

INSPECTION REPORT

GEORGE WASHINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Washington

LEA area: Sunderland

Unique reference number: 133473

Headteacher: Mrs S Palmer

Lead inspector: Mr C Smith

Dates of inspection: 6th – 8th October 2003

Inspection number: 256203

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	405
School address:	Well Bank Road Washington
Postcode:	NE37 1NL
Telephone number:	0191 219 3735
Fax number:	0191 219 3738
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Laidler
Date of previous inspection:	n/a

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

George Washington Primary is a new school formed through the amalgamation of three smaller schools. The movement of families into and out of the area is average. The school serves the areas to the north and west of Washington, near Sunderland, which suffer some social disadvantages. Although children's attainment ranges across the whole spectrum, most children enter school with attainment that is below the levels expected for their age. Free school meal and special educational needs figures are above the national average. Pupils' special educational needs are mainly related to difficulties with learning. A small number of pupils have speech or hearing difficulties and one has a statement for which specific provision is made. Almost all of the pupils are white and all are English speaking. The headteacher and staff have been focussing mainly upon setting up the school in its first year and blending together teachers and children who have had different educational experiences. Despite the school only just commencing its second year, it has already achieved the Basic Skills Quality mark (in recognition of the planning and organisation of the curriculum) and a Local Education Authority award for the way it assesses pupils' learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25211	Colin Smith	Lead inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education
9952	Lillian Brock	Lay inspector	
24030	Jenny Boothman	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage History Geography
4192	David Hartley	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology
23887	Peter Nettleship	Team inspector	English Religious education Art and design Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Primary Associates
Suite 13 West Lancs Technology Management Centre
Moss Lane View
Skelmersdale
Lancashire
WN8 9TN

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is fairly effective in providing a sound education for its pupils. Pupils enter school with attainment that is below the level expected for their age. Although pupils achieve steadily in most subjects, the standards reached by the age of 11 are below average in the main subjects. However, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Teaching is satisfactory and the headteacher and governors provide sound leadership and management for the school.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils in Years 2 and 3 achieve well in most subjects;
- Pupils' personal development is nurtured well and this is reflected in their positive attitudes and good behaviour;
- The school has established strong and effective links with parents and the community;
- Standards in writing are too low and are in need of improvement;
- Teaching in the reception and the junior classes is broadly satisfactory but there is scope to make further improvements through more effective checking on how well pupils are learning;
- Pupils' investigation skills in science and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in learning other subjects are areas to improve.

The school opened in September 2002 and has not been previously inspected. However, the quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection is of a higher standard than that reflected in the work in pupils' books from last year.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

There are no nationally moderated results available for this new school.

Pupils achieve steadily overall. However, their progress accelerates in Years 2 and 3, where teaching is at its strongest. Reception children enter school with attainment that is below the level expected for their age. They achieve satisfactorily overall, although better in one class than the other. A significant number of children do not reach the goals expected in literacy or numeracy by the end of the reception year. Infant pupils (Years 1 and 2) achieve well to reach standards that are at least at the levels expected in most subjects, and higher in reading and writing. Junior pupils achieve steadily. Standards by the age of 11 are at the levels expected in reading, ICT, religious education, music and physical education, but are below the levels expected in mathematics, science and history and well below in writing. Not enough was seen of other subjects to judge standards or pupils' achievements. School assessments show that girls achieved much better than boys last year but measures to improve boys' learning are taking effect. More able pupils achieve steadily overall. Talented pupils are suitably catered for, but the school has not yet identified its gifted pupils.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, behave well and are eager to work together and take responsibility. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good and pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of their own cultural backgrounds, but more opportunities are needed to prepare them fully for life in a culturally diverse society. Good attendance is encouraged and checked on but too many parents take family holidays in term time for attendance to reach the national average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is sound and teaching is satisfactory. Teaching in Year 2 and 3 is good in most subjects; consequently pupils achieve well in these classes. Teaching is mainly satisfactory in the other year groups, including the Foundation Stage (reception classes), in

all areas of learning and subjects inspected. Teachers have a secure understanding of the subjects they teach and use a variety of effective methods and approaches that capture pupils' interests. Teachers usually manage pupils well and create a positive learning atmosphere. However, there are weaknesses in the teaching of writing. The teaching of investigative skills in science is improving, but only slowly. The teaching of specific skills in ICT is often good in the computer suite but computers are not used enough in the learning of other subjects. Pupils' learning is better now than was evident in their written work from last year. However, there are still differences in rates of learning from one class to another, for example, in reception and half of the junior classes.

Pupils are well taken care of and their personal development is effectively supported. The good range of extra-curricular activities enhances their learning and their interests. A good partnership has been established with parents and the community. As a result, parents are playing a greater part in their children's learning. For example, the homework provided helps pupils to practise and improve their skills.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has been successful in bringing teachers and pupils from different schools together as one family and a positive atmosphere for learning has been established. Governance of the school is satisfactory. The headteacher, governors and staff have identified correctly the areas requiring improvement. The systems and procedures implemented are leading to improvements in mathematics and there are sign of improvement in other areas, such as English and science. However, more needs to be done by key staff and subject leaders in checking how well pupils are learning in the different classes, so that adjustments can be made to the teaching to enable all pupils to achieve well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The vast majority of parents and pupils are happy with what the school offers them. This is a major achievement in the light of the school's short history. At the meeting for parents, comments were made regarding some inconsistencies between teachers and classes last year but many of these are now being addressed. The school is actively seeking to involve both parents and pupils in its work and this is appreciated.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in writing;
- Improve pupils' achievements in the reception and some of the junior classes by making regular checks on how well they are learning;
- Develop the use of ICT in the learning of other subjects and improve pupils' investigation skills in science.

The school meets all statutory requirements.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils achieve steadily overall. This is a new school. National assessment results are available only from 2003. Therefore there are no trends to indicate whether standards are improving or not. Judgements can only be made on the strength of pupils' progress in the school now. What is known, from recent assessments, is that children's attainment on entering the school is below that expected for their age. The standards achieved by pupils leaving the school at the age of 11 are broadly average in reading, ICT and religious education, below average in mathematics and science and well below average in writing, which is an issue for improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Infant pupils achieve well in mathematics, ICT and religious education to reach the standards expected by the age of 7 and very well in reading and writing to reach above average standards in these subjects;
- Pupils with special needs achieve well because they receive good support;
- Junior pupils could achieve more in writing, science and ICT if the teaching in all classes was as strong as it is in Year 3;
- Children in the reception classes are not achieving at the same rate as each other. Stronger leadership is needed to pull the classes together.

Commentary

1. Infant pupils achieve well in most subjects because of good teaching. In particular, they receive a good grounding in the important skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Their confidence and fluency in reading and writing increases because they practise the skills taught in school by reading at home. Every opportunity is taken to encourage them to write and express their ideas and feelings in their own words. Their written work is usually lively and interesting. Infant pupils achieve well in mathematics. They greatly enjoy learning through games and practical activities and develop competence in handling numbers. Infant pupils have made a successful early start in developing ICT skills through the lessons in the computer suite. In religious education, they make particularly good progress in understanding their own feelings and beliefs through considering those of others.
2. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to the sensitive handling by teachers and teaching assistants. They gradually improve their literacy and numeracy skills and reach the targets set for them. More able pupils achieve steadily and many fulfil their potential in reaching the higher levels. Talented pupils are well catered for, particularly through the wide range of extra-curricular activities, which nurture and extend their talents. However, the school has not yet formally identified the gifted ones nor considered how their special abilities could be further developed. The 2003 assessments showed a stark contrast between the standards achieved by girls and boys, particularly in English. Girls performed well enough but the standards attained by boys were unacceptably low. The school has taken swift action. Junior boys are now specifically targeted in lessons, topics are adjusted to engage their interest and their response is improving. The school is gradually but successfully closing the gap.
3. Junior pupils achieve steadily after getting off to a flying start in Year 3. Comparing what pupils are doing now with the work in their books from last year, it is evident that they are now making better progress in response to more settled teaching. Standards in mathematics are improving, as the training provided by a local authority mathematics

consultant takes effect. However, not all junior teachers ensure that the more able pupils are sufficiently challenged in every lesson. Junior pupils make sound progress in reading and the subject leader for English is driving through important changes in the teaching of writing. The technical aspects of the subject, such as spelling, punctuation and handwriting, are being tackled effectively during literacy and additional lessons. There are also specific lessons where pupils can concentrate on extending their writing. Pupils are acquiring strategies to make their writing more fluent and interesting, for example, by planning an exciting start to a story. However, teachers do not take advantage of other subjects as a vehicle to improve pupils' written work. It is regrettable that when pupils encounter new experiences and have something worthwhile to write about, the opportunity is often lost. Junior pupils achieve steadily in ICT. They quickly acquire an understanding of how to handle and present information through specific lessons in the computer suite. However, opportunities to use ICT in the learning of other subjects are too few and far between. Pupils' work in the practical and investigational aspects of science is gathering momentum this term, but there is much to do to develop their understanding of how to plan their own investigations and record their findings methodically.

4. There is scope to improve children's achievement in the reception classes. On the whole, they make satisfactory progress but a significant number do not achieve the learning goals by the end of the reception year. The rate of learning, particularly of the more able pupils, is stronger in one class than in the other. The difference lies in the quality of organisation behind the activities provided. In one class, this is effective. In the other, the purpose behind the tasks given to the children is not always made clear to them. Stronger leadership is needed to bring about good achievement in both classes.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good. The school provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, which is good. Their cultural development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils try hard and behave well;
- The school raises pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Attendance is below the national average.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.7
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.5

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	399	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

Commentary

- Children in the reception classes are learning the routines of school life and gaining the skills to enable them to work together successfully. As a result, they are on course to achieve the levels expected in their personal and social development. Infant and junior pupils are enthusiastic about school, show interest in the activities provided and most of them persevere, even when tasks seem difficult. For example, Year 5 pupils worked hard to understand the tricky idea of converting mixed numbers to proper fractions and achieved the learning objectives by the end of the lesson. Teachers and teaching assistants show a sincere respect for all pupils and this raises their self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Pupils' moral development is good and is reflected in their positive behaviour. Personal and social education lessons are successful in encouraging pupils to share values and opinions. When they discuss social and moral issues, they show a genuine respect for the feelings and views of their classmates. Their behaviour contributes well to learning because pupils are ready to listen and eager to learn. Pupils' good spiritual development is evident in school assemblies and they understand what quiet prayer and reflection mean. Behaviour around the school is sensible and there is no evidence of oppressive behaviour, harassment or racial tension. There have been no exclusions in the year prior to the inspection.
- Despite the school's good procedures to monitor attendance, it is below the national average. The school has not yet convinced parents of the adverse effect that holidays in term time have on their children's progress. Pupils' personal development is good and they are beginning to respond well to the increasing opportunities to take charge of their own learning. Their ideas and preferences are having an effect now that a school council has been established. Most pupils have positive views about the school and appreciate the activities provided for them. Pupils have a good understanding of and respect for their own heritage. They study other faiths in religious education and racial tolerance and harmony are promoted well. However, their experience and understanding of cultural diversity is limited and the school is aware that more needs to be done in this area.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is satisfactory. The curriculum is well organised and enriched by a good range of out-of-school activities.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning and the assessment of pupils' learning are **satisfactory**. The quality of teaching observed during the week of inspection was significantly better than it appeared to be when pupils' work from last year was examined.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a secure understanding of the subjects they teach and lessons are well planned, with a wide range of effective methods to enable pupils to learn;
- Pupils are well managed and lessons move along briskly. As a result, pupils listen attentively, concentrate on their work and usually give of their best;
- Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good teaching and additional support from well trained teaching assistants;
- Pupils' work from last year, particularly in some junior classes, indicates weaknesses in marking and a tendency for some teachers to provide the same level of work for all pupils, irrespective of their different learning needs;
- Teachers do not make sufficient use of ICT or develop pupils' writing skills well enough in other subjects;
- There are differences in the quality of teaching in the two reception classes.

Commentary

8. Teachers have a secure grasp of the different subjects they teach and a clear idea of what they expect pupils to learn. The careful planning of lessons illustrates this and teachers make a point of sharing the objectives for the lesson with pupils, at the outset. This means that, in most instances, pupils know what is expected of them and they settle to work positively. Teachers use a variety of methods to explain new ideas or to encourage pupils to explore and learn for themselves. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher asked pupils to draw specific cards from a concealed pack. Success meant winning an extra playtime. However, the odds of drawing a card of a particular suit were against that and so pupils learnt about the realities of probability. Increasingly, pupils are being asked to discuss their ideas with a partner, investigate and learn for themselves and complete homework tasks, all of which have positive effects upon their learning. In almost all lessons, good relationships between teachers and pupils prevail and discipline is firm but fair. Resources needed for lessons are well prepared and ready for use. Lessons start promptly and usually move along at a good pace. Under these circumstances, pupils listen carefully, take an active part in discussions and work hard.
9. When lessons are planned, careful account is taken of the requirements of pupils with special educational needs. To this end, teachers and teaching assistants plan their learning together. In whole class lessons, pupils who do not find learning easy are encouraged to share their ideas with teaching assistants. This keeps them involved. When group activities begin, pupils with special educational needs receive good quality support. Teaching assistants are careful not to tell them the answers but encourage them to think for themselves. These factors enable them to experience success in learning. Teaching in Years 2 and 3 is good and often very good. Lessons are interesting, challenging and action packed. This is where pupils' learning accelerates.
10. When the new school opened last year, children and teachers from different schools had to learn how to work together. This took some time and there were significant inconsistencies in the junior classes, evident in the pupils' work in their books. For example, very little work was produced in geography and some of the work in science had been copied. Not surprisingly, pupils' writing skills were not developing adequately. Furthermore, the work provided for pupils in subjects such as English, religious education and science in some

classes was much the same for all pupils, irrespective of their different learning needs. Consequently, the work was too easy for some and too difficult for others and pupils' learning suffered. However, by the end of the school year, changes were made and some improvements implemented. Amongst these was a more robust system of assessing pupils' learning. As a result, teaching is improving but there is still more to do to bring teaching up to a good standard, particularly in some of the junior classes. There still are occasions when teachers do not use what they have learnt from assessing pupils' learning well enough to ensure an accurate match between the work provided and pupils' particular learning needs. However, the dubious practice of giving all pupils the same work to complete has largely disappeared. The marking of pupils' work from last year left a lot to be desired. However, teachers' marking is now becoming more helpful by showing pupils what they need to do to improve and setting individual targets for them makes this possible. Although teachers often use a variety of resources well, such as models and pictures to help pupils to understand new ideas, ICT is very seldom used outside the computer suite. In a history lesson about Ancient Greece, for example, pupils researched information from books but potentially valuable opportunities to widen pupils' understanding of using electronic sources of information were missed. Similarly, not all teachers are aware of the power of other subjects to improve pupils' writing. It is a pity that when pupils have enjoyed a worthwhile learning experience and have something to say, they are not asked to express their feelings and ideas in writing.

11. Teaching in the reception classes is satisfactory overall, but it is not the same in the two classes. In one class, all of the lessons are very purposeful and the teaching of important reading, writing and number skills is particularly good. However, in the other class, the purpose behind the activities provided has not always been fully thought through and explained to the children. When this happens, children are left uncertain of the tasks and one or two of them wander about aimlessly.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 63 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	8 (13 %)	18 (29 %)	33 (52%)	3 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **satisfactory**. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, as well as religious education and there are organised sessions of collective worship. All required policies have been established for aspects, such as alcohol and drug misuse. Members of staff work hard to ensure that the curriculum is inclusive whilst respecting the wishes of parents, such as those belonging to the Plymouth Brethren families. The school has gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark for its approach to literacy and numeracy.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has developed the curriculum to address pupils' specific needs;
- There is good provision for talented pupils and those with special educational needs. However, the school has not established a list of its gifted pupils;
- Support for learning outside school is good;
- The resources for physical education are outstanding but provision for children's outdoor play is restricted.

Commentary

12. The school timetable has been developed to include daily half-hour sessions, effectively run during the lunch time period, aimed at compensating for and improving children's reading, writing and number skills. An early evaluation of this pilot project shows that pupils' number work is beginning to improve. The additional time allocated to basic skills, however, reduces that available for other subjects, such as history, geography and design and technology. The school needs to ensure that gains made on the one hand do not create losses on the other. A number of the older pupils find it hard to concentrate through the whole of the afternoon without a playtime.
13. The school identified the need to ensure that boys participate fully in lessons and that the ways in which they learn most effectively are recognised. Extended writing opportunities are also recognised as being necessary. Teachers work hard to ensure that boys take an active part in lessons and in the Literacy subject leader's class there is clear evidence that writing difficulties are being addressed. In some other classes this is still at an early stage. A range of 'books for boys' has been purchased in an attempt to engage them in wider reading.
14. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. These pupils receive effective support through individual education plans that address their immediate needs and help them to achieve as well as they can. Teaching assistants are effective in how they help these pupils to learn. Regular meetings are held to assess pupils' progress. Computers, however, are seldom used to specifically address these pupils' needs. Few plans are in place to show how the school will meet the needs of its gifted pupils. However, talented pupils, such as budding artists, musicians and gymnasts, have good opportunities to attend after school clubs. Gains in their learning are evident in their art, music and physical education lessons in school. This year, the two Year 6 classes have been formed using information that shows how well they have done in the past. Higher attaining pupils have been put in the same class. The school will evaluate if this produces more success for its pupils and higher levels of achievement.
15. Resources for children in the Early Years are satisfactory overall, but at present, they lack both ready access to the outside play area and the opportunity to learn using large construction equipment. Resources such as the swimming pool and the very well equipped school hall are outstanding and make a significant contribution to pupils' physical development. Support for pupils' learning outside school is good. Homework is used effectively to improve the key English and mathematics skills. A qualified coach provides gymnastics and a gym club is organised with older pupils attending as trained helpers. Adequate use is made of external resources for the benefit of all pupils, for example geographical visits into the locality. Well established links with the police have already been developed. Topics, such as drug education are explored with local officers, who even find time to 'drop in' at playtime to chat with the children.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care and well being are **very good** and the school does all it can to involve pupils in its work. Pupils' personal needs are promoted well and they are now receiving adequate guidance to enable them to improve their achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' welfare, care and health and safety is of paramount importance;
- Good relationships with nurseries, secondary schools and outside agencies support pupils well through different stages of their school life;
- Promising procedures have been recently introduced to help pupils to have more understanding and control over their learning and personal development.

Commentary

16. Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well and provide a positive and supportive climate for learning. Teachers are very successful in raising pupils' self-esteem. They value what pupils say and use praise constructively to encourage them to grow in confidence. There are effective child protection procedures, which are supported by good communications with external agencies. Although the school occupies a very large and active community site, the buildings are safe and secure. Regular risk assessments are undertaken and several adults have first aid qualifications. Pupils' personal needs are a high priority.
17. Good links are made with the two main high schools and the transfer of Year 6 pupils runs smoothly. Support services, such as the learning mentors, the 'Every School Day Counts' and 'On Track' projects, offer successful support to those who experience difficulties. The headteacher ensures that children beginning in the reception classes are all in school, full time, by the end of the second week. This system of phasing children in gradually is beneficial in settling them into school, even though some parents want them to start full time on the first day.
18. The school has recently introduced a range of effective assessment procedures to find out how well pupils are learning. Individual targets are then set to show pupils what they need to do to improve. Parents are kept well informed. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is also improving in pointing the way forward. Specific lessons are arranged during which pupils exchange ideas about how they should work and play together. These measures are gradually enabling pupils to improve their academic performance and make more informed decisions about their personal development. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in all activities and, as a result, they make good progress. The school provides a range of experiences that help pupils to mature into responsible and caring individuals. This caring approach extends to the wider community, for example, when pupils collect for a range of home and overseas charities.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents and the community is **good**. Parents support the work of the school and appreciate what has been achieved in its first year of operation.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents receive particularly good information about school events and their children's progress;
- The school is trying hard, and with some success, to overcome a degree of apathy amongst some parents;
- The school fulfils its 'community centre' role successfully and forms strong partnerships with other schools and colleges.

Commentary

19. The school sends out an extensive range of good quality information for parents. Very clearly written information sheets are instrumental in helping parents to understand such matters as how boys learn, homework and the school's literacy and numeracy strategies. Parents are given information at the beginning of each term about what their children will be learning. This is followed by a formal consultation evening at the end of the term to set targets for children's future development. Many but not all parents take advantage of the opportunity to learn about the progress their children are making. Most parents support their children with the work they complete at home, for example, in the way they respond to the infant reading diaries.

20. Parents were asked to complete questionnaires to enable staff and governors to canvass their views. Surprisingly, 60 parents responded by saying that they did not want to know what their children were learning about or about the work of the school. However, most parents are happy to be involved in all that the school provides. The school has tried many ways to involve parents in their children's learning but there is a disappointing response when information meetings are arranged. This is in contrast to the large numbers of parents who attend concerts and assemblies. With the support of the local further education college a family learning course is now offered. Even the most reluctant parents are beginning to take an interest in their children's learning.
21. There are good links with the community. The school is rapidly becoming a focal point for the wider community, because the hall, studio and swimming pool are used most evenings by a range of groups from Brownies to Karate and Egyptian Dancing clubs. All these good links raise pupils' awareness of the importance of the relationship between the school and the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management and governance of the school are **satisfactory**. The major barriers of blending staff and pupils from different schools and winning the confidence and trust of parents have been overcome successfully. A **good ethos** for learning has been created. However, many subject leaders do not play a sufficiently important part in guiding the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors are very supportive of the school and willingly give of the time in the school's best interests;
- The headteacher has created a good environment for learning by forging a strong team ethos and establishing systems that have raised levels of pupil behaviour;
- Leadership of the key staff in the reception and junior classes is at an early stage of development. Consequently, standards are variable in both these areas.

Commentary

22. Most governors are experienced and are ambitious for George Washington Primary to be a true community school. They are appreciative of the support they receive from the headteacher, but are currently over-reliant on the information and advice that she provides. They are involved in the annual planning of finances and are kept informed of the monthly financial statements to enable them to monitor spending. The school improvement plan is concise, with a suitable number and range of priorities. The key weaknesses in the school's assessment data have been identified and effective action is taking place to bring about improvements. The headteacher recognises that there is now a need to develop the governors' role in evaluating the work of the school. The strong pride that governors show in their new school now needs to be matched by an equally strong commitment to raising standards.
23. The headteacher provides sound leadership and management for the school. Blending together the teachers and pupils of three separate schools has been a major task and her major achievement. The school now has a distinct and positive identity of its own that has been recognised and appreciated by the parents and governors. The headteacher is busily creating teams to plan and teach the curriculum effectively. Through her classroom observations, she has begun to tackle variations in the quality of the teaching. The need to improve the quality of teachers' marking has led to the recent introduction of a policy that now provides clear guidelines for the future. Other weaknesses of the school have been identified, such as the need to raise standards in writing, especially for boys in the upper junior classes. However, these have largely come to light through the analysis of the end of

year tests, rather than through reviewing the pupils' work in their books. Consequently, the widely varying writing standards, seen in a range of subjects in the junior classes, have not yet been identified sharply enough. The decision to provide extra writing lessons is having a beneficial effect but limits the time available for pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects.

24. The contribution made by some of the subject leaders is currently weak. The senior management team, which comprises the leaders of the infant and junior stages plus the learning manager, is beginning to take responsibility and monitor progress in their separate areas. However, leadership in the reception classes needs to be improved to ensure that the organisation and structure that underpins children's learning is equally good in both classes. Opportunities for subject leaders to monitor teaching in their areas of responsibility have been taken only in literacy and mathematics. The quality of the support and guidance provided by the literacy subject leader has been very good and has been much appreciated by the staff. Setting clear writing targets for every class over the current (school) year has given teachers a framework enabling them to be aware of their own individual contributions. There has been good use of external monitoring by local education authority advisers, for example, working with the mathematics subject leader to improve the quality of teaching in the subject. The special educational needs co-ordinator, though new to the post, has succeeded in drawing together the information provided by the three schools from which the school drew its pupils. The support assistants are very much part of the team that delivers the individual plans established for these pupils. The headteacher recognises that there is now a need to enhance the role of the subject leaders in the other curriculum areas to monitor the quality of both teaching and learning throughout the school.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	487,620	Balance from previous year	n/a
Total expenditure	504,851	Balance carried forward to the next	-17,231
Expenditure per pupil	1202		

The school has already recovered the budget deficit by not replacing a teacher who moved for promotion in the Spring Term of 2003. Staff, pupils and parents benefit from efficient administration.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The provision for pupils in the reception class is **satisfactory**, although it is better in one class than the other. Pupils make steady progress overall and achieve well in their personal and physical development to reach the levels expected. However, although they achieve steadily in language, literacy and mathematics, and develop some understanding of the world around them, many children do not reach the levels expected in these areas by the end of the reception year.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good relationships between children and adults are quickly established and children's personal and social development is good;
- High quality teaching assistants provide good support for all children, particularly those with special educational needs. However, the more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged;
- The organisation and structure of one of the reception classes is more successful than the other in helping children to learn;
- There are weaknesses in the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage.

Commentary

25. Many children enter school with attainment below the level expected for their age. They achieve steadily. However, their literacy, language and mathematical skills are still below the average of Sunderland schools by the end of the reception year. Children join the school from twelve local nurseries but they soon settle in because relationships between staff and children are good. Teaching is satisfactory, with a significant amount of good teaching in one of the two reception classes. However, the organisation and structure of one of the reception classes is clearer and more effective than the other. Teaching assistants provide good support for children's learning, especially for those with special educational needs. However, the more able children are not assessed and identified early enough. On some occasions they are not given sufficiently challenging work. Weaknesses in leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are evident in the improvement plan, which identifies areas for development but without a clear picture of how these improvements will be achieved or their impact on learning measured.

Personal, social and emotional development

26. Provision is good in this area of learning and teaching is effective in both classes. Children make good progress to reach the levels expected by the end of the reception year. Children's confidence is built up well. Adults encourage them to express their ideas and respect what they say, especially those with special educational needs. 'Happy Time' provides children with good opportunities to explore the feelings of characters in books and to understand their own feelings. Self-esteem and a sense of being valued are reinforced in Birthday Assemblies and when children receive stickers and cards as rewards. Good relationships are developed because children are encouraged to share their things and behave politely and helpfully towards each other. They listen attentively to their teachers and acquire some independence in selecting their own activities. However, children engaged in their own choice of activities are not always checked on and occasionally they lose concentration and flit from one activity to another.

Communication, language and literacy

27. Although provision is satisfactory overall, there are weaknesses in the teaching of reading which limit children's achievements. In one class where the teaching is good, children are stimulated to talk and listen intently. For example, the teacher introduced a 'sound box' containing toys such as a yellow teddy bear for the 'Y' sound. Children responded enthusiastically by identifying other objects that began with the letter 'Y'. In the other class a pretend hospital has been set up for children to engage in role play. This is greatly enjoyed and encourages them to extend and improve their speaking and listening skills. However, when reading was taught in one of the lessons observed, too many letters were introduced at once. This confused the children and when asked to work in groups, only those working with the teacher were clear about what they were expected to do. In both classes children are introduced to different forms of writing such as William Bear's party invitations, labels around the classroom and stories in big books. Through these rich sources, children begin to understand the process of reading. However, children are not always asked to contribute ideas of their own or make predictions about what will happen next. This makes it harder for them to perceive the meaning behind the stories.

Mathematical Development

28. Provision and teaching in this area of learning are satisfactory and most children achieve steadily. However, the learning of the more able children is sometimes held back when the level of challenge in the work provided is insufficient to move their learning on. In contrast, some teaching is very good. When puppets were used to introduce new topics, for example, children were highly motivated and rose to the challenge of counting forwards and backwards. The wide variety of learning experiences provided appeal to different children. For example, when children were chanting rhymes and counting items in the classroom, such as candles on a cake, their learning was very successful. Children are provided with a range of activities and encouraged to select from them and work independently. However, teachers' instructions and the purpose of the activities are not always made clear to the children. Furthermore, a means of checking which children have experienced the different activities has yet to be provided. When teachers and assistants work with small groups, the children usually make good progress. In particular, through the group activities, children with special educational needs receive good levels of support and their learning accelerates. However, the same attention is not always given to the more able pupils and the tasks provided are not always sufficiently challenging. For example, a pupil capable of counting to 40 was asked to count to 5. Under these circumstances, limited progress is made.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

29. Provision and teaching is satisfactory in this area of learning. Pupils explore their surroundings enthusiastically through play or specific tasks planned by the teachers. For example, they search for objects with different textures and make collages with different fabrics, as part of early science. Planned links across the six areas of early learning help pupils to understand the connections between their existing knowledge and that of the wider world. For example, when children were asked to examine different pieces of rock, they also sketched the shapes and patterns they saw, which improved their drawing skills. Children develop a secure foundation in ICT using classroom computers and learning to control a programmable toy. They practice using the mouse and know it has an affect on the images seen on the computer screen. However, learning could be more purposeful if an adult read the text with them so they could understand more about the changes on screen. There are not enough opportunities for children to work with large-scale equipment outside, for example, to construct buildings for their role play. Neither are they able to develop their skills of balance and control because there are no wheeled vehicles to ride. Outdoor play is provided but it sometime lacks purpose.

Physical Development

30. Provision in this area of learning is good. The use of the school hall, the new apparatus and the involvement of a gymnastics coach are strong ingredients, significantly enhancing children's rapid physical development. One lesson observed illustrates some excellent teaching and learning.

Brightly coloured apparatus was imaginatively set out in the hall and music played. Children were stimulated to move around, reflecting the mood of the music, but stopped immediately on instruction. The theme was cleverly introduced by asking the children to sing about Goldilocks and the three bears. The coach then led them through the story developing their physical movements very skilfully - 'she crawled under daddy bear's chair, then jumped up to reach the bowl on the shelf many times and had to stretch up to grasp it'. Children absorbed and used new language, such as 'the chair was huge and she was only small', very successfully. Next came a song to which the pupils moved - 'Can you bend like me? Can you bounce like me?' The coach demonstrated how to perform a backward roll safely, using a specially designed slanting box. Children worked under, over, along and through the apparatus. Then out came the parachute, which they sat waving while groups of children gleefully jumped amongst the waves. They all lay down as serene panpipe music and 'non pop' bubbles filled the hall and they calmly watched the floating bubbles settle on their bodies. Gradually, children arose and began to collect these on their fingers, creating wonderful sculptures that looked like molecules. They began exchanging sculptures. It was wonderful!

Creative Development

31. Little direct teaching of this area of learning was observed. There are some good examples of children's creative work in the form of self-portraits and simple hats, but little three-dimensional work. A painting area is set up each day and children are encouraged to express their feelings through drawing and painting. However, they are not always given specific guidance on the task and their work does not improve as much as it could. Play areas, like the hospital, provide good opportunities for children to be creative. Here teddies lie in a row of beds and a child, dressed in a doctor's coat, attends to a teddy who has a splinter in his ear after falling off his skateboard. Such experiences help children imagine different situations and invent imaginary conversations.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision for English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the age of 7, pupils read confidently and express their ideas enthusiastically, both in their speech and their writing;
- Writing skills are not sufficiently developed and used across the junior classes and this severely limits the pupils' ability to work fluently in a range of other subjects;
- The teaching of English is stronger in the infants than in some of the junior classes;
- Skilled and dedicated leadership in English is helping to identify and remedy many of the weaknesses.

Commentary

32. Infant pupils achieve very well in reading to reach above average standards, by the age of 7. They enjoy reading aloud, analysing words and sentences and discussing the text. They quickly acquire new skills and improve them through practising reading at home. By Year 6, standards in reading are close to the levels expected. Pupils enjoy reading and increasing use is being made of the library. Attempts are also being made to attract boys to reading,

such as the 'Bookworm Club' and inviting male authors into school. Year 6 pupils grasp the literal meanings of their books, but they find it more difficult to make inferences from the text. In the upper junior classes, teachers usually read the passages being studied, therefore pupils do not have enough opportunities to improve their ability to read with expression.

33. Infant pupils achieve very well in writing to reach above average standards by the age of seven. Pupils produce much written work based on their own ideas and feelings. Teachers' expectations are high and pupils thrive on the challenge to write fluently and imaginatively. Consequently many pupils reach standards that are higher than expected for their age. By contrast, standards in writing are well below average by Year 6 and junior pupils are not achieving enough in this aspect of English. The school fully understands that writing is a key area for improvement, and especially that of the boys new strategies are being introduced, which are having the desired effect. These include specific 'basic skills' lessons, which are designed to remedy junior pupils' weaknesses in spelling and punctuation. In addition, extended writing sessions are timetabled where pupils learn how to engage the attention of the reader by setting the scene for a story. However, there is still more to do. Pupils have very limited opportunities to develop and improve their writing through other subjects, such as religious education and geography. Junior pupils' skills of improving their first attempts at writing are weak, partly because they are not encouraged to use classroom computers to redraft their work. The school has recently introduced a 'Writer of the Week' award for every class and this is beginning to stimulate an interest in writing.
34. Speaking and listening skills are average by Year 2 and Year 6. Infant pupils contribute enthusiastically in lessons. In infant and junior classes, there are many opportunities for discussion but the more reticent speakers are sometimes allowed to remain silent. Boys contribute as much to the discussions as the girls.
35. The quality of the teaching in the infant classes is predominantly good and is often better. Much enthusiasm is linked to vitality and humour, engaging the pupils to a high degree. The work set is undertaken with great interest because it extends the learning of all pupils. In the junior classes, the teaching quality is more variable. In Year 3 it is strong and the high standards are maintained. In the later years the teaching is satisfactory overall. Target setting is now giving the pupils a clearer idea of what they have to do to improve. A new marking system has also been introduced that is providing clearer guidance to teachers and pupils. They appreciate the system of planning work with their year group partner, as well as the help they receive from the subject leader. Pupils with special needs are given good support with their reading and writing, receiving regular, individual attention and working in small groups. The teaching assistants work in close co-operation with the teachers to make lessons meaningful.
36. The subject leader sets a very high standard. There is a strong emphasis on raising standards and the subject leader has a very clear understanding of how to achieve this. She has observed teaching closely and discussed the points for improvement. Consequently, teachers now have greater awareness of what needs to be done. Other subject leaders now need to follow this very good example, by checking pupils' work in all subjects in their books and folders to ensure that their writing is improving.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

37. Pupils' speaking, listening and reading skills are developed suitably in other subjects through paired and class discussion and reading for information. However, pupils' writing is not being developed sufficiently across the curriculum. In some subjects, such as religious education, history and geography, pupils (in some junior classes) produce very little written work. This lack of practice is a major reason why writing standards lag so far behind other areas of literacy.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Standards are rising because the quality of teaching and the assessment of pupils' learning are improving

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 2 and 3 achieve well where teaching is at its best;
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of good teaching and the support of teaching assistants;
- There are inconsistencies in the teaching of mathematics which if ironed out, would enable all pupils to achieve well.

Commentary

38. Infant pupils achieve well to reach the standards expected by the age of 7. Junior pupils achieve steadily. Although rising, the standards reached by 11-year-olds are still below average. Much has been done to improve standards in mathematics. A consultant from the local education authority has been very effective in developing teachers' understanding and helping the school to use the assessments made of pupils' learning to identify and remedy any weaknesses. The subject is soundly led and managed in school to ensure that the training provided is implemented correctly. As a result, mathematics lessons are well planned, carefully structured and purposeful. Teachers carefully explain the objectives for the lesson, consequently pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn. The methods of calculation taught are based on secure understanding of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. For instance, when pupils are asked to add two numbers such as 139 and 479, they separate the hundreds, tens and units before adding. This ensures that pupils do not simply learn tricks with numbers but develop clear understanding that the position of a digit within a number is crucially important. Teachers ask pupils to explain their own methods of calculation. This improves their speaking and listening skills and also raises awareness that there is more than one way to arrive at the correct answer. Pupils' work from last year showed that they were not given enough opportunities to use the skills they had acquired to solve mathematical problems. Assessments of their learning, later in the year, revealed a significant weakness in this area. Mathematical investigations are now being incorporated into numeracy lessons. Younger pupils solve mathematical problems using pictures and older pupils move on to solving written number problems. This is particularly valuable in preparing them for answering questions on the test papers.
39. Years 2 and 3 pupils benefit from lively, imaginative and challenging teaching. Learning is fun and often involves playing mathematical games. Lessons move along swiftly. Teachers ask probing questions to make pupils think. In Year 2, for example, the teacher cleverly encouraged pupils to imagine a very long counting stick so they could work out the eighth or twelfth multiple of 10. Throughout the school, good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. In almost all lessons, these pupils are given specially adapted work and benefit from the close attention of well-trained teaching assistants. This ensures that they make good progress.
40. Given the improving picture in mathematics, teaching, although satisfactory, is not good in all classes. There are some weaknesses. Firstly, although teachers are right to increase the level of challenge and expect pupils to work out the answers in their heads, there are occasions when pupils need to use mathematical equipment, such as counters, white boards or jotters, to help them to work out the answer. Such strategies would help pupils to visualise the problem. Secondly, some teachers cater for the more able pupils by asking the whole class to complete an increasingly complex set of examples, assuming that the more

able pupils will work quickly and reach the more difficult questions. This is not always the case and teachers would be advised to move the more able pupils on to the more demanding work from the outset. There are also inconsistencies in the presentation and amount of work produced in different classes and learning mathematics through ICT is very seldom used in some year groups. As yet, the school does not have rigorous procedures for checking pupils' work with a view to bringing all classes up to the same high standard.

Mathematics across the curriculum

41. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to use and extend their understanding of mathematics in other subjects. In science, for example, as pupils become more involved in carrying out investigations, they draw on their mathematics to measure and record results. Similarly in ICT, pupils are beginning to construct and read databases, charts and graphs, which also link with subjects such as history. The school has made a satisfactory start in this area.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **satisfactory**, although there are some weaknesses in the teaching of older pupils. What older pupils know about science is better than their understanding of how to find things out.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and pupils' achievements are satisfactory and improving;
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good;
- Pupils' understanding of how to plan and carry out their own fair tests and the use of computers to improve the pupils' learning are areas requiring improvement;
- Leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

42. Pupils achieve steadily from a below average starting point when they enter school. Standards are still below average by the age of 7. Teaching in the infant classes is largely satisfactory and occasionally good. Infant pupils are given good opportunities to record observations and write about what they have found out in their own words. This is helping to improve one of the school's main areas for development, which is to raise standards in writing. Standards are also below average by the time pupils reach the age of 11, but junior pupils are achieving steadily. When the school opened last year, because pupils arrived from a number of schools they had not covered the same work. Staff had to work hard to address these differences before the pupils took the national tests for 11-year-olds. Older pupils' work completed last year was compared to that seen during the inspection. Some work from last year was merely copied from the board and teaching concentrated largely on the learning of scientific facts. Teaching pupils how to find things out, record their observations and explain what they had found out was given insufficient emphasis. Little attention was paid to the development of scientific writing. Teachers' marking did not help pupils to improve their work. A different approach can now be seen. Pupils are now being taught to understand how a scientist works and plans to carry out a fair test.
43. From lessons seen during the week of inspection, teaching has improved and is now at least satisfactory. Pupils are expected to think about the questions they want to investigate, how they might test their predictions and record their results. A good example of this was seen in Year 6 as pupils talked about how to find out whether warmer water helped something to dissolve faster. However, a lengthy discussion with a more able group of Year 6 pupils shows that there is still room for improvement in their understanding of how to find things out. Whilst they can talk quite confidently about a range of scientific knowledge they are still

hesitant about how to plan and carry out an investigation. They also find it hard to recall when they had used a computer to help with their learning in science. This is another area for improvement. Teaching assistants work well with pupils who have special educational needs, helping them to think carefully about their work and explain what they have found out. They frequently copy the teaching style adopted by the class teacher and this helps to raise the pupils' level of achievement.

44. There are weaknesses in the leadership of the subject. Pupils' books and their performance in national tests have not been analysed in order to find out where teaching and learning can be improved. No lessons have been observed by the subject leader in order to identify existing good practice. Consequently opportunities to improve teaching and learning are not being fully explored. The subject leader needs to identify where teaching is good and spread this practice to help other colleagues.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision overall is **satisfactory** and pupils achieve steadily in aspects of the subject that are available to them. Many pupils started in the new school with limited knowledge and experience of computers. A quarter of the staff had no prior experience of teaching in a computer suite. Some equipment and systems have still to be acquired, for example a server (a master computer recently purchased via a Sports Aid grant) and e-mail facility. Developing ICT is one of the school's immediate priorities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils and teachers enjoy using the computer suite and display a high level of confidence;
- The subject leader has a clear view of where developments are required;
- The use of computers to improve learning in other subjects is limited.

Commentary

45. Good teaching in infant classes is helping pupils become confident users of programs designed to help them write and produce pictures. The youngest children know how to open a program, change the size and style of the letters and use associated language correctly, such as 'font', 'delete' and 'highlight the text'. Year 2 pupils are able to use software to draw pictures, changing the colours and thickness of the lines. They know how to find their earlier work, save new work for a future lesson and print their finished piece. When pupils are required to work in pairs they help each other and take turns sensibly. Pupils are well supported by teachers and their assistants. As yet, pupils tend merely to produce slightly different work from a similar starting point instead of some groups being given a more challenging task at the start. In this respect more could be done to improve the learning of the more able pupils. Staff are sufficiently confident in the software to respond immediately when help is required.
46. Teaching in junior classes is satisfactory. Pupils achieve steadily but as yet they do not have access to email or equipment specifically designed to sense change, such as temperature and levels of light. The subject leader is aware of this but only the local education authority can provide some facilities, such as email. Year 5 and 6 pupils use the Internet competently to find out more information about their work. For example, they ask the right questions to narrow down their search for information using web sites, such as 'Jeeves for kids'. They are able to capture images and text, resize and then combine them to produce colourful, informative booklets on World War II.
47. Some excellent work has been produced with the help of a work experience pupil from a local High school. Year 6 pupils took digital photographs of each other and then used the computer to alter their appearance into almost mythical characters. The end result was of a

high quality. As yet, the use of computers to help pupils organise information in charts and graphs is very limited. This is an area for development, as is the use of a computer to control models and sense changes in the environment.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

48. The subject is soundly led. The subject leader has produced useful documentation such as parental consent for use of the Internet and lists of software licenses for the suite of computers. She has organised staff training to extend their expertise. However, the use of ICT in the learning of other subjects is weak and an area for improvement. This also applies to pupils identified as having special educational needs. The school is very responsive to parents' wishes. For example, the school complies with the wishes of Plymouth Brethren families, regarding aspects, such as Internet access for their children. These pupils are included in ICT lessons.

HUMANITIES

Only one geography lesson was observed but pupils' work from last year was examined.

GEOGRAPHY

49. Some good work takes place in the infant classes. This is often associated with visits into the locality to study urban and rural features such as shops and parks. To enable infant pupils to understand more distant places, they follow 'the travels of Barnaby Bear', a well known character who visits different countries. A 'pretend' travel agency has been set up in one class, which greatly promotes pupils' interests and understanding of different places. In some junior classes, very little geography was recorded in pupils' books last year. Some of that was copied text or 'find the missing word'. This suggests that there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills through geographical recording. However, junior pupils have the opportunity to make a residential visit to the Lake District, which strengthens their understanding of geographical differences, for example, by comparing another place with where they live. The subject has not developed as well as it should over the last year because, until recently, there was no subject leader.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses;

- High quality discussions extend the pupils' thinking, enabling them to gain new insights into themselves and others, as well as into the deeper meanings of life;
- The subject leader has provided clear guidance on which they can base their lesson planning;
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to clarify their thoughts by writing them down as evidence for future consideration.

Commentary

50. Pupils achieve well in the infant classes and steadily in the juniors. They reach the standards expected in the locally agreed syllabus for schools. In the infant classes, there is a good mix of first-hand experiences, instructional teaching and practical work linked to other subjects. Pupils respond sensitively in discussions; for example, when shown a small, circular stained glass design, portraying an idyllic rural scene, a girl in Year 2 explained, 'It's a nice picture because somebody thinks God's world is beautiful.' Religious education is increasingly being used as a vehicle for extending pupils' self awareness and capacity to think and reason. Whether investigating a miracle of Jesus, considering a moral dilemma, or gaining an

awareness of the personality of God, pupils learn more about different faiths. They also learn more about themselves by thinking deeply about their own beliefs and comparing them with those of others.

51. The subject is well led. In addition to promoting the syllabus throughout the school, the subject leader has also developed assessment tasks for each unit, so that pupil progress can be monitored. However, the teaching places very little emphasis on the recording of work, so pupils' books do not reflect the high quality of the discussions. By Year 6, the pupils speak with much enthusiasm for the subject. They recall aspects of the work studied last year on Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism but they tend to confuse different elements. With no clear written record, for which they had personal responsibility, such confusions are inevitable. Videos are used well to provide glimpses into the lives of the believers of these faiths but little research from books or from computer programs is undertaken. Most of the learning comes from second-hand sources, so it would greatly add to the pupils' awareness of different religions to visit different places of worship or to speak to followers and learn more about their beliefs and customs directly from them.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is some strong teaching and effective use of artefacts;
- Teaching and learning have improved this year;
- There are limited opportunities for pupils to develop and extend their writing.

Commentary

52. Although standards are below the levels expected by the ages of 7 and 11, pupils achieve steadily from a low starting point when they enter school. From the work completed last year, pupils had insufficient opportunities to find and organise information for themselves. This is why their historical skills are not as good as they should be.
53. Provision has greatly improved this year. Teachers have a secure understanding of how to teach history and expertise is very good in Year 3. Teachers use interesting methods to help pupils to learn, such as using sets of cards for collecting statements about Henry V111 or using artefacts for studying Ancient Egypt. Such lively teaching, allied with good questioning, stimulates pupils to develop interests and acquire a sound understanding of historical facts and periods. Pupils' enthusiasm is reflected in the amount of historical information they bring from home. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, for example, the quality of their written work is particularly successful when the teacher and pupils compile a 'word bank' of relevant terms before the writing begins.
54. Increasingly, pupils are being encouraged to record events in their own words and to work more independently. Links between history and other subjects are slowly developing. For example, ICT was used to enable pupils to combine pictures and text, to present work on Ancient Egypt. In another lesson, pupils were encouraged to empathise with the feelings of others by pretending to be Samuel Peyps watching the blazing fire of London. Despite these improvements there is more to do. When junior pupils are asked to complete research on historical events and places, they are not always guided on how to sort, organise and record the information. Consequently, they tend to collect information haphazardly and miss some of the important historical ideas. The modest development of pupils' writing, through learning to explain historical events from different points of view, needs to be extended to make it a regular feature in all classes.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

One art and design and one design and technology lesson were observed and discussions were held with Year 6 pupils about the work in their folders and on display. The school is seeking to gain recognition for its art and design (the Artsmark award).

ART

55. Good links are made between art and other subjects, such as history and religious education, which give the work an added relevance and purpose to the pupils. Pupils work in a range of media in two dimensions. This is well displayed and celebrated to promote a sense of achievement and pride. The art club makes a valuable contribution to pupils' interest in the subject and their learning. This is evident in the two and three-dimensional work produced. The use of sketchbooks is developing pupils' observation skills effectively, although the books are not used sufficiently to enable pupils to experiment and clarify their ideas.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

56. Design and technology projects are well represented in the school. In some classes pupils are asked to produce written 'step by step' instructions showing how something will be made. In others, labelled diagrams showing pupils' designs are developed. However, these are not consistently developed in every class largely because there is a lack of clear guidance as to what should be expected from each year group in the school. There is a need to improve subject leadership in identifying the areas of good practice and sharing them with colleagues. A good example was seen when Year 4 pupils designed and made a bag using the following approach:

- they began by investigating a range of bags currently available, identifying and discussing the pros and cons of their various features;
- pupils then produced one or two labelled design drawings showing the range of materials they might use;
- then they produced a design specification detailing the various parts;
- pupils were then taught a range of required skills e.g. simple sewing techniques;
- next they produced a series of 'step-by-step' written instructions about how they will make the product;
- the product was made over a series of lessons;
- a missing element in this work was a detailed evaluation of the finished bag to say what was good about it and how it could have been better.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision for pupils' physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' gymnastic skills develop well, particularly in the early years;
- The very good facilities and wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities positively influence pupils' interests and achievement;
- Teaching pupils how to improve their performance and add creativity needs to be more consistent.

Commentary

57. Pupils achieve steadily in most aspects of physical education to reach the standards expected at the ages of 7 and 11. Standards in swimming are satisfactory and almost all pupils are on course to achieve their 25 metre distance award by the end of Year 6. Teaching is broadly satisfactory but there are good elements evident in some lessons. The younger pupils, between the ages of five and eight, show remarkable control, co-ordination and elegance of movement for their age. This is largely related to the effective teaching of gymnastics. A very capable coach visits the school and teaches reception and Year 1 pupils and also runs an after school gymnastics club. Class teachers observe her lessons and this is having a progressively strong influence upon their own teaching. The coach makes maximum use of the very good facilities, including a large, well equipped school hall and the good quality climbing, jumping and balancing equipment. When groups of pupils are sharing one piece of equipment, the coach provides additional pieces of smaller apparatus, such as target boards covered in velcro, which encourages pupils to improve their aim. Pupils with a talent for, or interest in, physical education are well catered for through the good range of out-of-school activities, including gymnastics and Brazilian 'samba style' football. The skills gained through these additional activities are demonstrated in lessons by the pupils involved. This has a positive influence on the learning of others. The subject benefits from sound leadership. Physical education lessons are well planned, thoroughly organised and safely executed. 'Warm ups' and 'cool downs' are ever present in all lessons and pupils fully understand the purpose and benefit of exercise. In some lessons, there is a strong emphasis on improvement where teachers make particularly good use of demonstration and intervene to coach new skills when pupils are working on apparatus. Through this, pupils know what they need to do to improve. When pupils are involved in dance, they are encouraged to incorporate creativity and originality into their work. For example, Year 4 pupils used a variety of roles, spins and explosive jumps to perform a dance based on fireworks. However, the two essential ingredients of teaching pupils how to make their performance better and, at the same time, different, are not present in all lessons. In particular, pupils are not always asked to observe and comment on their own work and that of others. This is why pupils achieve steadily rather than well.

MUSIC

The provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' listening and appreciation of music is developing well;
- Pupils have good opportunities to learn to play musical instruments;
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use ICT or to write about their musical experiences.

Commentary

58. Pupils achieve steadily in almost all aspects of music to reach the levels expected at the ages of 7 and 11. Standards in singing are typical and when pupils are encouraged to sing familiar songs and include actions, they sing with feeling and enthusiasm. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In each of the three lessons observed, the part of the lesson designed to improve pupils' listening and appreciation of the different elements of music was taught. This was partly because interesting extracts were chosen, such as from Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture. On these occasions, pupils learn to identify changes in the mood of the music very successfully. In Year 6, for example, pupils recorded interpretations of what they heard as a musical journey by drawing an undulating line across a page. When asked to explain the various peaks, troughs and changes of direction in the line, pupils made very accurate links with characteristics of the music. Subject leadership is satisfactory. Pupils have good

opportunities to play musical instruments to accompany songs and compose their own pieces. Talented pupils and those with emerging interests in music are well catered for, through a wide range of opportunities to learn to play recorders, guitars, violins and brass instruments. Although pupils enjoy music and engage in worthwhile experiences, they do not use ICT to help with their composing and there is little evidence of any written work, for example, to describe how and why they composed a particular piece of music. This is unfortunate because pupils' writing skills are weak and opportunities to express their feelings and ideas in this subject are not fully exploited.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for the pupils' personal development and understanding of citizenship is **satisfactory**.

59. A number of good opportunities are provided for pupils to understand what is required of a citizen in a community, through specific personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHCE) lessons and the work of the school council. They ask questions such as, 'As a School Council can we present our own award each term?' During PSHCE lessons, pupils are encouraged to think about relationships, their contribution to the school and helping others. For example, three boys decided to run a Blue Peter, Water Aid sale. They wrote letters to parents, organised the sale of goods and raised £180. This helped them see one aspect of the role they could play in society. Parents were delighted as pupils, many of them boys, went home and baked cakes ready for the sale. The school recognised the organisers' efforts through the presentation of the term's Citizen Award. Work with local police officers from the Neighbourhood Renewal Area is helping pupils to understand the community in which they live. Other roles, such as acting as lunchtime helpers, playing games with younger children and acting as librarians, help to develop a sense of how they can make contributions in their own society.

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	8
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
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	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
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	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	5
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).