

INSPECTION REPORT

CHIPPING ONGAR PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ongar

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114948

Headteacher: Caroline Dalton

Lead inspector: Brian Griffiths

Dates of inspection: 9th – 11th February 2004.

Inspection number: 255789

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	257
School address:	Greensted Road Ongar Essex
Postcode:	CM5 9LA
Telephone number:	01277 363789
Fax number:	01277 365696
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Debbie Klee
Date of previous inspection:	22 nd June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This average-sized school serves the small town of Chipping Ongar, which is about twelve miles west of Chelmsford in Essex. Children are admitted to full-time schooling at the beginning of the term in which they reach the age of five: thus the oldest children start full-time in September; those with birthdays after December 31st start part-time in the September of the same school year. There are 35 children in the reception class, of whom 15 are attending mornings only, and 222 in the rest of the school. At six per cent, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The great majority of pupils are white British, with small numbers of Indian, African, mixed white/black Caribbean, white/black African and white/Asian. All but two pupils speak English as their first language and these two are fluent in English. A below average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. There are 25 pupils on the register of special educational needs of whom five have statements. Most special needs are either language related, social and emotional or moderate learning difficulties; two have physical difficulties. The overall attainment of children on entry is around average. Almost 10 per cent of pupils leave at times other than the usual and a similar proportion arrives from other schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2607	Brian Griffiths	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage; Mathematics; art and design; citizenship; music.
9348	Mary Le Mage	Lay inspector	
29378	Ken Watson	Team inspector	Science; information and communication technology; design and technology; physical education; special educational needs.
29426	David Grimwood	Team inspector	English; geography; history; religious education

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International
Upperton House
The Avenue
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 3YB

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a sound education. Although there are weaknesses, a thoughtful start has been made on making improvements. After a period when standards were lower they are now rising. However, the school is underachieving because standards are too low in Years 1 and 2 and could be better by Year 6. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory taken overall; standards in Year 2 are below average but by Year 6 are now around average. Satisfactory teaching is characterised by good relationships so that pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning, to other pupils and to adults. The school is well placed to make the necessary improvements because staff and governors are responding enthusiastically to the headteacher's good leadership, clear sense of purpose and accurate identification of areas for improvement. Parents and pupils value the school and **it provides satisfactory value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- In Years 3 to 6 pupils achieve well in English.
- Standards in Year 6 should be better, and have been so in the recent past.
- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and standards are below average.
- At all stages pupils have good attitudes and behave well.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
- Although teaching has some strengths, it does not often enough meet the very differing academic needs of pupils in each class.
- The headteacher's leadership is good; at all other levels teachers have not been able to develop the necessary management skills, or have been here for too short a time, to make real impacts on their subjects.

Although it is now improving, the school is still not as good as it was when it was last inspected. Standards fell in 2001 and have not yet recovered fully. However, the school is well on the way to establishing a renewed sense of purpose, and there is a good atmosphere for learning. Fewer lessons are taught well than previously.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, although it varies from stage to stage and test scores have varied a great deal in the past few years. Children in the Reception Year achieve satisfactorily and reach the national early learning goals for their age in all areas of learning excepting personal, social and emotional development in which they exceed the national expectation. In Years 1 and 2 achievement slips and is unsatisfactory; standards at the age of seven are below average in reading, writing and mathematics; standards are average in speaking and listening and in science. Average standards are reached in religious education. In aspects of music and art standards are above average throughout the school. Between Years 3 and 6 achievement is satisfactory. At the age of eleven standards are above average in English overall and in reading and writing. In speaking and listening standards are average. Pupils reach average standards in mathematics, science, religious

education and history; in the light of their good standards in English and measures that are being taken to improve all-round performance the school is in a good position to improve on these.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. **Their** attitudes to school and their behaviour are good. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching quality is satisfactory with strengths in the fostering of good relationships and behaviour and in the use of, and contributions made by, support assistants. On occasions teaching does not meet the needs of all pupils in classes all of which contain pupils at very different standards, so that learning is not as secure as it should be.

The curriculum is satisfactory in its quality and range. However, the statutory requirement to provide either swimming or outdoor and adventurous activities is not fully met. Good provision is made for pupils' health and welfare, and careful monitoring is used to give good quality support and guidance. This is one reason that academic standards are rising. Links with pupils' homes are good, allowing parents to contribute well to pupils' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is soundly led and managed. The headteacher's good leadership is creating a climate of renewed enthusiasm in other managers and coordinators. Governors are committed to the school and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are supportive of the school and value the accessibility of staff. The great majority of pupils enjoy school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve pupils' standards, especially in Years 1 and 2 and in mathematics and science at all stages.
- Ensure that teaching more frequently is matched to what pupils already know, understand and can do.
- Ensure that managers below headteacher level acquire and use the skills needed in order to contribute fully to making improvements.

and, to meet statutory requirement, provide either swimming or outdoor and adventurous activities within Years 3 to 6.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, although unsatisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Standards are average at the end of reception, below average in Year 2 and average in Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 6 pupils reach above average standards in English, but could do better in mathematics and science.
- Throughout the school standards are rising from a base that has been too low.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they often receive good support.
- The standards reached by pupils in Years 1 and 2 are too low.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.5 (15.9)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.5 (14.1)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.2 (16.8)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 38 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.3 (27.6)	26.8(27.0)
mathematics	27.4 (27.5)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.8 (29.4)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 43 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. After above average standards for some years, Year 6 test scores reached a low point in 2001 from which they have almost but not entirely recovered. The current Year 6 is on track to reach above average standards in English, largely because the school's recent extra emphasis on reading and writing is bringing about improvements. Standards in mathematics are average overall. A good number of higher attaining pupils are responding well to the demanding work they do with a support assistant who is a specialist mathematician, but a larger than usual number of pupils with special educational needs keeps overall standards at average levels. Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average in science, religious education and history. In many lessons, particularly in science, teaching does not fully draw on what pupils, with the wide range of ages and academic needs in each class, already know, understand and can do. Singing is enthusiastic, rhythmical and tuneful and in art many pupils have good sketching and drawing skills.

2. Year 2 standards are recovering more slowly than Year 6. They are below average in English (although speaking and listening skills are at average levels), mathematics and science. As these pupils entered Year 1 with average levels of attainment, this represents unsatisfactory progress; it is largely the result of teaching that does not regularly match work well to the wide range of attainment in each of the two Year 1 and 2 classes. For example, each class contains pupils with reading,

speaking and listening skills that are close to those of five-year-olds at one end and to nine-year-olds at the other. The difficulties inherent in giving clear spoken and written explanations and instructions to such a wide range are not usually overcome.

3. Children in the reception year make satisfactory progress overall. Above nationally expected standards are reached in personal, social and emotional development whilst the nationally expected early learning goals are met in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. However, morning and afternoon sessions are very different. In the morning sessions children achieve well because a good number of adults create a vibrant learning atmosphere in which children approach learning with enthusiasm and help is always on hand when needed. Well-skilled parent volunteers often make valuable contributions. In Spring-term afternoons, with fewer children – but still around 20 - only one adult is usually available. Progress is less good because individual needs cannot be met, especially as the teacher understandably concentrates on children’s safety and welfare and does not intervene in learning at anything like the rate in morning sessions.

4. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs achieve well because expert teaching in groups focuses well on their needs. Their progress is steady when they work in class lessons without additional support; in these, work is often not well-differentiated for them and their learning loses some momentum.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities

5. Pupils’ attendance and punctuality are satisfactory and their attitudes and behaviour are good throughout the school. They understand and accept well, their responsibilities as part of the school community and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are responding very well to newer responsibilities.
- The pupils’ knowledge of other cultures is very limited.
- Pupils have good relationships with others.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.0	School data	0.7
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

6. Pupils throughout the school have good attitudes to their work and behave well at all times. They show respect for all the adults they meet and try their best to comply with the wishes of these adults. However, they have limited opportunities to make choices. Responsibilities are often assigned, rather than chosen, or used as privileges for having done well in lessons. When there are opportunities to show initiative, pupils respond very well. A clear example of this is the enthusiasm and interest pupils throughout the school are bringing to the development of the class and school councils. In designated lessons and in informal discussions, pupils demonstrate an eagerness to be involved, and identify a range of topics they would like to discuss with a view to improvement. They suggest innovative, sensible solutions to some of the issues and the older pupils are beginning to realise there are different ways to resolve issues where there is not unanimous agreement. After a lengthy discussion about ‘voting’ to reach a decision it was exciting to hear a pupil who had been very quiet to that point say ‘We could try and find a compromise’.

7. Pupils' cultural development is limited, especially in the area of understanding the multi-cultural nature of life in Britain today. Pupils have relatively few visits out of school and insufficient use is made of visitors to build rich cultural experiences for the pupils. They have knowledge of other faiths and the associated cultures through their religious education lessons and school assemblies, but very little first hand experience of any of these cultures. In addition, the oldest pupils have few opportunities to consider major ethical issues and express their views.

8. Pupils take pleasure in the achievements of other pupils in their class and are always polite to each other and adults, including visitors. In some groups they spontaneously applaud the achievements of their classmates. They work well together when paired for activities. Older pupils, on a rota basis, play with younger pupils at lunchtime and one class is sensibly debating whether they should ask the school council to investigate ways of increasing this integration.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

9. The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. At all stages a sound curriculum is taught satisfactorily. Assessment arrangements have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

10. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The arrangements for assessing pupils' progress vary between subjects in their effectiveness but are sound overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching successfully encourages good behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Assessment is used well to direct learning in English and mathematics and for pupils with special educational needs.
- Writing skills are taught well.
- There is very good support outside lessons for special needs pupils.
- Planning does not always cater for the wide range of ages and abilities in each class.
- Teachers are not always secure in their subject knowledge.

Commentary

11. Throughout the school, relationships between pupils and staff have a positive effect on learning. Pupils listen well to suggestions and do their best to carry out the work assigned to them. They enjoy working together and co-operate well in pairs or small groups.

12. The best lessons were characterised by a sense of excitement and fun that stemmed not only from the careful choice of resources and the practical approach to the learning but also to the teachers' dramatic use of voice and the pace of their explanations.

13. Assessment systems are well established in English and mathematics. Teachers keep a close track of pupils' progress, particularly in English. This helps them to plan appropriate and challenging tasks and leads to good achievement in this subject in the later years at school. Lessons in English and mathematics for small groups of both the highest and lowest attaining pupils in Years 3 to 6 are characterised by tasks that are matched very well to their needs and give good learning opportunities. In whole-class lessons, work is sometimes less well matched to needs that, in the mixed-age-group classes, are very broad ranging. The target setting for pupils with special educational needs is particularly good, and when, as is often the case, these targets are addressed in a systematic manner by support staff, learning is very good.

14. The recent emphasis on reading and writing skills has led to an all round improvement, and standards are now above average by the end of Year 6. Teachers are aware of the need to promote writing skills in all areas of the curriculum, and teaching ensures that pupils' work in such subjects as history and science is usually neat and well organised.

15. In many lessons, teachers do not find it easy to plan for the wide age and ability range in each class. Where groups of similar ability are formed, for instance in English and mathematics, pupils learn well because they are working at an appropriate level and building on previous learning. In whole-class sessions, too often pupils are all given a very similar task that leaves the less able floundering and fails to challenge the more able.

16. Teachers are not always confident in their subject knowledge. For instance, in science lessons, there were occasions when imprecise use of specific scientific vocabulary led to confusion and hindered learning. Teachers plan together, but the planning is not rigorous enough to ensure that skills are systematically developed through the school. Lesson objectives are often too general to be useful in focussing pupils' minds on new learning and areas for improvement and it is often not clear what new skills and understanding are expected from the older year group in the class.

17. Most lessons seen during the inspection were broadly satisfactory, but only about a third were better than that; both teaching and learning are less good than at the time of the last inspection.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in [number] lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	2	6	14	2	0	0

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

The curriculum

18. The quality and range of the curriculum and the opportunities for enrichment are satisfactory. Accommodation and learning resources are good and meet well the demands of the curriculum

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Neither swimming nor outdoor and adventurous activities is provided.
- The programme for personal, social and health education is developing well but is not fully in place.
- The difficulties of providing a demanding curriculum for pupils in the mixed age-group classes are not always resolved.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for.
- Too little use is made of educational visits or visiting experts.
- Teaching assistants are usually well briefed, have valuable skills and often contribute well.

Commentary

19. Curriculum provision is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements except that the school does not provide either swimming or outdoor and adventurous activities. The school has the necessary resources to provide both of these; attempts to provide swimming are well advanced and the provision of outdoor and adventurous activities would not be difficult. The school has suitable programmes of work for each subject of the National Curriculum, having adopted and, in some cases, adapted nationally recognised material. The interest engendered by some subjects is often used effectively to enhance work in others. For example, pupils' interest and skills in sketching are used well to improve understandings in religious education, science and history. The religious education programme properly follows the locally agreed syllabus. Programmes of work are carefully

designed to facilitate both full coverage of each subject and also the systematic development of pupils' skills. In order to cope with having two age groups in each class, the school has adopted a two-year rolling programme in most subjects. The result is that, for example, when Year 4 pupils are following the Year 3 programme and activities are not planned precisely to build on the earlier learning of pupils, it can lead to the work being too easy for some or too hard for others. This situation is often most difficult in Years 1 and 2 where pupils' abilities to work independently, and to understand written and oral instruction, are not as well established as in the classes of older pupils. After careful assessments of pupils' achievement, the school has introduced some new approaches in order to raise standards. For example, an innovative reading programme has been introduced, initially for younger pupils and is helping to improve reading standards. Material to raise the achievement of boys has been identified and brought into use; this is also having a positive impact and no significant differences were observed between the standards reached by boys and girls.

20. The programme for personal, social and health education is thorough but is not yet formally adopted. However, the principles underpinning the approach are already having a positive impact on provision and so on pupils' achievement. There is a suitable policy for sex education and the subject is appropriately and sensitively handled.

21. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall with some very good features. Individual education plans are soundly based and benefit from the inputs of the special needs coordinator, teachers and support assistants. Support outside class lessons is very good, with skilful work from teaching assistants; they make good contributions to assessing pupils' progress and planning the work they are to do, as well as making learning interesting and successful. However, when pupils with special needs are working without support alongside others in their class, their progress is less certain; they sometimes struggle with work that is aimed at older and higher attaining pupils.

22. Extra curricular activities have not been maintained at the level found at the last inspection but they are satisfactory. Although aimed, almost entirely, at pupils in Years 3 to 6 they are popular and directly support the curriculum, particularly in sport and music. There is a good social aspect to the activities with pupils often having refreshments before they begin. Although there are some examples of educational visits, for example, a valuable visit to a Hindu centre as part of work in religious education, there is generally insufficient use of visits and visitors to enrich, and bring relevance to, learning.

23. The accommodation is spacious and supports the curriculum well. The large hall and good outside facilities allow for a range of physical activities. The school is able to boost interest in reading and research skills by having both fiction and non-fiction libraries. The information and communication technology suite is large enough to allow for whole class sessions. Resources are generally in good condition, plentiful and conveniently stored for easy access; as a result they are frequently used to give effective support to learning.

24. A good range of academic expertise exists among staff and it is being augmented by newer appointments. Teaching assistants offer good support to pupils not only to those with special educational needs. They also support the curriculum well through, for example, providing informed help in mathematics; higher attaining Year 6 pupils are benefiting greatly from this. As a result of such expert help in English, science and mathematics a substantial proportion of pupils is on track to reach levels usually associated with pupils two years older.

Care, guidance and support

25. The steps taken by the school to ensure the care, welfare, health and safety of its pupils are good, as is the level of support, advice and guidance provided. The involvement of pupils in the work and development of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The involvement of pupils in reviews of their progress supports learning.
- Pupils' good relationships with adults build trust.
- There is no systematic monitoring of the personal development of pupils.
- The thorough approach to the development of class and school councils benefits all pupils.

Commentary

26. The school is increasingly involving pupils in understanding how well they are learning. Each pupil agrees targets for improvement with their class teachers. These are usually focused on making progress in English and mathematics but also, for those who would benefit, include targets about behaviour, in general, or in specific situations. These targets are referred to regularly and naturally by pupils as well as staff. Meetings are arranged between the teacher, the parent and the pupil, who is fully involved in the review of their progress against their targets. This is a very good vehicle for ensuring trust and consistency between all the parties concerned and is very supportive of the development of pupils. Throughout the school the vast majority of pupils say there is at least one adult in the school in whom they feel they can confide. This is a clear indication of the very good relationships between pupils and adults.

27. Pupils and their capabilities are well known by all the adults they work with. However, there is no systematic system in the school to monitor the personal development of pupils. As a result, where behaviour or personal development targets are agreed with a pupil they tend to address inappropriate behaviour, rather than extend their attitudes towards their learning, or, for example, improve co-operative and collaborative skills.

28. The school is investing significant time in the thorough implementation of school and class councils. This is a major development for the school and the way in which it is being approached means it is of benefit to all pupils, not just council representatives. All pupils are receiving an in-depth introduction to the way in which school councils operate and contribute to the life of a school. They are being given the opportunity to take real responsibility and are rising to the challenge.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

29. The school has established good, effective links with the parents of its pupils. The school's links with other schools are satisfactory, as are links with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The regular access parents have to class teachers ensures early resolution of any concerns.
- Annual reports to parents on their children's progress are very detailed but difficult to understand.

Commentary

30. At the start of every day parents are welcomed into classrooms for 15 minutes. Class teachers are present and the pupils are engaged in their early morning work. This environment allows parents to see their children's work on a very regular basis or have a word with the class teacher as soon as any need may arise. It is very supportive of the well-being of pupils, for whom a parent being in school is natural and does not suggest that there is a problem. It is very helpful to both parent and teacher who can clarify possible difficulties very quickly. Parents spoken to are very supportive of this initiative and feel they are privileged to have it.

31. The school is working with two high schools to develop curriculum links in mathematics, science, ICT and business enterprise, aimed at providing valuable enrichment and challenge for pupils. The schools are currently producing plans to clarify how they will cooperate. Included in the

well-advanced plans are opportunities for Year 6 pupils to work with staff from the high schools, using resources that may well be beyond the means of this school.

32. The written information available to parents about the progress their children are making is extensive. However, the form in which it is presented makes it quite inaccessible to many parents. To begin to understand the annual report, parents need to refer to the document outlining all National Curriculum levels, in all subjects, which they are given when their child enters Key Stage 1. Then to discover exactly what topics their child has studied during the year, they need to refer to the curriculum document they are given at the beginning of each year. This is not a process which meets the needs of parents to know what their child can do and how hard they are working. However, there is one element of the reporting process which is very good. All parents receive a single sheet of paper listing the factors that are supporting their children's learning, and what may be impeding learning. This is a strength of the reporting process.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

33. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is led well by the headteacher and all others are responding with enthusiasm to new and appropriate demands. The governing body satisfactorily meets its responsibilities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All members of staff are responding well to the headteacher's high ambitions for the school.
- Coordinators of many subjects and aspects of the school's work are only just beginning to have major impacts on teaching and learning.
- The governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are committed to continual improvement.
- The school improvement plan identifies key areas for improvement but does not identify clearly enough what the benefits will be for pupils.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	679394	Balance from previous year	57008
Total expenditure	688372	Balance carried forward to the next	48030
Expenditure per pupil	2607		

34. Poor test results in 2001 affected morale, and both test scores and morale recovered only slowly. Many connected to the school now speak of a renewed vigour and sense of purpose; staff with leadership and management roles speak with enthusiasm of the new expectations of the relatively new headteacher and of their desire to contribute more fully than in the past. However, many lack experience of many of the management strategies and activities that are needed to ensure that standards are driven up at all stages. For example, subject managers have observed their colleagues teaching in the past and have then discussed the lesson with them. The new headteacher is refining techniques, so that observations focus on key areas such as the use of the final parts of lessons to summarise and consolidate the learning that has taken place. The analysis of several observations has led to the identification of whole-school strengths that are being consolidated and weaknesses that are being worked at, in some cases with outside help. The enthusiasm of staff to make these improvements and to contribute to the full process puts the school in a good position to remedy under-achievement.

35. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator sets an example of good leadership and management. The coordinator ensures that pupils are identified at an early stage and are given the appropriate help and support to enable them to achieve well. She makes sure that her own and

others' training is kept up-to-date and maintains good communication with the support agencies. A particularly effective innovation is the way she has involved pupils with statements of special educational need in organising their annual reviews. Pupils have written to, and received replies from, all those involved in the review, and have bought and organised refreshments for the occasion. This is very successful in raising pupils' self-esteem and making them feel thoroughly involved in their own learning. Pupils' needs are met well in the carefully planned withdrawal groups but less well in classes, with their wide range of attainment.

36. Governors bring to their roles a good understanding of the local community and of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They use these to act as critical friends to staff and scrutinise reports and plans with care. On occasions they accept too uncritically the reasons offered, for example, for drops in standards and have not pressed as hard as they might for a more rapid return to past high standards. However, they too are responding well to new school leadership and are rapidly embracing new approaches designed to enhance school improvement.

37. The school improvement plan is being increasingly influenced by a broader range of those connected with the school. For example, the results of surveys of parents and pupils are considered and the school and class councils are starting to make their views known. The document itself is, in most ways, well designed and lays out clearly how improvements in key areas are to be managed; it sets out chains of responsibilities and timescales that allow checking that things are on track. The plan has sections called 'success criteria' but very few of these identify with any degree of precision what the effect will be on the well-being and achievements of pupils. It is, therefore, difficult to measure success with real certainty.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Introduction

38. The majority of children start in this reception class, mornings only, in the September of the school year in which they become five. At the beginning of the term in which they reach five they begin to attend in the afternoons as well. Thus the oldest children have three full terms, morning and afternoon, in the reception class, whilst the youngest have three terms attending in the mornings, in the last one of which they also attend in the afternoons. The morning and afternoon sessions are very different. Most mornings there are around 35 pupils being taught by two teachers and at least one teaching assistant, and there are often additional, skilled, parent helpers; in the Spring-term afternoons about 20 children are taught by one teacher usually with no help.

39. Morning sessions are vibrant and exciting. Work in all areas of learning is well planned; high quality resources, that are well matched to the intended learning, are attractively laid out and ready to use; skilled and well-briefed adults ensure that children receive help when it is needed and that when the time comes they move on to the next task without lost time and with immense enthusiasm. Teaching and learning are good and often very good.

40. In the afternoons, learning slows. Children remain interested and active, but as there is less adult intervention there are fewer opportunities for even informal instruction, and less help is given when children are, for example, involved in role play, building or playing with large movable toys. Some learning takes place and on some occasions children benefit from working only with other children without adult intervention. Understandably in these circumstances, teaching has a large element of overseeing children's safety and in observing how well they apply skills acquired during morning sessions. These are useful activities but every afternoon spent on them means that too much teaching time is lost. Taken overall, learning in the afternoons is unsatisfactory. Nonetheless, most children develop good personal, social and emotional skills during their time in the reception class and in all other areas of learning they reach the national early learning goals. In all areas, teaching and learning are, on balance, satisfactory excepting in personal social and emotional development, where it is good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching assistants and volunteer parents are skilled, and are managed well by the class teachers.
- Almost all children form good relationships with adults and other children.
- Good opportunities are provided for children to work alongside others in order to help them to learn how to cooperate and take turns.

Commentary

42. The teamwork of adults working together in the morning sessions ensures that all pupils feel valued and they blossom as a result of the friendly, thoughtful inputs of all the adults. The careful deployment of other adults and thorough briefing by the class teacher ensures that work is matched well to individual needs and many opportunities are made to encourage children's concentration spans, sensitivity to the needs of others and growing self-confidence. On some occasions children's interest in learning becomes over-excitement and they guess at answers, in order to be first to

respond. In small group situations this is handled well by adults, who calm down the atmosphere and get learning back on track. A typical example of good personal development was when two boys played together with giant dominoes. They worked harmoniously for over twenty minutes, changing the nature of their tasks frequently, after chatting about what they were to do next. They were not afraid to set themselves demanding tasks and, with only a little adult intervention, they built towers, matched colours and shapes, tessellated simple shapes and tidied up after themselves. Their enjoyment was obvious to others, so that two girls joined them and were welcomed into the group. This good progress was possible because the teacher had chosen to make available a highly suitable task and trusted the children to work sensibly. With less adult involvement in the afternoon, children use and continue to develop their social skills and, for example, outdoor play with large toys is characterised by children's energy and enthusiasm, with much sharing and exchanging of equipment.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

43. Provision in communication, language and literacy is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of activities helps to develop children's skills.
- The enthusiastic use of local guidance has a strongly positive impact on children's reading
- Many morning activities foster learning but afternoon activities do so less effectively.

Commentary

44. Children learn well through the rich curriculum of the mornings. The great majority of activities are planned so that children have to listen carefully to adults and other children and respond in ways that enhance their growing language skills. This is true whatever the main focus of the activity. For example, in a lesson in the computer suite children listened carefully to the teacher's instructions and their subsequent work proved that they had understood; working in pairs they clarified what they were to do next; letter recognition was at expected levels for their age and was consolidated well. On other occasions children negotiate as they play with building materials, and as they weigh materials for baking they explain carefully what needs to be done with the flour to ensure that they have the correct amount. Children enjoy greatly the more structured work associated with 'Early Reading Research' (E.R.R.). A key feature of the approach is the short, sharp bursts of learning, and rapid fire questioning that maintains interest and so enhances progress. The use of actions to accompany particular sounds consolidates well children's memorising of relatively complex sounds. Adults are skilled in the approach and the teaching of letters, letter blends and associated words is very effective; as a result, standards are rising. In the freer play of the afternoons children continue to develop, largely because their social maturity results in them playing happily together, discussing and negotiating in small groups, so enhancing their language skills. For example, a brightly coloured playhouse was turned, after discussion, from a 'castle' into an 'ice-cream van'. The language associated with buying and selling was then used enthusiastically. However, in other cases the lack of adult support results in progress being slower than it should be.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

45. Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children' mathematical understandings are carefully and systematically built on.
- Good use is made of parent helpers.
- On occasions over-exuberance slows learning.

Commentary

46. The careful assessments made of children's progress are used to ensure that new learning builds on firm foundations. Activities are well-planned and good use is made of bright and attractive resources that fit well with the intended learning. On many mornings parent helpers make good contributions in activities such as baking jam tarts. In one such lesson children were successfully encouraged to estimate quantities and use the finger on weighing scales to accurately weigh ingredients such as flour. One child read the scale 'Three'; she knew that four units were needed (although the units were not named) and she looked at the heap already on the scale and said 'We need a big bit'. Formal instruction also makes solid contributions to learning and work usually progresses well. On some occasions pupils are so eager to contribute and please the teacher that they guess wildly at answers rather than consider the question. Teachers handle this successfully so that learning continues at a satisfactory pace. On one such occasion almost all children counted objects confidently up to 10 and many up to 20; two higher attainers were able to use a number line to count back one from 24 to get 23.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's interest in how things happen or work is effectively fostered.
- Good use is made of the computer suite, although teachers are not always secure in their own understandings.

Commentary

48. Many of the reception class activities draw on children's curiosity and enjoyment when, for example, they investigate how constructional toys fit together and how various shapes can be built into two or three dimensional structures. Children approach this area with much enthusiasm and will naturally, for example, pause and point out to their friends how the trailer is fastened to the trike and how it could be uncoupled. Many understand at an appropriate level some of the differences between past and present – as when a four-year-old says 'My big brother used to be little too when he was in my class'. Focused teaching about computers in the computer suite encourages interest and understanding so that many children can control the mouse and begin to match text with pictures. On some occasions teachers lack experience and, therefore, expertise, so that full use cannot be made of otherwise valuable experiences.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

49. Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many children handle large moving toys (such as trikes) confidently and safely.
- Most children manipulate blocks and construction materials accurately and with care.

Commentary

50. The reception class is well equipped with large toys and with construction toys, for both outside and inside play. These materials are used systematically to develop children's hand-eye coordination so that by the time that they leave for Year1, most children handle resources of all sizes safely and with increasing control. They are often aware of the space that they are using and how to play in ways that are safe for themselves and others. For example, children building a tower with flat rectangular blocks cleared a small area that allowed them to work safely and reduced any worry for

other children if their towers fell over. When using large moving toys many are adept at pedalling and steering and are able to negotiate tricky courses safely and with a good degree of pleasure.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

51. Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Morning sessions are characterised by a wide range of activities to which pupils respond with enthusiasm, using all of their senses.
- Art work is wide ranging in quality, with the best being of above expected standards.
- In afternoon play, children are encouraged to use their imagination well but with little direct adult input.

Commentary

52. Much of the work of the reception year takes place in a stimulating environment in which originality and creativity are successfully developed. This works especially well in morning sessions when an adult is always close by, aware of children's learning needs and able to ask questions or point out something that the child needs to know. As a result many children acquire skills in the bold use of paint and large brushes, producing pleasing abstract effects – for example, their interpretations of 'stretch it', 'flatten it' show good skills and creative interpretations of the task. Much of the painting uses the same set of colours, and children have too little experience of choosing and mixing colours for their work to have its full impact. However, the best drawings of, for example, houses have real charm with their many doors and windows and textured walls. Three-dimensional work, for example when using 'playdough' shows similar levels of creativity and imagination. In outside play, children use their imagination to support role play, so that trikes become buses that charge fares and 'castles' are quickly seen as 'ice-cream vans' in order for play to be fulfilling. As in other areas of learning, there are times when the teacher is not able to participate in play, model the 'pretend' process or ask thought-provoking questions, as she is managing the learning of around 20 children alone.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

53. Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of seven-year-old pupils are below average and of eleven year old pupils are above average.
- Teachers' planning is often not sufficiently detailed to meet the wide range of ages and abilities in each class.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is generally good.
- Assessment arrangements are good.

Commentary

54. The results of national tests in English in 2003 showed standards in reading and writing of seven year old pupils at the school to be well below average but standards of eleven year old pupils in English to be average. Standards being reached by the present Year 2 pupils are better than this, but still below average; the standards of pupils in Year 6 are also improving and are above average. Standards have fallen in Year 2 since the last inspection when they were judged to be above average. The achievement of pupils in Year 6 is good but that of Year 2 is unsatisfactory. In tests, girls generally do better than boys but during the inspection boys and girls were treated equally by teachers and no significant differences were seen on the standards being reached. Much of this is related to recent improvements made to resources and to approaches to teaching and learning.

55. Pupils with special educational needs do well because of good provision. Their individual education plans are thorough and set clear achievable targets. Pupils with special educational needs generally receive good support, particularly from skilful teaching assistants.

56. Levels of attainment in each class vary considerably and often teachers' planning of work is not sufficiently detailed to meet the learning needs of all the pupils. This affects the learning of all pupils but is particularly significant for younger pupils who, because of their undeveloped literacy skills, need more direct support. In lessons there is a disparity between the achievement of pupils working in groups with direct adult support and those who are working independently. The school is aware of the relatively low achievement of younger pupils and is working on solutions. For example, a system of short, often repeated, phonic and whole-word sessions, which has previously been successful with pupils in reception classes has been introduced in Years 1 and 2. The reading material available at the school has been scrutinised and material likely to be more of interest to boys has been introduced. In whole-school paired reading sessions, where a younger pupil is paired with an older pupil, boys are being encouraged to read non-fiction material of real interest to them. Taken together, these innovations are beginning to increase interest and raise standards.

57. Standards of speaking and listening are generally satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils are given ample opportunities to speak and put forward their ideas in lessons and assemblies and pupils in Year 3 and 4 have the opportunity to join the 'Confident Speaking Club' where, for example, a pupil, in the role of Elvis Presley, argues cogently why he should not be thrown out of a hot air balloon. Although pupils are frequently offered encouragement and praise, what they say or how they say it is not so often analysed with them in order to make improvements next time. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils reporting on a project to support their local fire station, spoke too quickly and inaudibly and were not questioned about the details of a seemingly interesting venture.

58. The standards reached in both handwriting and spelling are satisfactory. There are examples of good teaching of handwriting. In an infant class the teacher takes short, concentrated sessions, with pupils shown correct techniques. The teacher sets a very good example with her

own demonstration and pupils are assisted by having books ruled with lines to indicate suitable heights for different letters. There is not, however, a consistently applied, structured scheme for the teaching of either handwriting or spelling, to help to ensure the development of both throughout the school.

59. Comprehension skills are systematically developed. Pupils in Year 6 note the humour in Mr. Toad being 'frogmarched' off. By the time they are in Year 6 pupils have experience of a wide range of writing styles – for example fantasy, balanced argument, autobiography, and are able to use a range of literary devices. Pupils in Year 4 are introduced to simile and metaphor and this leads to pupils in Year 6 writing '...dark blue eyes like a storm threatening thunder and lightning' and 'The sky, a porthole into heaven'. Older pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing, limiting the standards that they reach.

60. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although there are examples of good teaching. Teachers' planning is, often, not sufficiently detailed to meet the needs of all the pupils in the class and this is particularly true for higher and lower attaining pupils. The learning objectives of lessons are not consistently discussed or displayed so that pupils do not have a clear idea of what they are trying to achieve in the lesson. The marking of pupils' work is generally good and pupils are often given clear advice on how they might improve their work. Teachers sometimes attempt to extend pupils' vocabulary with their comments, '...some powerful words evoking wildness and savagery' writes a teacher of Year 6 pupils. Marking is not yet used to develop an entirely consistent approach to the setting of learning targets for individual pupils, although there are examples of good practice. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have targets written on flip up pieces of paper attached to their books so that they are always visible to the pupils as they work. The sessions at the end of lessons are not always fully used to consolidate learning in the lesson.

61. The leadership of literacy is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is new to the post but already has some clear ideas on how pupils' achievement might be improved. Assessment arrangements are good and allow the easy tracking of the progress of individual pupils. Analysis of the responses of individual pupils to national assessment material helps to identify areas of weakness that are then tackled systematically.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

62. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing in other subjects apart from English. Discussion is a feature of most lessons but although pupils' contributions are valued and treated with respect, both by adults and pupils, and this builds confidence, particularly amongst pupils with special educational needs, they are less frequently challenged and this hinders the achievement of, particularly, higher attaining pupils. History and religious education are used effectively to develop and consolidate writing skills in a range of different forms.

MATHEMATICS

63. Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 2 are below average
- The higher attaining pupils in Year 6 are well catered for and do well
- In many class lessons teaching does not meet the needs of some pupils.
- Good support helps pupils with special needs to achieve well.

Commentary

64. Although teaching taken overall is satisfactory, many teachers find it too difficult to meet the learning needs of children in their classes because the spread of attainment is too great. This has the greatest impact in Years 1 and 2, where not only are standards in mathematics very different from pupil to pupil, but their capacities to learn using the written or spoken word also vary greatly. In these classes, teachers have to try to cover a wide range of mathematical skills and understandings but have to try to do so using language that will be understood by pupils some of whom are functioning at around the literacy level of nine-year-olds whilst others are closer to that of five-year-olds. It is to teachers' credit that on occasions they do this well. For example, in one lesson on directions, Year 1 pupils were given a very practical task involving planning an obstacle course for a bear to move around. Year 2 pupils stood and made full and half turns, clockwise and anti-clockwise, in order to establish some underlying principles of angles and direction. Both year groups worked hard and successfully. On other occasions the work they are given is very similar whatever the level of attainment, so that higher attainers are not stretched or lower attainers do not understand. In the Years 3 to 6 classes there is also a wide spread of attainment. The higher and lower attainers, who often receive additional support do well in their groups but, along with others, make less progress in whole-class lessons, as teaching does not always meet the needs of all pupils at the same time.

65. Pupils with special needs are well catered for throughout the school. Skilful support from teaching assistants is guided by well-planned individual learning targets so that pupils make good progress towards them and achieve well. This work is well resourced and the links between the teaching assistants and class teachers are good and productive for pupils. The work has a practical bias that helps to establish understanding and then for pupils to practise new skills with an adult close by to ensure that tasks are fully understood and that any difficulties are spotted quickly and resolved. The work undertaken by special needs pupils is closely linked to the work that others in their class are doing, so that they can also benefit from subsequent whole-class teaching.

66. Potentially higher attainers in Year 6 are especially well catered for. Each day they work in small groups with a teaching assistant who is a specialist mathematician. The good facilities of the building allow them to have a quiet working space, and learning resources are matched well to the intended learning. The regular exposure to advanced mathematical thinking and a naturally used accurate vocabulary enables them to achieve well. As result well over a third of Year 6 pupils are on track to reach standards normally associated with 13 year-olds. The only reason that the year group as a whole is only at average standards is that there is a larger proportion of pupils than usual who have special educational needs and who will struggle to reach the level expected of nine-year-olds.

Mathematics across the curriculum

67. There are satisfactory opportunities to use mathematics in other subjects. ICT systematically supports work in handling data and in developing understandings of angles. In most other subjects the support is less systematic but sensible opportunities are taken in design and technology, history and geography to apply skills that have been acquired in mathematics lessons.

SCIENCE

68. Provision in science is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are recovering from a low point.
- Most teaching is satisfactory but too little is stimulating
- Assessment is not well used to plan for different ability groups.
- Scientific skills are not systematically taught through the school

Commentary

69. Results of the national tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 6, and of the teacher assessments at the end of Year 2, show that after a dip in 2001 results have steadily improved. In each of the last two years, Year 6 test scores reached similar levels to those reported at the last inspection, but the current Year 6 is not yet up to that level. Standards now are about average for both age groups, but are still not as high as they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' knowledge of science, and in particular their understanding of life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes is satisfactory. Scientific enquiry is not as strong because in some classes pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to experience practical and investigative activities, nor to have their earlier learning built on; the under-use of practical activities robs the subject of some of its excitement and the under-use of assessment to inform subsequent teaching reduces the effectiveness of building on what pupils already know, understand and can do. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress, and achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. Girls have tended to outperform boys over the last few years, but nothing was seen during the inspection to suggest that this is a result of any unequal provision, nor were unequal standards identified.

70. Pupils are taught all elements of the subject throughout the school. Pupils in Year 2 have looked at the differences and similarities between animals and plants, including observations of plants in the school environment. They have studied different electrical appliances and the way an electrical circuit works. The more able can describe an investigation using simple scientific language. By Year 6 most pupils can demonstrate a fair knowledge of the way the sun and the moon affect the seasons or the length of daylight hours. They know about life cycles, seed dispersal and the importance of habitat. They know about animals that have become extinct, and some that are in danger of extinction. Most understand and can describe the differences between solids, liquids and gases. They are able to use different sources of information including the internet, to find out more about the natural and man-made world.

71. Teaching in most lessons is satisfactory because lessons are well prepared, class management is good, and pupils usually pay attention and behave well. Teacher led discussion is often of good quality and pupils usually remember the main learning from previous lessons. They sensibly tackle the tasks arranged for them, and co-operate well in pairs or small groups. However, throughout the school there are too many occasions when the planned work does not take into account the wide ability range in each class; this is partly due to the fact that the assessment of individual achievement is not well developed. Too often the tasks do not engage or stimulate pupils sufficiently, and do not provide real challenge for the more able. Investigative work does take place, but the skills needed to begin to understand scientific principles are not being systematically developed.

72. Older pupils find scientific information from a source supplied by the teacher. Most are able to extract information from the text, but with little understanding of where that information had originally come from, how reliable it was, or whether there might be a different point of view, for instance about the hunting of whales. In lessons on forces, pupils in the middle years were looking at the way springs are used in different mechanisms. Pupils were interested and some good discussion ensued; many pupils benefited, but the activities did not extend sufficiently the understanding of potentially higher attaining, older pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources have improved since the last inspection.
- All classes make good use of the ICT suite.
- Little use is made of computers outside lesson time.

Commentary

74. Only two lessons in information and communication technology were observed during the inspection, and other evidence was very limited. Work is not collected systematically in pupils' files and there is no portfolio of work samples, so it is not possible to make a firm judgement on standards. However, in the two lessons seen in Key Stage 2 attainment was about in line with expectations. Appropriate use is made of laptop computers in classrooms, particularly to help the learning of pupils with special educational needs who achieve in line with their peers.

75. There have been considerable improvements in the way the subject is resourced and taught. The school now has a suite of thirteen computers linked to others around the school. A digital projector in the suite facilitates whole class teaching, and other resources include two digital cameras, a camcorder, laptop computers and a good range of software to support learning across the curriculum.

76. All classes are timetabled to use the ICT suite once or twice a week. Sound use is made of this time to carry out such activities as research using CD Roms or the internet, or to word process stories and other writing. In the lessons seen, pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 used the keyboard confidently and knew how to select, save and print text and pictures. Pupils in the top class knew how to log on to the internet, and how to find information using different search engines. They can describe how they have entered information onto a database and produced graphs and charts, for instance, when working on the weather.

77. Pupils are less confident when talking about control technology, and have little experience of using the word processor to generate, develop and organise their written work. They have little experience of exchanging information with others, for instance through the use of e-mail. The co-ordinator, who is new to the post has sound ideas to develop this and other aspects of the subject. She is aware that in mixed-age classes there is a need to target work more carefully to different groups, so that older and more able pupils are appropriately challenged.

78. Although it is often well used, the ICT suite is rather small for whole-class teaching and learning, and it is difficult for teachers to ensure that all pupils get regular hands-on experience. There is too little computer use in lessons in other subjects, using class-based resources, to compensate for this.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

79. The technology is used soundly to support research in subjects like history or science. Older pupils are also familiar with using data handling programs to produce graphs and charts on various topics. Programmable moving toys are used to support mathematics work on angles and degrees of turn, although in the Year 3 and 4 lesson observed, pupils' understanding of this concept was not well developed. All classes use part of their time in the ICT suite for cross-curricular work, but this is an area that is not yet fully developed.

HUMANITIES

History and geography

80. Provision in history and geography is **satisfactory**.

81. Only one lesson was seen in geography and little pupils' work in geography was available; thus judgements on the quality of teaching and learning and standards of work are not possible. In the one lesson seen teaching and learning were satisfactory; pupils in Years 1 and 2 learnt about the differences between first and second hand sources of information, as they compared farming in the local area, after a visit from a local farmer, and in St. Lucia.

82. Although no history lessons were seen, pupils have completed a good amount of work at standards that are average for pupils aged seven and 11. The work of pupils in Years 1 and 2 indicates a lively approach with pupils making a visit to a local hall to study different brick patterns and then supporting their learning by making clay bricks in the shape of houses. They are introduced to research by comparing features of new houses with the houses of their grandparents. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 cover a good amount of work and this offers good support for literacy. For example, they make and then use notes to produce a written account of The Life of Boudica. They then develop the theme by writing an account in the style of a newspaper report. Attempts to support mathematics, and to use it in history, are not so successful as timelines are not drawn to scale and so do not give any indication of relative periods of time. Marking of work is generally good with teachers offering suggestions on how pupils might extend their learning. The standards of presentation of much of the work is only average at best and suggests that expectations of pupils are not always sufficiently high.

Religious education

83. Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have fallen slightly since the last inspection.
- Teaching is good in Years 3 and 4.
- Resources for religious education are good.

Commentary

84. Although pupils' standards have fallen since the last inspection they meet the levels expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and this leads to satisfactory achievement by the pupils. The achievement of pupils in Years 3 and 4 is often good because teaching, which comes under the direct influence of the co-ordinator for religious education, is often good in these classes. The coverage of material is wide and the programme enriched with visits which offers the pupils first hand experiences and makes the subject relevant. A good example is the annual visit to a Hindu centre. Pupils' learning is also helped by the judicious use of the good quality artefacts and resources the school has built up. Pupils with special educational needs generally receive good support from teaching assistants in lessons and make satisfactory progress.

85. Work in religious education provides good support for learning in literacy. Years 5 and 6 pupils write newspaper style accounts of the meeting between Goliath and David and Years 3 and 4 pupils produce storyboard accounts of the Plagues of Egypt. The subject is also used to further pupils' personal and social development. In a good lesson in Years 3 and 4, pupils, who are studying the Disciples and considering what qualities they show, are given the opportunity to speak, without pressure being put upon them, about the qualities of friendship. Through skilful questioning, the teacher draws out quite sophisticated ideas, like sometimes people may be 'too perfect' to be a true friend. The learning is not always retained by pupils because few Year 6 pupils, when questioned, could say what a Disciple was and fewer still could name one. Few know what parables are, although when reminded did know the story of the Good Samaritan, although again very few understood the meaning of the story. Year 6 pupils do, on the other hand, have a good knowledge about the Old and New Testaments and the content of each, as well as being able to outline some of the classic Old Testament stories. Pupils make a satisfactory study of religions other than Christianity and compare features. Year 2 pupils are able to compare Christian and Sikh wedding ceremonies.

86. Teachers mark work carefully, sometimes providing comments to show pupils how they might improve their work. The co-ordinator has produced a series of thoughtful and carefully levelled assessment tasks designed to test the attainment of pupils but these have not been put into use yet.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

87. Very few lessons were observed in art and design, design and technology, music and physical education and too little pupils' work was examined for firm conclusions to be drawn about overall standards of attainment and teaching and learning. Teachers' plans and records, together with some pupils' work, including that on display allows some judgements to be made.

Art and design

88. No overall judgements can be made on standards, teaching or learning in art. However, it is clear from teachers' plans and records that a suitable curriculum is taught in such a way that some aspects of art progress well. Whilst only a little pupil work was examined, a high proportion of it was of good quality. In particular, many pupils make meticulous sketches to illustrate work in other subjects. For example, work in science is illustrated well in ways that not only show a good eye for line and texture but also support scientific understanding. A history topic that involved a visit to Budworth Hall was used to stimulate work of good quality when pupils made pottery tiles. Block prints that interpreted 'wind' were effective; they were dark, heavily textured and evoked well the poem that accompanied them.

89. Good use is made of pupils' sketch books. Work in these is often of a good standard and ranges from learning and practising techniques such as shading, line making and producing a range of textures with one medium (a soft leaded pencil) through to relatively sophisticated drawings. One higher attainer produced an outstanding, Modigliani-inspired, face that positively leered out of the page.

Design and technology

90. Insufficient work was seen during the inspection to form a judgement about provision, standards, or teaching and learning in design and technology.

91. Evidence from the few pieces of work contained in pupils' folders, from displays around the school, from discussions with pupils and from teachers' planning, suggests that the subject is given sound coverage. Year 2 pupils have created pictures with moving parts, have made carriages in connection with a history topic and have looked at the parts of different kinds of vehicles. Years 3 and 4 have made picture frames using a variety of materials, and have made sound use of writing frames to describe their aims, how they planned and executed the project and what they thought of the finished article. Years 5 and 6 have designed and made biscuits for different occasions. The booklets they have produced show an increasing understanding of the design and make process, and the need to compare and evaluate the finished products.

92. The school has a useful space set aside for food technology, and parents frequently help groups with cooking projects. The role of the co-ordinator is relatively underdeveloped at present, but plans are in hand to address this. The school is also aware of the need to make the medium term planning more manageable.

Music

93. Although no overall judgements can be made about provision, pupils' standards or teaching and learning, it is clear that in the past the subject has played an important part in the life of the school and some good work continues. However, the school's priorities have recently turned away from music, so that some activities have lapsed. Nonetheless, there are a number of specialist musicians on the staff and there is a well-timed plan to return to using their skills and enthusiasm more systematically. Currently they encourage singing especially well. A choir is supported enthusiastically. Singing, on occasions such as in assembly, benefits from enthusiastic and expert

support and is tuneful and rhythmical. Visiting musicians teach woodwind, violin and guitar to over 20 pupils.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

94. Insufficient work was seen during the inspection to form a judgement about provision, standards or teaching and learning in physical education.

95. In the one lesson seen, the attainment of Years 3 and 4 pupils was about in line with expectations. During group practice most pupils were able to pass and catch a rugby ball with a fair degree of skill, and most responded well to the teacher's suggestions for improvement. Many pupils were not as successful when asked to take part in a more competitive activity; they showed lack of maturity in the way the skills were forgotten in their anxiety to pass the ball too quickly.

96. From conversations with adults and pupils it is clear that the teaching of games and sports is central to the physical education curriculum. Athletics, dance and gymnastics are also given fair allocations of time. However, as at the time of the last inspection, there is no provision for swimming tuition, and no opportunity for the older pupils to take part in outdoor and adventurous activities. The school is therefore not meeting statutory requirements in this area.

97. The school has satisfactory resources, a good sized and well-equipped hall and plenty of outdoor space for games and sports activities. The co-ordinator, who is new to the post, is aware of the weaknesses in the curriculum and is beginning to formulate plans to address them.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

98. Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are responding well to the carefully considered introduction of the school and class councils.
- Pupils participate maturely in discussions about their achievement and targets for the future.
- Pupils with special educational needs benefit greatly from helping to organise their review meetings.

Commentary

99. The school places considerable and increasing emphasis on pupils' personal, social and health education. Many opportunities are made not only to involve them in decisions about matters that affect them, but also systematically to help them develop the understandings and skills that will help them to do so effectively. For example, the current process of setting up school and class councils is underpinned very effectively by a class-based set of lessons in which the purposes of the councils is established and the skills of negotiation and decision making are developed. Pupils' personal and social growth during these sessions is sometimes erratic but is often good. In one such lesson, teaching established, with pupils' help, a range of matters that could usefully be considered by councils alongside those that would not be helpful. For much of the time pupils discussed matters with creditable maturity, but occasionally lapsed into inappropriate suggestions. On other occasions, pupils see new sides not only to the issues they are discussing but also to each other (for example when agreement seemed impossible on an issue and voting was being considered, one pupil who had been quiet until then suggested 'seeking compromise').

100. Many pupils participate in reviews of their progress; they help to explain to parents the work they have done and join in with the process of setting their new targets. They often do this with

considerable maturity and, because they have shared in the process, they take seriously their new targets and work diligently towards them. Pupils with special educational needs not only join in with this process but also go beyond the usual. For example, on occasions they help to set up the meetings and organise light refreshments. As a result they not only understand their new targets but also develop self-confidence and pride in their achievements.

101. The work is underpinned well by effective coordination, a thorough scheme of work and well-understood policies and programmes for sex education and a 'Health Education' day held in the summer term.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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