make an effort to work hard and complete tasks. The pace of the work always demands their full concentration. Although appropriate deadlines are sometimes set for younger pupils, they are not regularly challenged to complete tasks in the shortest possible time, and too many tasks are undemanding for older and higher attaining pupils especially in Years 1 and 2. As a result, some pupils fail to complete work which is within their capabilities or do not make the effort to start immediately and have to be reminded what they should be doing.
21. Knowledge of letter sounds and the alphabet are regularly taught and revised in Years 1 and 2, and activities to practise them include spelling as well as reading them so that pupils use them automatically when trying to read or spell unfamiliar words. Pupils are given opportunities to be independent with spelling as soon as it is feasible by referring to posters and picture dictionaries in lessons. As a result, when reading texts, pupils attempt to work out unknown words unaided, often successfully, and the independence enables them to tackle new books confidently. Pupils are also taught that texts are to be read for meaning, and nearly all pupils approach books to gain understanding, and quickly correct errors they make when reading aloud.
22. In many lessons teachers capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm by using a variety of methods and activities, and as a result pupils are keen to learn and recall previous work readily. In English, for example, in Year 5/6 pupils acted the stage directions they had inserted into a scene from *The Evacuees*. In history Year 3/4 pupils presented their work on Roman roads in a booklet using information and communication technology and Year 1/2 pupils tasted a variety of exotic fruit to help them in planning their own fruit salads. Discussion in such lessons is often animated, and teachers not only introduce the correct technical vocabulary, but expect pupils to use it. Pupils often enjoy the new words and are confident about experimenting with their use in the contributions they offer. With this rich vocabulary being provided, and the expectations by adults that all pupils will contribute their ideas, they listen carefully to each other as well as to adults and become confident speakers. Active encouragement from teachers to offer contributions from experiences outside school, including reading relevant books and making use of the Internet, expands horizons and encourages wider consideration so pupils think for themselves as well as seeing where work in lessons fits in to their existing knowledge.
23. Pupils with special educational needs are usually well supported by adults, which builds their self-esteem as well as ensuring they participate fully. In most lessons the teacher or an assistant discusses the task with the special educational needs pupils before they actually start work, enabling them to clarify what they are expected to do, and the adult is able to help them understand anything which they failed to comprehend in the introduction. When the teacher directs pupils to individual education plan targets before they tackle the task set, this results in significant gains in skills. Pupils with special educational needs are regularly actively involved in whole class sessions which helps them to see what they have learnt even if it is less than their peers.
24. Although the school's overall picture of pupils' attainment is clear through its assessment data, with very detailed tracking of progress in English, mathematics and science feedback to pupils during lessons is not always so well targeted in Years 1 to 4. Nevertheless, most pupils think teachers do help them to improve their work. Although plenary sessions are aimed at summarising what has been taught and in the best lessons provide further challenge or insights into what is to be learnt next, in too many lessons in Years 1 to 4 they only reiterate what was introduced earlier in the lesson. Comments made by teachers fail to indicate precisely why a piece of work produced by a class member is good, and even less often how it could be improved even more. Similarly in books, marking has the same shortcomings. While it is often

encouraging and marks technical errors, it seldom gives ways to improve work further, and is rarely focused on the targets set for the group. As a result, some aspects improve but others fail to do so. In English in Years 3 to 6, for instance, most pupils improve their spelling but few pupils increase their facility with appropriate punctuation during any school year. Different provision for two year groups in the same class is also not clear through different expectations, so, even where similar tasks are suitable, the older and higher attaining pupils are not necessarily learning how to improve faster. Poor presentation is rarely commented on, and even when it is, it is not followed up consistently so only those pupils who are proud of their own work regularly write neatly and avoid crossings out. Insufficient guidance is given to pupils on reading books, too. When reading on their own some gifted and higher attaining pupils read fiction which fails to make them infer or deduce what is happening, while some lower attainers try to read texts containing too many unknown words and do not understand the storyline.

25. Because classes contain two year groups, progress in many subjects is dependent upon effective planning of different work for groups within the class on a given lesson objective. In practice, many tasks set in Years 1 to 4 are not planned on the basis of previous learning and are essentially promoting the same skills and knowledge for all pupils irrespective of ability or age. In some lessons older and higher attaining pupils are not challenged. For example, in the introduction in a Year 1 and 2 English lesson, all pupils spelt words ending in 'ub' by putting a single letter on the beginning.

The curriculum

The school's curriculum is satisfactory overall. Although National Curriculum planning is sound, the day-to-day curriculum has some shortcomings in terms of progression for the two year groups in each class and the use made of available time. There are very good opportunities for enrichment activities, and the quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some subjects of the curriculum are taught for more time than others
- Time is not always used well in long lessons in Years 1 to 4.
- Special provision has been made for gifted pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- The range of extra-curricular clubs and opportunities to play sports are very good.
- The school promotes pupils' personal, social and health education well.
- There is good provision for smooth transition from Foundation Stage to Year 1, and Year 6 to secondary schools.

Commentary

26. The curriculum meets statutory requirements including provision for religious education and collective worship. Although it is satisfactory overall, there are shortcomings in the way it is planned and conducted; these affect learning and, in this respect, provision is less satisfactory than at the time of the last inspection. There is clear yearly planning of all subjects in the form of schemes of work, but non-core subjects are taught in blocks and then often not taught again for several months. Moreover, some subjects have more time allocated to them over the two year cycle, for example geography, than others, such as history. Whole afternoons are spent teaching a single subject which provides time for extended activities and work in depth for the oldest pupils but results in ineffective use of time for younger ones. This impedes the steady building of skills. Planning also takes insufficient account of the two year groups in each class so that skills are not developed well enough by either the older or the younger pupils in the class especially in science, geography and history. Although co-ordinators have produced detailed planning for their subjects and checked outcomes, this monitoring has not been rigorous enough to ensure pupils have worked at the appropriate level and been sufficiently productive. However, the need to plan a two-yearly cycle to cater for classes containing at least two year groups means that the necessary re-evaluation has only recently begun. Cross curricular links are well planned into the curriculum, such as design and technology projects associated with

healthy eating and appropriate literacy tasks incorporating relevant literature. However, many literacy lessons for pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not last the recommended hour with preparation for break and lunch cutting into lesson time, and on occasions break is allowed to extend beyond the scheduled period. Appropriate provision is made for pupils with special educational needs including additional tuition, adult support and work to support their individual education plan targets.

27. The school actively includes all pupils in everything it offers. Pupils from the local special school are included in classes as appropriate, and every effort is made to ensure other pupils with special educational needs are regularly involved in all class activities. Where necessary, careful planning enables individual pupils to be included in lessons they would otherwise be unable to attend. During the inspection, for instance, special provision was made for pupils with food allergies to take part in the design and technology work without endangering their health. On a personal basis, therefore, the school is totally inclusive.
28. A recent very positive innovation is the provision made for those pupils identified as gifted. Special provision to spend one afternoon a week at a local grammar school has been made to ensure that the group of pupils in Year 6 continue to be challenged in mathematics, science and information and communication technology. A previous project involving liaison with Year 10 students from another secondary school developed pupils' problem-solving and communication skills and culminated in a stimulating playground for younger pupils. This unusual feature of the curriculum responds well to the different cohorts of pupils and provides very well for the pupils involved. Pupils themselves are very pleased to be given such opportunities, and participate whole-heartedly.
29. Provision for personal, social and health education is good and permeates all aspects of school life. A clear programme, which alternates with religious education, is delivered through class discussions. This, combined with very high expectations from adults, develops pupils' personal and social skills extremely well. Older pupils start to learn about how parliament functions and pupils throughout the school are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the recently created school council. Sex education and awareness of the dangers of drugs are taught regularly.
30. Considering the size of the school, there is a very good variety of extra-curricular clubs particularly for sports and these have been increased substantially since the last inspection. These clubs are appreciated by parents and pupils alike. Pupils play football, netball, cricket and take part in athletics against other schools. Pupils are very keen on these activities and appreciate the opportunities they have, reporting this as one of the best aspects of the school. They go on many educational visits including a residential trip, and visitors come into school to enrich their experiences.
31. There is a satisfactory number of appropriately trained teachers, nursery staff and teaching assistants in the school. Many teachers are part-time, but there are good levels of co-operation between them and the quality of teaching is not affected. Resources are adequate. The accommodation is satisfactory overall, but the use of the hall as a classroom affects the quantity of gymnastics and restricts its quality, and the toilet facilities are barely adequate for the number of pupils. A step into each classroom limits the ease of access for pupils with disabilities.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes very good provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Pupils are given regular advice on how well they are doing in terms of progress towards National Curriculum targets and have plenty of opportunities to be involved in the school's plans.

Main strengths

- Procedures for child protection, and those ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety are very good.
- Induction arrangements for pupils are very good.

Commentary

32. Attention to pupils' welfare, health and safety has improved since the last inspection. Pupils are very well cared for by the school in a safe and happy environment and they say they receive very good support from the school staff. The child protection policy is extremely detailed and fully comprehensive and procedures are meticulous and thorough. The school carries out the necessary health and safety audits regularly and accidents are well recorded. Staff at the school provide very good personal and educational support. Pupils interviewed during the inspection confirmed they receive a good standard of support and advice, know who to go to for support and praised the staff for the care they receive. This personal guidance contributes significantly to the standards achieved. Supervision of pupils at lunch time and break times is of a high standard. Lunch time is a pleasant, social occasion where pupils of all ages socialise and integrate well together. The leadership of the school establishes the ethos whereby pupils are expected to learn to get on well together and treat each other with respect and understanding.
33. The school gives good levels of support to pupils with special educational needs including those with emotional difficulties. Individual pupils with special educational needs are well monitored and provision is reviewed regularly to ensure that progress is being made. The support received by these pupils gives them considerable confidence and self-esteem.
34. The school has very good induction arrangements for new pupils and these are appreciated by parents, who unanimously agreed with the statement on the pre-inspection questionnaire. All children visit the school prior to admission for a personal interview with their parents and liaison with the local nursery is extremely good. Children may start school on mornings only if parents wish and each child in reception is paired with an older child to mentor them during their first year at school.
35. Involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good. The school council, to which pupils of each year are elected, is a lively forum where pupils put forward to staff ideas they have for the benefit of the school. For example, pupils have been involved in the drawing up of class and school rules. Pupils help in assembly operating equipment under supervision, and act as monitors. The Year 6 pupils involved in the project to improve the playground were not only proud of their achievement, but reported positive comments from younger pupils and the request by Year 3/4 pupils to do something similar for the junior playground.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and the community are very good overall. Links with other schools are good overall, but there are particularly effective links with other schools designed to improve specific provision such as arts and gifted pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are given a wealth of information both about the school and on pupils' progress.
- Parents' views are valued and acted on.
- Concerns or complaints are dealt with effectively.
- Arrangements for transfer to secondary school are good.
- The school has effective links with the local village organisations.

Commentary

36. Ninety per cent of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. The overwhelming majority thought their children liked school, their children were making good progress; they felt comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem, and that the school takes accounts of their suggestions and concerns.
37. The school's links with parents are very good, much more effective than they were when the school was last inspected. Many parents actively help in a variety of ways in school including offering Spanish lessons, support with physical education and helping to produce the children's newspaper. Parents know they are welcome to come into school at any time. The information provided to parents is very good, and parents attending the pre-inspection meeting were effusive in their praise for the quality of school reports. The school brochure is extremely well produced and contains well written information presented in a parent-friendly fashion. Termly newsletters are provided to inform parents about activities and events in addition to weekly bulletins. Annual reports, based on the school's assessment data, are of high quality with details of pupils' progress and a full explanation of grades pupils have achieved. Regular parents' evenings include not only discussion on pupils' progress, but also an annual meeting at which parents give their views on items for inclusion in the school development plan. For example, parents advised the school on the placement of the new ICT suite. In addition, evenings are arranged to advise parents on how they can help develop their children's education.
38. The school has very good arrangements for the transfer of pupils to the next stage of education. All Year 6 pupils visit secondary schools and the headteachers from each of these come to Bythams school to meet pupils. Taster days are provided and the headteacher invites parents to an individual personal interview to discuss the options available for their child's next school. The special arrangements for a group of Year 6 pupils to attend a local grammar school are contributing significantly to their achievement, whilst other pupils are benefiting from extra-curricular arts activities at another secondary school. These have been brought about by the efforts of headteacher and relevant subject co-ordinator.
39. All parents are members of FOBS (Friends of Bythams School) and this group arranges a large number of social activities such as Christmas parties, Sports Day refreshments, discos and also helps with school productions as well as raising substantial sums to provide resources.
40. The school has very good links with the community. The school actively participates in the annual fairs of two local villages and works well with local church and community association at their social events. The school has made its spinney available for the use of the whole community and projects with local schools include, dance, arts and sports tournaments. Year 6 pupils are enthusiastic about the opportunities provided for them.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall leadership and management are good. The school is very well led by the headteacher and governed effectively. Many changes have taken place since the headteacher took over the school despite the prolonged absence of two of the teachers, which has restricted developments in the overall quality of teaching. Subject co-ordinators are not fully effective in respect of producing base line standards, so leadership overall is good. Management is sound.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's clear vision and energetic drive inspires pupils, staff and governors.
- Staff are committed to the headteacher's vision and work well together.
- The governing body actively supports the school's development.
- Good account is taken of best value principles.
- The governing body is open and welcomes contributions from all interested parties.
- Comprehensive tracking data is effectively used to measure 'value added'.
- Subject co-ordinators are not fully accountable for the development of their subjects.

Commentary

41. All the people concerned with the school are inspired by the headteacher's vision and drive and are pleased with the many improvements she has instigated since the school was inspected previously. This vision includes innovative solutions such as active liaison with the secondary schools to assist in providing the best for Bythams School. For instance, lately, a special programme for the gifted pupils in Year 6 and previously a project to enhance the playground which involved a wider group of gifted and talented pupils working with Year 10 from another secondary school. Governors, staff and parents all speak favourably about her intentions and hard work and the improvements in the school since she took charge. She knows exactly what she intends the school to achieve and has established a course for its work which she relentlessly pursues, yet she makes time for everyone in her busy schedule and works hard to ensure the school is inclusive. Governors actively support her plans, and have reached an understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through her presentation of information to them. She expects governors to understand complex tracking data on pupil performance and to monitor this regularly to provide a check on whether the school is providing 'value added' for all its pupils. They now challenge data and contribute significantly to discussion on pupil progress as well as questioning whether proposals are likely to improve provision. Staff work together supportively to try to fulfil the headteacher's expectations and value the way she works with them to improve their contributions. Her strategic plans are comprehensive, and she is not daunted by setbacks which are beyond her control. Despite prolonged staff absences and the need to employ temporary staff, the headteacher has successfully brought co-ordinators to a better understanding of their roles and shown good examples in her own work as subject leader. This has included effective monitoring of outcomes and the use of information to improve provision subsequently such as better investigative work in science. Even though she teaches for seven tenths of the week, and administers the school efficiently she has identified the most important priorities and worked hard at improving overall standards. Programmes to improve teachers' practice are in place, but it has not always been possible to implement them with all staff especially where there has been long term absence. However, as a result of these actions the school is now set to improve more rapidly in the near future. The headteacher actively works at ensuring the school is fully inclusive, willingly admitting pupils who have been excluded from other schools and integrating pupils with challenging special educational needs and taking account of their particular circumstances in organising provision.
42. The governors are enthusiastic about the school and, in addition to supporting its work, actively promote it in the community such as in taking on 'The Spinney' project to enhance provision locally. The work of the governing body is much more effective in monitoring the school's

progress than it was when the school was inspected in 1998. Governors attend relevant training and use the information to improve their contributions to the school's development. They work as a team using the strengths from varied life experiences and initiate projects as well as challenging those suggested by school staff. Governors are prepared to challenge local education authority practices which they consider disadvantage Bythams pupils. The governing body welcomes any member of staff who is interested to attend its meetings so that decisions are open and well informed. The governors and headteacher take good account of the principles of best value when discussing the school's work, and are aware of the longer term implications for the school if it fails to fulfil its aims. In the meanwhile, budgetary decisions are taken after careful consideration and day-to-day management of finance is prudent.

43. The co-ordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs is sound. The co-ordinator liaises with classroom teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies as well as dealing with the necessary administration. The special needs governor is supportive of the school and takes an active interest this area of the school's provision.

44. In developing the school's effectiveness, the headteacher set about increasing the skills of co-ordinators to enable them to accept greater responsibility for their subjects. By making them responsible for provision across the school and expecting them to monitor outcomes she has improved their understanding of what happens across the school. Through this monitoring certain key developments such as the need for improved marking have been identified and been incorporated into the School Improvement Plan. However, co-ordinators, many of whom are part-time teachers and have limited opportunities to carry out their work, have not taken responsibility for raising standards and do not actively promote their subjects by challenging colleagues. Work done in a given subject has not, for instance, been rigorously checked against the co-ordinator's planning to see how deeply it has been taught, or what particular groups of pupils have learnt from the work so the teacher undertaking the monitoring has not demanded more challenging work from older pupils in a class, or checked that assessment information is used effectively.

Financial information for the year April2002 to March2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	192380
Total expenditure	196275
Expenditure per pupil	2346

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	1427
Balance carried forward to the next	1565

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Children enter the reception class with attainment that varies from year to year but generally is slightly above average in all the areas of learning. They leave the reception class with attainment that is slightly above average in communication, language and literacy, personal, social and emotional development, creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Their physical and mathematical development is broadly in line with what is expected for children of their age. Their achievement is good in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world and satisfactory in other areas. Teaching is good overall, given the early stage in the school year when the focus is on settling children and developing their language and communication skills. There is significant input from the nursery nurse. However, there are instances in lessons where greater challenge needs to be planned for higher attaining children. Although day-to-day assessment of individual children usually ensures they make good progress in lessons, it is not always used effectively to match work to children's different needs in planning activities. Careful assessment is made of children's achievements and these are regularly recorded so that progress can be monitored. Relationships between adults and children are good. Provision is satisfactory overall as it was at the time of the previous inspection. There is sound leadership to ensure that the needs of reception children are catered for within the mixed year group class.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good daily routines, established when children enter reception, help them to be happy, self-confident and ready to learn.
- The good strategies used by adults to promote good behaviour.

Commentary

45. Through careful organisation and the creation of a calm atmosphere conducive to work, adults ensure that the children are purposely employed in an interesting variety of activities. This enables children to do tasks with good understanding, although on occasion some children become bored with activities that do not extend them enough. The children start to take responsibility for their coats and lunch boxes, and learn to tidy up after themselves. They enjoy chatting to each other and working together in groups as well as completing tasks independently.
46. Good systems are in place which enable staff to discuss children's needs with their parents before they join the school. This forms a secure basis of knowledge on which staff build a good understanding of each child's needs. Children with special educational needs are identified at an early stage and relevant individual learning programmes are written for them.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most adults use opportunities well to develop the children's language skills.
- Insufficient account is taken in planning tasks to extend the most able children.

Commentary

47. Children's speaking skills are well developed through all activities. Adults ask skilful questions which demand a full answer and the majority of children are keen to join in. Listening skills are good when the topic interests them, such as listening to stories. However, although planned reading activities are usually appropriate they sometimes lack sufficient challenge to engross the most able children for the whole of a planned session.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's attitudes to mathematics are good and they enjoy the activities.
- The activities are appropriate for many children's abilities, but a few of the more able children are not always sufficiently challenged.

Commentary

48. Mathematics is soundly taught. Adults make the learning of mathematics fun and the children respond enthusiastically, and most work hard and show good understanding.
49. By the end of reception most children have achieved the expected learning goals. Adults constantly question the children in a variety of ways which stimulate them to think and to understand. Games play an important part in reinforcing children's understanding and they are used well by the nursery nurse. For example, she used the painted shapes in the playground for counting practice and for matching the properties of shapes, and the children loved the element of competition to find something first! Incidental counting is used well throughout the day together with counting rhymes. Most activities are well planned but there is sometimes a lack of challenge for the more able children who say, "This is boring now" once they have completed an activity satisfactorily.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

50. No overall judgment on provision in this area is possible as no teaching was observed, but clear planning ensures that children enjoy a wide range of experiences which help them discover simple aspects of history, geography, science, technology, music and religious education. The curriculum is enriched with extra detail. For example, the children examined a wealth of exotic fruit which widened their understanding and vocabulary very well. When they tasted a piece that was unfamiliar, they were encouraged to define whether it was sweet or sour and whether they liked it or not. Photographic evidence shows children enjoying a wide variety of new experiences last year. Children use the classroom computer with ease, manipulating the mouse precisely and 'clicking' to select objects.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good provision for the development of eye-hand co-ordination skills and for being part of a team.
- There is a lack of facilities to develop gymnastic and dance skills indoors.

Commentary

51. Children move around the playground with the degree of control expected in children of this age. They are agile and show satisfactory awareness of parts of their bodies and are achieving satisfactorily. They start to be aware that their hearts beat faster after exercise. Children often share physical education lessons with pupils in Years 1 and 2, and this helps them to understand how to be part of a team during very simple games activities which they love! Their ability to control a ball in different situations such as rolling, bouncing and kicking is starting to develop well. Fine manipulative skills are also developed through cutting, gluing and mark making activities, and pictures on the walls show very good levels of control with paint brushes. The teaching is good in this area of learning.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

No overall judgment is possible on provision in creative development as too little evidence was available for judging teaching in this area. Children's work on display and in portfolios was pleasing and showed good attention to detail. Children dressed up and used the role-play area well as they pretended to be mothers going shopping.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are mature and articulate speakers.
- They read confidently and expressively.
- There are regular opportunities for drama and role play.
- Basic word building skills are well taught.
- Gifted pupils apply speaking and literacy skills through specific projects aimed at their needs.
- Insufficient guidance is given to pupils in their independent reading and how to improve their grammar.
- Poor presentation is frequently permitted in daily work in exercise books.

Commentary

52. Standards have improved since the time of the last inspection. Pupils' speaking skills are more advanced, they read more expressively and use a wider range of styles and structures in their writing. Handwriting and presentation have deteriorated, though. The strengths in questioning pupils and managing pupils have been maintained, but assessment information is not used as well as it used to be in terms of day to day feedback in lessons in Years 1 to 4.
53. By the end of Year 2, most pupils read confidently and are achieving well. All pupils use letter sounds to tackle unknown words, and most successfully work out words with expected sounds successfully. They also use pictures and context to help them when necessary, and some can apply what they already know to work out polysyllabic words. When the text is suitable, most pupils read with expression and good comprehension. Higher attaining pupils are able to predict what might happen in the story and use the contents to find relevant pages on a subject. Although lower attaining pupils use common sounds confidently to build words, they often have a more limited knowledge of letter strings such as 'tion'. Although they usually know the gist of the story, they are less confident about recalling detail. Basic skills are taught well and pupils acquire these and consolidate them regularly as a result. The emphasis on reading to understand the text is also well taught and becomes a part of pupils' everyday strategy when reading.

54. Most pupils write readily by the end of Year 2 and because they are soundly taught they are achieving satisfactorily. Most pupils can express their thoughts in a series of relevant sentences that are demarcated by full stops and capital letters, and they use capital letters for names quite reliably. Common words are usually spelt correctly and errors of grammar are unusual. Many pupils join their letters and can write neatly when that is the purpose of the work, but few do so in all their writing. Higher attainers write confidently on a range of topics, using a range of structures. They are already using more interesting vocabulary. Lower attainers are less confident about using punctuation, and make more spelling errors but are still willing to commit their thoughts to paper. Pupils are taught basic spelling skills thoroughly and apply these when tackling unknown words. However, expectations of the amount of work completed are not so high and pupils are not always as productive as they could be.
55. By the end of Year 6 pupils read confidently for a variety of purposes, and many say they like reading and read books for pleasure. Most pupils are achieving well in reading and satisfactorily in writing. Word building skills are still applied when necessary by lower attaining pupils, who often correct their own mistakes because they realise what they have read does not make sense. Average and higher attainers are able to summarise what they have read effectively. Higher attainers quickly locate relevant information by scanning, and most pupils refer to the text to make a point when discussing a particular question. Higher attainers are also able to deduce information about a likely event in a story from what they know about a character. However, pupils' use of context to work out meanings of unknown words or phrases is less well developed, and higher attaining pupils are not appreciating the depth of meaning in a whole fiction book because reading material is not always challenging enough when pupils read independently. Favourite authors and genres are given readily, but the writers they know are often too limited in terms of thought-provoking themes and rich vocabulary. Pupils write well for an appropriate range of purposes. Completed written work is usually accurately spelt and grammatically correct. Basic punctuation is usually consistent, and higher attainers use a greater variety, but few pupils are actually consistent in using all the most appropriate marks. Higher attaining pupils use more complex structures and a richer vocabulary acquired because of the effective teaching of spoken language. The teaching is satisfactory overall and better in Years 5 and 6. Marking and feedback are not sufficiently effective in ensuring pupils know how to improve their work, and not followed up thoroughly enough to see comments are used by pupils to overcome a particular weakness. For example, although handwriting is taught regularly throughout the school and pupils are able to write neatly, day-to-day presentation of work in exercise books is too often less than satisfactory. Older pupils continue to use a limited range of punctuation. Insufficient guidance is given on books read independently. As a result, pupils achieve satisfactorily overall, but aspects of their work could develop more quickly with more precise guidance. However, the National Literacy Strategy is used effectively to teach the different styles of writing, and to introduce a range of genres and texts.
56. Pupils throughout the school listen attentively and speak confidently and are achieving well in this area. Year 2 pupils already ask pertinent questions about the work they are given and readily offer an opinion. They contribute to class discussion at length when expected to do so, and read work aloud clearly and audibly. By Year 6 most pupils make relevant contributions to discussions in response to the previous comment, and many use pertinent technical vocabulary when appropriate. Higher attaining pupils can offer a generalisation to assist in moving a conversation forward. Gifted pupils confidently refute each other's arguments, contribute new information acquired from other sources outside school and offer opposing points of view to stimulate debate. Higher attaining pupils are aware of an audience, tackling formal presentations of their work and informal discussion aimed at finding out about their work with equal aplomb. The effective use of drama and role play, the active encouragement of pupils to offer opinions and points of view and high expectations of pupils' ability to acquire the correct vocabulary all contribute to pupils' good achievement in this area.
57. As the English co-ordinator was absent at the time of the inspection, it is not possible to make a judgment on her work.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

58. There are regular opportunities across the curriculum to use language and literacy skills. Not only are role play and drama used well as activities to explore topics in history and religious education across the school, but there are also useful debates and discussions during which older pupils consider thoroughly different points of view and offer their own. Writing tasks in various subjects in Years 3 to 6 reinforce literacy skills, for instance using bullet points to record key points in geography and there are high expectations that pupils will apply reading skills using a variety of sources to find out information to support work in other subjects across the school.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in Years 5 and 6 helps pupils to recover ground lost lower in the school.
- Test results are generally lower in mathematics than in literacy.
- Samples of work indicate that not all teachers challenge different groups of pupils accurately.

Commentary

59. Standards have risen since the time of the last inspection. Test results fluctuate from year to year due to variations in the ability levels of the small number of pupils concerned, but they are generally lower than in literacy. Standards achieved by pupils in Year 2 in the 2003 national tests were very high, and in relation to their attainment on entry they achieved very well. Pupils in the current Year 2 are achieving satisfactorily but test results may not be as high next year due to the lower starting point of pupils in this group. Pupils in Year 6 in 2003 achieved below average results but the current Year 6 are set to reach above average results and pupils are achieving satisfactorily overall but with significant differences between higher and average attaining pupils and those lower attainers whose progress has been slowed by inconsistent teaching during staff absences. The 2003 results were partly due to the quality of teaching in some lower year groups. Samples of work from last year identify that, in some year groups, work was not broken into tasks of differing challenge to suit the spectrum of ability to be found among those pupils. In one class, on many occasions, all pupils had attempted the same tasks. Lower attaining pupils had often failed to understand the work well enough to become competent. Good teaching in the top class helped pupils to recover lost ground but could not compensate completely despite additional support and targeted intervention programmes. Pupils who had experienced a succession of temporary teachers in the Years 3 to 5 often had limited understanding of how the number system works. Test results this year are likely to be higher due to the number of gifted and talented pupils who have been identified in the present Year 6, but there are still a number of pupils whose mathematical understanding is below the level expected for their year group. Most pupils in Year 6 know their multiplication tables and use the four rules confidently when doing calculations, but average and lower attaining pupils find them difficult to apply in practical situations. Most pupils use decimals to two and three places and understand equivalent fractions.
60. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 3 and 4 and good for Years 5 and 6. Teachers use the National Numeracy Strategy appropriately. In the Year 5/6 class the teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and usually plan suitable tasks for different groups. This allows pupils to work at their own levels and to make satisfactory progress. For example in a lesson in Year 6, higher attaining and gifted pupils found the mode¹, median² and range and interpret resultant graphs of footballers' goal records, while the average pupils worked with teacher

¹ the most frequent number

² the number in the middle

support on a simpler task. The lower attaining pupils were given valuable help by a teaching assistant as they catalogued simple information about hair and eye colour found in the group. By the end of the session, all groups had achieved a satisfactory amount of accurate work, and understood clearly what they had been doing.

61. Whole class sessions, at the start and end of lessons, are less challenging for the whole range of abilities and teachers do not always use strategies which involve all members of the class. Good use is made of the teaching assistant at the top of the school who gives discrete and valuable help in class to lower attaining pupils, and additional sessions outside the classroom. A group of pupils in the top class receive valuable additional tuition using information and communications technology as a tool for learning. The headteacher as co-ordinator provides very good leadership. Her knowledge and expertise have ensured that teaching and planning are carefully monitored. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and provide useful tracking data to map pupils' progress, but the information is not used effectively in all classes to ensure work is matched to pupils' precise needs.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62. Satisfactory progress has been made in developing numeracy across the curriculum. Pupils have an increasing awareness of dates and their chronological order in history, and in information and communication technology there are good opportunities for them to transfer data onto a variety of graphs. Measurements are used appropriately in science and geography, and scientific data is recorded in graphs when necessary.

SCIENCE

63. No lessons were observed during the inspection because of the way the curriculum is organised, but pupils' work, teachers' planning and the co-ordinator's monitoring were scrutinised. Standards in science are average in the Year 2 but above average by the end Year 6. This shows that standards have risen at the end of Year 6 since the last inspection. Year 2 pupils have appropriate scientific knowledge and carry out practical investigations satisfactorily. They record their work in simple tables and on worksheets. They are able to recall significant facts and apply them to work in progress, but are seldom challenged to generalise their learning. While Year 1 pupils achieve well, the work often fails to challenge Year 2 pupils in the same class. Greater challenge in Years 3 to 6 results in above average results in Year 6, although some lower attaining pupils are not able to make the transition confidently from work done in Years 1 and 2 to the more challenging work in Year 3 onwards and fail to understand some key scientific principles. Because the current Year 6 contains a significant number of gifted pupils standards are higher since these pupils are already working at level 5, and are targeted to reach level 6 through the work being planned at the local grammar school. While this group and higher attaining pupils generalise results, use the correct scientific vocabulary and make sensible predictions, a proportion of lower attainers and average attainers in Years 3 to 5 fail to record results and draw relevant conclusions from their investigative work. As in mathematics, this affects their understanding and results in some underachievement. Pupils with special educational needs are usually well supported by adults and make steady progress.
64. By blocking the work into units and teaching the subject all afternoon for several days a week, science actually receives less than average time (compared with most schools) overall, and, when planning lessons for younger pupils, it becomes more difficult to build in enough variety to sustain pupils' concentration. As a result some work is extended over an afternoon when it would be more satisfactorily taught in a single lesson. However, this blocking does enable older pupils to pursue an investigation fully and younger pupils to undertake relevant fieldwork such as looking at habitats in the local spinney. Where planning fails to take sufficient account of the two year groups in each class, work covered is often the same for all pupils. Despite this, work is not always necessarily harder in older age groups or when topics are revisited and assessment is not used to match tasks as, for example, when recording parts of the flowering plant. Even investigative skills are similar for all pupils in the class. Assessment information is

not used enough to ensure work matches the different needs within each class, and builds securely on previous learning. Some useful independent tasks such as the 'Seed diary' in Years 1 and 2 does provide suitable open-ended work and has the potential to enable teachers to plan more effectively for the different needs in the class. Moreover, cross-curricular links make the work relevant and meaningful to pupils. For example, discussion of fruits, including the way seeds and stones grow inside them in design and technology helped pupils to think about the structure of fruit.

65. Although no science lessons were observed, there are some shortcomings in the teaching evident from pupils' exercise books. Pupils' presentation, particularly in terms of producing neat well-ordered accounts of their work supported by clear scientific diagrams, is often weak. Although some teachers give effective feedback including questions to follow up and guidance on how to improve, much work receives no more than an acknowledgement from the teacher to show it has been seen. The spelling of key scientific terms goes uncorrected by some teachers, so errors persist.
66. Because the headteacher is co-ordinator for science there is a clear overview of how pupils are doing through regular tracking of progress and steps are being taken in Years 5 and 6 to assist lower attaining pupils to understand better. She has taken the innovative steps to arrange special provision for the gifted pupils. She is also aware of how to make effective use of the blocked sessions, and has been instrumental in promoting more practical work. She thus provides good leadership on how the subject should develop.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

67. No specific information and communication technology lessons were observed during the inspection so it is not possible to judge teaching. However, lessons in other subjects conducted in the computer suite showed the level of pupils' skills and confidence and samples of work and presentations by pupils gave the breadth of work covered. Standards in Year 2 are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. By Year 6 standards are above average and most pupils achieve well. The oldest pupils create spreadsheets and gifted and higher attaining pupils produce databases independently and select appropriate graphs to display their findings. Pupils are confident about accessing programs, saving files. All pupils in Year 5 /6 use a range of presentation skills using publishing and word processing programs, and when suitable incorporating images via the digital camera. They can also use hyperlinks to provide routes through their information. Gifted pupils confidently use *PowerPoint* to give a presentation on the spinney project, including a range of visual effects. Higher attaining pupils also realise the importance and usefulness of information and communication technology for finding information on a wide range of topics, and know when it is more useful than other sources of information. Higher attaining Year 3/4 pupils use information and communication technology to create booklets about Roman roads to record work in history. They use a range of menus and icons to edit the text and present their work attractively including changing font and colour and importing 'clipart'. Meanwhile lower attaining peers find relevant facts and edit their work with support. From information in their work Year 2 pupils have done some simple classification to understand sorting for databases, changed font and colour in word processing and graphics programs, produced simple block graphs and used the *Roamer* to travel simple tracks.
68. Although pupils in Years 3 to 6 use information and communication technology across the curriculum, it is not sufficiently well used as a tool for learning, or for developing independence across the school. Even though the computer suite is timetabled for them to do so, Year 1 and 2 pupils do not use it regularly and records of work done in information and communication technology are very limited. Moreover, some completed work is identical for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils irrespective of age or ability. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 use information and communication technology more regularly, but not all cross-curricular work is accurate, though. Use of features such as spell check is not automatic, and information obtained from CD-ROM and Internet sources is too often downloaded verbatim and printed unedited.

69. Because the co-ordinator is only employed part-time, she has a limited amount of time to develop the subject, but her leadership is satisfactory. She has planned the work across the school and through monitoring of the work produced has an overview of standards that is being used to take appropriate action to improve provision.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

70. Information and communication technology is regularly and appropriately used by pupils in Years 3 to 6 to produce a range of brochures, posters, graphs and pictures, including digital photographs, to support their work in literacy, history, science, religious education and personal, social and health education. The Year 5/6 work provides practice at using many skills and enables pupils to produce polished pieces of work. Gifted pupils are often able to identify when information and communication technology is the best medium for a particular project and can use it flexibly. During the inspection, for instance, pupils had removed sound effects from a *PowerPoint* presentation because they thought they were inappropriate for the occasion when demonstrating to the inspectors.

HUMANITIES

Religious education is reported in full below. It was not possible to see sufficient lessons to make provision judgements in history and geography, so the subjects were sampled.

Geography

71. A study of work shows standards in geography are average overall as they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils acquire the appropriate skills and knowledge required by the National Curriculum. Where work relates to the locality, or to specific geographical features such as rivers or traffic, pupils are given useful opportunities to undertake fieldwork enabling them to understand the relevance of what they are learning. Pupils in Year 1/2 have, for instance, recorded the desirable and less attractive features of Little Bytham, while Year 3/4 pupils have taken relevant measurements of the river and Year 5/6 pupils have looked in detail at the traffic and suggested solutions for making the village safer. This work is often backed up by map work so that pupils also understand the importance of maps in recording information about a location.
72. However, because work is on a two year cycle and taught in blocks pupils' geographical skills and knowledge are not built up systematically, but learnt in bursts. As a result, lower attaining and younger pupils sometimes struggle to understand some of the work. While some open-ended independent activities, such as producing booklets on family holiday destinations, redresses this situation by enabling pupils to work at their own level, such opportunities are rare and more commonly all pupils tackle the same tasks. Teachers' marking (even on the open-ended tasks) does not give guidance on how well the pupil is acquiring geographical skills, nor on how to improve further.
73. The co-ordinator monitors provision, but has not had an impact on standards and has not identified the most important issues for the development of the subject. Assessment reveals what pupils have learnt in relation to the planned objectives, but insufficient use is made of the information.

History

74. Attainment is at the expected level by the end of Year 2 and pupils have started to build a satisfactory base of skills and knowledge. The standards are similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection. They are aware of differences between old and modern houses and the furniture contained in the kitchens, and are clear in their views about what they like about long ago and the present day. Pupils have learned about Louis Braille and become aware of the boon of the Braille machine. There is however, no evidence that pupils recognise differences in

the way the past can be presented. Pupils in Year 1 follow the same work and there is limited evidence that tasks are adapted to cater for each age group. Pupils with special educational needs follow discussions well, but struggle with written work. Pupils' achievement last year was satisfactory overall.

75. Attainment is at the expected level by the end of Year 6. Pupils have developed skills to a satisfactory level and have an increasing knowledge of aspects of European and British history. In discussion, pupils in Year 6 were able to order civilisations chronologically and talk about the similarities between Greek and Roman gods. Opportunities were missed last year to encourage pupils to use their writing skills appropriately to record their work. Last year's samples of work from the Year 3/ 4 class indicate that little emphasis was laid on developing pupils' historical skills and that tasks were not devised to give more challenge to the older or more able pupils. Pupils used their geographical knowledge to situate past civilisations on maps.
76. Teaching and learning in the one lesson observed were satisfactory. The lesson lasted all afternoon and the planned activities, which were pleasant rather than challenging for the different ability groups, were stretched to fill the time. This resulted in some pupils losing focus during the second hour. Good opportunities were included for pupils to do research on the Internet, and the higher attaining pupils practised their information and technology skills well in order to produce booklets about Roman roads. Pupils with special educational needs made similar progress to the rest of the class but at a lower level.
77. Leadership and management of the subject are sound. The programme of work is taken from a recommended scheme and has been amplified by the co-ordinator to identify learning objectives, but outcomes are not monitored to see how fully planning has been followed. Assessment reveals how pupils perform, but insufficient use is made of the information to ensure all pupils make best progress.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is wide and includes useful multicultural aspects.
- Topics are covered in depth in lessons.
- Teaching and learning are generally good.
- Written work is often limited in quality and quantity.

Commentary

78. Last year at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, samples of work indicate that pupils' attainment was at expected levels and that teaching was at least sound. Written work reveals that pupils had a useful knowledge of aspects of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. Pupils' achievement was satisfactory. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
79. This year pupils in Years 1 and 2 have been writing prayers of thanks inspired by harvest time, but extending into wider thanks. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are considering the Bible as a Christian text and how it helps believers. Two lessons were observed. The quality of teaching was good in one and very good in the other. In both lessons, pupils showed good levels of enthusiasm and knowledge. Teachers used questions well which extended their pupils to consider aspects beyond the immediate and superficial. For example, pupils in Year 2 thought about harvest from the point of view of field mice. Good relationships and high expectations of good behaviour encouraged the older pupils to be confident as they discussed what people gain from reading the Bible. A few pupils who are agnostic put their views clearly and were listened to courteously by the rest of the class. Pupils with special educational needs are well included in discussions.

Pupils have opportunities to practise their writing skills, but there are no systematic reminders to write neatly or to use dictionaries, and the work produced last year was often thin in content. The use of pupils' information and technology skills is still being developed and is not much in evidence in religious education.

80. Leadership and management of the subject are generally satisfactory but monitoring of outcomes lacks rigour. The locally Agreed Syllabus has been carefully adapted to the school's needs. Because assessment is limited planned work does not regularly ensure all pupils make best progress, especially in recording their work.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Design and technology and physical education are reported in full below. Art and design was sampled.

Art and design

81. It was not possible to judge teaching and learning in the subject, although the one lesson observed was satisfactory. There were pleasing examples of pupils' art and design work displayed around the school. Last year, older pupils practised the technique of enlarging and painted very finely detailed reproductions of a number of landscapes artists' work. Younger pupils have painted portraits. Sketch books have been used to capture body movements and to practise colour mixing but there is scope to increase their use.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **sound**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils now undertake regular, worthwhile projects resulting in completed artefacts.
- Resultant artefacts are of average quality, and sometimes better.
- Planning for design and technology still has some shortcomings.

Commentary

82. Design and technology has improved since the last inspection when it was a key issue. Standards are now average in Year 2 and Year 6 and have improved since the last inspection when they were judged to be unsatisfactory. Pupils now undertake worthwhile projects which enable them to consider the background information they need before planning what to do, learn suitable skills and make a completed artefact. They achieve satisfactorily. In Years 5 and 6 pupils consider a vast range of bread products before learning two methods for making bread (by hand and using a bread maker) and baking their own, then considering basic recipes and added ingredients to enable them to plan a recipe of their own. Pupils are very well taught, using a range of methods including demonstration and considering recipes from the Internet. They learn skills in producing dough and knowledge of ingredients quickly and effectively due to the efficient organisation and brisk pace of the lessons. They also learn to work as a team, negotiating fair shares in the work, and apply what they know confidently. Year 1 and 2 pupils are satisfactorily taught. They are given relevant information such as the need to wash and peel and remove stones from fruit, and the processes of making a fruit salad. As a result, they understand the range of flavours, colours and textures available because they have tasted a variety of fruit.
83. However, the actual lesson observed was largely an art activity. The lesson lacked pace because it was taking a whole afternoon when the content could have been covered as effectively in much less time. Planning of work to fit several whole afternoon sessions for

younger pupils sometimes results in this slow pace, in low productivity and the incorporation of activities which are not truly design and technology.

84. Pupils are not actually regularly designing their own artefacts when undertaking certain projects. In the Year 3 and 4 work, for instance, the money containers were made from an identically sized piece of fabric, folded over and sewn. The only differences were in the type of stitching and the fastener used. Nevertheless, they were fit for their purpose, being closely stitched, and most were well finished. Although by Year 6 pupils design and evaluate their products and suggest alternative ways of making them, or improvements needed, younger pupils do not do so regularly. The only evidence of evaluation of finished work was of Year 5 and 6 work on shelters and fairground rides. Pupils had rightly identified the need for more accurate measurement and amendments in design to enable making to be easier to carry out.
85. The purpose of design and technology is not always considered when planning work. For instance, the shelters made by Year 5/6 were ostensibly for hikers on mountains but were constructed from straws and pipe cleaners and Year 1/2 made puppets on which the only design was decoration.
86. The headteacher, as co-ordinator, has ensured that design and technology provision and standards have improved, and sets a very good example in planning and teaching the subject for colleagues to follow but other teachers' practice has not reached the level of her work.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is generally good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes, are well behaved and eager to learn.
- The school does its best to provide gymnastics and dance outside, and focuses on developing pupils' skills in sport.

Commentary

87. The only lessons observed were games; no gymnastics, athletics or dance was seen. Teachers are well organised and teach sports with enthusiasm. They are knowledgeable and emphasise the need to build skills which they teach in a lively manner. This in turn entuses pupils who concentrate hard and try to improve their performance. Many written comments on what pupils liked most about school on the pre-inspection questionnaire were positive about provision for physical education. Classes are well managed and teachers have high expectations of good behaviour. They stress the importance of a safe learning environment and pupils respond well and use the space sensibly which reduces the risk of accidents. Learning resources are used well and tasks which build skills are varied frequently so that pupils' interest is maintained. The accommodation restricts the scope of the curriculum as the Year 5 and 6 classroom is the only indoor space available, and this is too small for older pupils to do gymnastics or certain types of dance.
88. Overall standards have been maintained since the last inspection, although gymnastics and dance were observed then, whereas in the latest inspection all lessons observed were in games. Standards in ball activities are above the expected level by the end of Year 2, and this good achievement continues in the older classes. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 understand the basic rules for netball and are becoming proficient at passing the ball, while pupils in Years 5 and 6 are practising rugby passes. They adapt skills learned in one sport such as dodging to another sport with ease. All pupils in Years 3 to 6 go swimming regularly and many pupils swim the expected distance of 25 metres before the end of their time in Year 6. In the summer term, older pupils train hard in athletics and practise to compete in the cross-country championships

between many local schools. Last year they came in third.

89. The co-ordinator, who is the headteacher, is well qualified to lead the subject. She is knowledgeable, a good practitioner herself and keen to carry the subject forward. The initiative of providing bats, balls and skipping ropes at playtimes has brought the added benefit of improving pupils' performance in games. There have been satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. There is now a scheme of work which ensures that pupils build steadily on their skills and have as wide an experience as possible of all aspects of physical education. The extra-curricular activities and opportunities for competitive sport enhance provision and are appreciated by pupils and parents.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	4
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).

