

INSPECTION REPORT

Halton Community Primary School

Aylesbury

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110391

Headteacher: Mr R Mann

Lead inspector: Mr J Palk

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th January 2004

Inspection number: 256321

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:	181
School address:	Tring Rd Halton
Postcode:	HP22 5PN
Telephone number:	01296 622264
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Robert Allen
Date of previous inspection:	21 st January 2002

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Halton is an average sized primary school with 181 pupils on roll. Eighty-two per cent of pupils come from families working at the nearby Royal Air Force station. The movement of pupils in and out of the school is high with about half the roll changing each year. Numbers in the school also fluctuate each year; since the last inspection, numbers in the school have risen by a quarter. There are significantly more boys than girls. There are seven classes including a reception class. Children join the reception class each term. Their attainment varies from year to year but is presently above average. Other pupils are taught in mixed age classes with a two-year age range. Pupils are taught in mixed age sets¹ for English and mathematics lessons.

The social and economic makeup of the school is broadly average. Very few pupils are receiving free school meals. The majority of pupils are white with small minorities of pupils with Asian heritage and mixed African and white backgrounds. No pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. Two traveller pupils receive extra support. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average. Most have moderate learning needs or social and communication difficulties. There is one pupil with a statement. The school has experienced significant turbulence in its teaching force over the last two years. All but one teacher is now on a permanent contract. The headteacher took up post at the start of last term.

¹ Sets: where pupils are taught in groups organised on the basis of their attainment.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23630	J Palk	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Geography
8992	J Vischer	Lay inspector	
30144	E Hastings	Team inspector	English Science History Music Physical education Religious education Special educational needs.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is providing a **sound** education for its pupils. Good leadership and management by a new team are leading to rapid improvements. Most pupils are achieving well and standards overall are average. Teaching is satisfactory with much that is good. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning. There is strong leadership provided by the headteacher and management of school improvement is good. The school no longer has serious weaknesses and is giving satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are above average in English and mathematics by year 6.
- Teaching and the provision for children in the reception class are good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and they behave well.
- Standards are below average in design and technology (DT).
- Pupils are achieving well in information and communication technology (ICT) but a lack of resources restricts their progress in control technology².
- There is good guidance on what is to be taught but some lessons do not provide enough variation for pupils with different needs.
- The leadership of the headteacher provides staff with a very clear focus on what needs to improve to make the school better.

Overall, the school has made good progress in tackling weaknesses identified by the last inspection. The majority of pupils are now achieving what is expected of them. Weaknesses in the curriculum and the quality of teaching have been firmly tackled. The school is now able to track pupils' progress and the information is used to provide additional support and set challenging targets for pupils. Teaching has improved in years 3 to 6. However, throughout the school there are still weaker features in teachers' planning for mixed age lessons. Leadership and management, and communication between parents, governors and the school, are now strong features.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those with similar proportions receiving free school meals.*

Achievement is **good** overall. The large numbers of pupils moving in and out of the school and the high level of staff turnover has affected results in recent years. This has resulted in greater differences in pupils' performance in subjects than in previous years. Pupils in the 2002-03 year 6 were underachieving and the more able did not make the progress expected of them in mathematics and science. This had a detrimental impact on test results. The inspection found that reception children achieve well in literacy, mathematics and social skills. By the end of reception standards are above average in communication skills and personal development. Year 1 and 2 pupils are achieving well in English. By year 2 they reach average standards in writing and above average standards in reading. Achievement in mathematics and science is satisfactory and most pupils attain average

² Control technology: this is an area of ICT where children learn to use devices to control events. For example, programming traffic lights.

standards. Standards in religious education (RE) are satisfactory. In years 3 to 6 pupils are achieving well. There is effective support for the less able and travellers. More able pupils are reaching the standards expected because the teaching is demanding of them. Pupils moving into the school achieve as well as others because there are excellent strategies to ensure they settle quickly.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **good**. Throughout the school pupils' attitudes are very good and they develop well as independent learners. Behaviour is good in and around the school. Attendance levels are above average and pupils arrive at school promptly.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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

Teaching is **satisfactory** overall, with much that is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers in years 3 to 6 make good use of ICT to make lessons interesting and to help pupils learn. What the pupils can do is assessed well in English and mathematics. Teachers are getting the information they need about pupils' attainment in other subjects but do not always provide the right level of challenge in the work given to pupils in other lessons. Questions are usually chosen well to take pupils' learning forward. Good marking tells pupils how to improve. The good planning of activities in the reception class extends children's abilities to work together. Throughout the school, teaching assistants are well informed about what they have to teach. This gives them the confidence to support individuals and small groups of pupils effectively.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils are well cared for. Provision for those with special educational needs is good; they are well supported and make good progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The headteacher has a very clear vision of what the school is about. Management runs well and is ensuring that the school improves quickly. The school is guided well by checking on standards and the quality of teaching. The work of the governing body is good. They provide effective support to the school and ensure all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are satisfied. They feel their children are well looked after and encouraged to learn. They approve of the recent improvements in teaching quality. Parents still have reservations about homework and the information contained in progress reports. The inspection found that the quality of both was satisfactory, although there are inconsistencies in practice through the school. Pupils really like their school. They like the teachers and the way they are becoming involved in helping the teachers make the school even better.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve achievement in design and technology and control technology.
- Improve the match of work in lessons other than English and mathematics.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievements are **good** overall. Standards overall are average by the end of year 2 and year 6. Standards in English and mathematics are above average in year 6. Boys achieve as well as girls. Reception children achieve well and exceed expectations in literacy and personal development. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils are achieving well in English.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics in years 3 to 6.
- There is good achievement in pupils' use of computers to find and communicate information, but their skills in programming events and using sensors are below average.
- Pupils achieve well in art and design.
- Achievement in design and technology is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	67 (94)	84 (84)
writing	50 (97)	81 (86)
mathematics	92 (97)	90 (90)

There were 12 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. The 2003 results for year 2 were below average overall. Teacher assessments in science were well below average. Test results have fluctuated over recent years and the underlying trend is below average. However, the number of pupils moving in and out of the school makes comparisons unreliable. Moreover, pupils were taught by a number of teachers during the first three years in school and this affected continuity in their learning. The more able pupils achieved better in reading and mathematics than writing. In 2003 girls achieved as well as boys but over time boys achieved better than girls.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	88 (92)	75 (75)
mathematics	58 (83)	73 (73)
science	85 (92)	87 (86)

There were 26 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Year 6 pupils' performance in last year's tests was average, but well below when compared with similar schools. Results have been erratic over the last three years, although the underlying trend is broadly in line with the national trends. Pupils reach average or above standards in English but performance in science has been below average. Pupils did not meet the challenging targets for performance in the tests. Those who had been at the school since the end of year 2 did not achieve as well as they should have in mathematics and science, although they made

reasonable progress in English. However, pupils' learning in their last two years was interrupted by numerous changes in teaching staff. This meant that pupils' teaching and learning was inconsistent. The school's data indicates this affected girls' performance in mathematics and the more able pupils in all subjects.

Inspection findings.

3. The achievement of pupils at the last inspection varied between satisfactory and unsatisfactory. This inspection found most pupils are now working at or close to their potential. The backlog of skills is being dealt with systematically through improvements to teachers' subject knowledge, better lesson planning and good use of assessment information to raise teachers' expectations. Pupils are settled and enthusiastic about learning. They are being appropriately challenged in the broader curriculum as well as in English, mathematics and science.
4. Children achieve well in the reception class because of good quality teaching and a well-organised curriculum. Overall, achievement for all pupils in years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and standards are average. Reading and writing skills are better than last year because of effective use of strategies to raise attainment. A sound base of mathematical skills is established by the end of year 2. There are good levels of support for less able pupils who are learning well.
5. The improvements in assessment and associated target setting in English and mathematics have had a positive impact on the achievement of pupils in years 3 to 6. The use of assessment information in science and ICT alongside the strong practical and investigative approach taken by teachers has boosted achievement. The school still lacks the equipment to teach ICT control and modelling skills beyond the level expected of year 3 pupils. There have been other priorities for the school and, with a deficit budget, expenditure has to be very carefully managed. Improving ICT resources is a target for next term. In DT pupils have not had enough experience of making things to be at average levels in this subject. Achievement in geography, history and RE is now satisfactory and has benefited from the emphasis on researching and finding out information. ICT skills have been used very well in these subjects to ensure that pupils consolidate new knowledge. Throughout the school, there has been a systematic approach to planning art and design lessons that develop techniques and skills. This combined with the good use of teachers' own expertise has helped to raise standards in a subject that was below average at the last inspection.
6. Writing receives particularly good emphasis through the school. Pupils write for a good range of purposes and work is well matched to their ability. There is good emphasis on developing spoken language; this helps pupils develop vocabulary that improves reading and writing skills. The strategies for teaching less able pupils in English and mathematics skills are proving effective. Pupils are learning to calculate more rapidly. Good emphasis is given to helping pupils use and apply strategies to solve mathematical problems. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are well understood by teachers and support assistants who modify the work well for them. More able pupils are achieving well in English and mathematics because work has a greater level of challenge and there are high expectations of them. In years 3 to 6, the grouping of pupils by prior attainment, and in particular the monitoring of individuals progress in these groups, is particularly effective in keeping the pace of their learning even through the year.
7. In subjects where pupils are taught in mixed age and mixed ability groups there is still a lack of clear expectations of the different abilities, and achievement is satisfactory rather than good. None the less, the improved curriculum ensures that previous gaps in learning are quickly being addressed and the pupils are poised to reach good standards in all their work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes are very good and behaviour is good. Both attendance and punctuality are very good. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good relationships with others; they are confident and have high self-esteem.
- The school promotes high expectations for pupils' conduct.
- The school teaches the responsibilities of living in a community very well.
- The attendance figures are above average and the effort parents and carers make are very good.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.9	School data	0.4
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.

8. Attendance rates are above average. Within these figures are a number of authorised absences which the school permits in order to support families whose fathers or mothers may be called away for active duty abroad at short notice or to welcome a return from service overseas during the week. The school matches parents' very good efforts at getting their children to school on time by making registration very brisk and efficient. As a result lessons start very promptly both in the morning and after lunch.
9. Pupils' very positive attitudes are reflected in the way they get on with each other and with adults. They are happy and cheerful around the school and carry out their duties carefully and with the slightest prompting – for example the drawing of curtains in the hall before assembly to stop the dazzling effect of the sunshine. They work well collaboratively and put their mind to the task in hand. Staff's high expectations for pupils' conduct are therefore quite naturally promoted through example without over-relying on rewards and sanctions criteria.
10. Pupils feel well supported and repay this expectation by their behaviour and attitudes. Implicit is a sense of right and wrong, which the school manages to instil into pupils in this kind of effortless way. Bullying is low but when instances occur staff move quickly to try to resolve the issue. A good multicultural and multi-faith mix in the assembly programme, which contains many moral stories from around the world, further supports the culture of tolerance. Pupils are free from racism and there have been no exclusions in recent years.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory education. The curriculum is broad and balanced and lesson planning is catering satisfactorily for the high mobility of pupils and the gaps in learning. Teaching is satisfactory and often good. Pupils are well cared for. There are good links with the community and satisfactory links with parents and other schools.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are sound overall. The most effective teaching is in reception and years 3 to 6. Overall, good use is made of assessment information in English and mathematics.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are clear about what they want to achieve in lessons.

- Where assessment information is available, it is generally used well to set pupils challenging work.
- Teachers have good questioning skills.
- There are good arrangements for tracking children’s progress in the reception class.
- Computers linked to whiteboards are used well to support learning.
- Good marking tells pupils how to improve.
- The support staff make a valuable contribution to the progress of less able pupils and those with special educational needs.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	2 (6%)	19 (53%)	15 (42%)	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.

- Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers are very skilful at making learning interesting and enjoyable whilst at the same time making sure it is purposeful. Teaching assistants make a big contribution in lessons; they work closely with individuals and groups of pupils and have a sharp grasp of what pupils need to learn. There has been a comprehensive training programme for teaching assistants, who are confident teaching small groups. On many occasions, teaching assistants used their initiative to adapt or modify the activity to arrive at the objectives effectively.
- The lack of accurate and consistent assessment has been a barrier to raising expectations and improving learning. Pupils’ work is now assessed thoroughly in English and mathematics. Results of assessments are used to track progress allowing individual targets to be set. Pupils are well aware of these and find them helpful. Teachers use the assessment criteria accurately and this shows in the high expectations they have in their marking of work and their questions in lessons. Marking is accurate and gives a clear indication to pupils of what they need to do to improve.
- Much of the teaching in English and mathematics is good because teachers think carefully about how to group pupils. Teachers vary group sizes, allowing pupils to have individual help more easily when needed. The teachers are flexible when grouping pupils, basing decisions on assessments of the pupils’ work during lessons and discussions with teaching assistants on what has been learnt. In other subjects, which are mainly taught in mixed-age classes, assessment systems are at an early stage of development. Consequently teachers do not have enough information to plan different work for the different groups of pupils. Instead, they tend to plan for work of broadly one level, using the effective teaching assistants and the good working strategies of pupils to adjust the work for different ability groups. This works up to a point but does not provide the right balance of challenge for different abilities and pupils arriving in the school with different experiences.
- Teachers use the guidance from subject co-ordinators and the national guidance well. For example, in mathematics lessons they seek ways to make the work practical, while in history they vary the manner in which pupils present their work. There is a great deal of common practice in, for example, the effective introductions to lessons and providing time at the end of lessons to go over what has been learnt. By collaborating in planning lessons, teachers have significantly raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve in art and design and music since the last inspection. All adults are sensitive to the efforts of pupils with special educational needs and give them chances to make major contributions in lessons. Pupils use computers and whiteboards very well to try out ideas or reinforce their knowledge of words or numbers.

Most teachers, but not all, use the large electronic whiteboards very well to guide pupils' thinking during the lesson. For example, calling down additional aids such as maps, number squares or pictures. The use of the boards has a strong impact on pupils' concentration, offering them a clear view of what is being taught as well as encouraging positive views towards the use of ICT. Such techniques as 'hot seating'³ are also used well to involve pupils in assessing their own work.

15. Teaching and learning in the reception class is good overall. The two adults have a very clear grasp of the requirements of the curriculum and teaching methods for children of this age. They are well organised and use the spacious accommodation well to create interesting and exciting areas in which to learn. They have a good understanding of how well children are learning and use this information to match work that will move them on.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory and it is good in the reception year. It is much improved since the last inspection and now meets all statutory requirements. There is a good range of curricular opportunities that caters for the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of all pupils, including traveller pupils and pupils with special educational needs. The accommodation and resources meet the needs of the curriculum well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides good enrichment of the curriculum.
- The needs of the different groups of pupils are met well.
- The spacious accommodation is well maintained, and is used effectively.

Commentary

16. Following the weaknesses identified at the last inspection, a thorough overhaul of the curriculum was carried out by the temporary headteacher and is now effectively implemented by the present headteacher. The result is that there is now adequate time to teach all the subjects and sound guidelines to ensure continuity in the development of pupils' skills. Monitoring and assessing the impact of the curriculum is developing quickly to ensure that gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge can be dealt with. Most aspects of ICT are well resourced, including a new spacious computer suite, and support learning in other subjects. A good curriculum is provided for pupils in the reception built around the regular tracking of children's work and play.
17. The school has a well-established tradition of successfully integrating visits to places of educational interest and participating in a variety of community projects. It is very evident from the enthusiastic and well-informed way that pupils talk about these experiences that they are having a lasting impact on their learning. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop and practise sporting skills through participation in extra-curricular activities and competitive matches.
18. Additional booster lessons and work programmes in English and mathematics effectively support learning.
19. The work areas between classrooms are used well by teaching assistants to support small group teaching. The space in the reception class is generous and well organised to encourage children's independence. There is a well resourced outdoor play area for these children but access to this is restricted. An additional weakness is the lack of access for wheelchairs and parents with young children.

³ Hot seating: is when a pupil or pupils take questions from the rest of the class and answer them from the point of view of the character they represent.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare and health and safety is good. The support, advice and guidance they receive is also good. The school is in the early stages of involving pupils in the work of the school and its development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Health and safety procedures are very good.
- The arrangements for settling pupils into school at different times during the year are very good.

Commentary

20. The usual procedures for checking on the health and safety of pupils and adults are duly carried out and recorded. The expertise of staff involved in these procedures is of a high standard and ensures a rapid response to any concerns. Levels of supervision in the various playgrounds are good and support pupil welfare well.
21. Pupils interviewed did not hesitate to inform inspectors that they have an adult to whom they can turn and in whom they can trust. This has a significant impact on how secure pupils feel and adds to their sense of confidence and well-being.
22. Pupils are continually being asked to contribute in lessons and are expected to express their own view, especially in for example personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lessons. This has a positive impact on their sense of self-worth but formal ways to have their views heard, recorded and acted upon are not yet in place.

Example of outstanding practice

Arrangements for helping reception children settle into school are good. Arrangements for pupils arriving during the year are outstanding. Pupils, into whose class the new child is going, are told in advance. Each pupil is expected to contribute in some way to the new child's settling in. Staff ensure pupils at least propose something to help even if it is not practical to carry it out on the first day. Neighbouring classes in the same year group are also made aware of the newcomer and expected to pay due regard. The administrative procedures ensure that records and other relevant information are in the school as soon as possible and careful monitoring and following up is carried out. The process not only ensures that the new child feels welcome and settles in quickly but also that pupils' own self-esteem and sense of community is reinforced. Pupils have very good memories of their own arrival.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has satisfactory links with parents. Links with the community are good and links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory. Parents have sound views about the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Weekly newsletters are very good.
- The quality of information in last year's pupil reports is inconsistent.
- The approachability of the school is very good but some concerns are not effectively dealt with.
- Homework is inconsistent.
- The seeking of parents' views is good.
- Community links with the RAF station are very good.

Commentary

23. Relationships with parents were not on a secure footing at the last inspection. These have improved through the efforts of the previous and present headteachers. Parents are kept very

well informed about the school through the relatively new weekly newsletters. These include pupils' awards for the week giving parents an immediate sense of involvement and pride. Overall provision of information for parents is satisfactory. During the recent period of instability parents were not kept so regularly informed about their child's progress. Annual pupil reports have improved since the last inspection and give good descriptions of what pupils can do. This information about how the pupils may improve is patchy. Whilst the previous headteacher had introduced a format for all to follow this was not consistently applied. Parents were right to feel that reports are inadequate.

24. The use of homework as a tool to communicate with parents as well as provide learning for pupils is inconsistent. Consequently many parents are unhappy with the provision, as they do not know what to expect. However parents are supportive of the school and regularly attend assemblies, sports and fund-raising events. The active parents' association succeeded in raising large sums last year for the interactive whiteboards.
25. The school has a well-established tradition of issuing annual parent questionnaires. The newly appointed headteacher has maintained this tradition and appropriate action is taken in response to parents' views. This stems principally from the headteacher's conscientious determination to give approachability priority. However perhaps due to the period of turbulence and perhaps also to entrenched negative views about mixed age classes, many parents still feel that the school does not take account of their views. These parents' views are in complete contrast to how approachable they feel the school is. Parents are very positive about this aspect. The inspection team considered that there are still issues to be resolved in planning lessons appropriately for the range of abilities in mixed age classes.
26. The school's very good links with the RAF station revolve around the shared use of some facilities, and regular instances of RAF recruits being involved in helping the school to enhance or redecorate its buildings and grounds. Recruits have also been instrumental in raising funds for the school such as monies used to make a costly school outing possible. There are few links with other areas of the local community, although a good regular programme of performing visits is established with the adjacent retirement home.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides effective leadership. The leadership of senior staff is satisfactory. Management is good, as is the governance of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governors provide good support for the headteacher but are also challenging of the progress being made to improve the school.
- The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and plans systematically.
- Progress towards the targets on the school improvement plan is good but this is now out of date because much has been achieved ahead of time.
- Co-ordinators are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and are clear about where improvement is needed.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school.

Commentary

27. With support from the local education authority, the governors played a significant part in helping the school to address its serious weaknesses after the last inspection. They addressed the weaknesses in their own awareness of the situation in the school, and now have good links to individual subjects. Governors played a full part in shaping and monitoring the action plan and took difficult decisions regarding staffing. Along with the headteacher they evaluate the standards

and pay close attention to staff training to ensure that the pupils have the expertise needed to achieve well. Governors are prepared to challenge and debate on matters of strategy and there is a good feeling of teamwork that embraces the local authority. They play a key role in formulating policies, many of which reflect well the ambitions of the school.

28. Bringing stability and raising the achievement of pupils has been central to the headteacher's work. The headteacher's strongest feature is the ability to instil confidence in people after a long period of staffing uncertainties. He leads by example and is a good role model for teachers and pupils. As an experienced practitioner, he provides plenty of support for newly appointed staff. Along with senior staff he has established good systems to keep track of individual pupils' achievements and openly shares his expectations of progress with staff. There is an extensive programme for checking on teaching quality. This has helped improve provision and is beginning to raise standards. Formal performance management is also in place and is appropriately linked to professional development and school improvement planning. The previous headteacher had done much to improve the quality of curriculum planning, in particular to make it suitable for mixed age classes. The present headteacher is thorough in his evaluation and monitoring of the standards and teaching, and in one term has gained a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The use of an associate teacher to cover for staff assisting the headteacher with monitoring or supporting newly appointed staff has meant that this important work is undertaken conscientiously. Good follow up and an honest approach to evaluation has served to unify teaching teams.
29. Regular reviews with the school's senior management team and governors have been a strong feature of the LEA's involvement since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses. The support for teachers through training helped prevent further eroding of standards during the years of staff turbulence.
30. The school self-evaluation, completed before the inspection, closely matches the judgements in most areas of the inspection. The challenge to the leadership now is to set the path for the future development based on the information being gained about standards. The current improvement plan reflects the priorities for the school last September when the headteacher took over from the temporary headteacher. This has been superseded by the pace of change and improvement and therefore needs to reflect this more clearly.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	£432,632
Total expenditure	£482,704
Expenditure per pupil	£2667

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-£4,645
Balance carried forward to the next	-£54,708

31. The management of finances is now on a secure footing. Well-informed spending decisions reflect the school's educational priorities. The deficit carried forward is very high. Systems for managing the finances were weak at the last inspection and for the last two years governors have had to plan with a deficit. The costs incurred in trying to bring about staffing stability further exacerbated the budget position. Staffing costs have now stabilised and the governors have agreed with the local authority a recovery plan that will balance the budget in the near future.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING and SUBJECTS.

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

32. Provision for the children in reception classes is good. Most children achieve well, because the activities are well managed and inspire the children to learn. Children exceed the expectations in social development, communication, language and literacy and in their creative development. In mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and in physical skills children are on course to meet the goals expected by the end of the year. The co-ordinator has been with the school for one year and in that time has shown strong leadership. Provision has strengthened since the last inspection with the introduction of regular tracking of children's progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for the children to develop initiative and independence.
- Very good behaviour; children are eager to learn and participate well in activities.

Commentary

33. All adults work hard to help children feel safe and secure. This raises their confidence and willingness to take part in activities, and make choices about some aspects of their work. Children behave very well. Adults promote social skills well, for example, by teaching children the difference between right and wrong and helping them understand, in simple terms, how their actions affect others. Consequently, children share equipment, take turns and chat to each other when working. During creative activities children spontaneously said 'please' and 'thank you' and were keen to help each other use the resources positively. Children learn simple rules and routines, such as remembering to put up their hands to answer questions and the need to limit the number of children at the activities.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching and learning are good.
- Children's speaking skills are particularly well promoted.

Commentary

34. On starting school speaking skills are average. The strong emphasis that is placed on promoting this aspect pays off. By the end of the reception year the majority exceed the expected goals. Reading and writing skills are taught well and are above expectation for this time of year.

35. Teachers and support staff encourage children to talk in play and other activities, which extends their vocabulary. The development of writing skills features prominently. Pretend play areas have a good range of resources to promote writing and many children use these spontaneously and imaginatively, for instance to compose lists of what they need for an exploration of the moon's surface. Handwriting skills and correct pencil grip are well promoted. By the end of reception

many children write the letters of the alphabet. Higher and average attainers make good attempts at writing words and short phrases independently, showing good application of what they have learned about letter sounds.

36. All children listen attentively to stories and handle books carefully. Staff encourage them to read notices and captions; a love of books is promoted well. Most were very keen to read to each other and are clear about the direction in which print is read. More able children read with good expression. Good use is made of ICT to support children's literacy development, although the unreliability of classroom computers means that plans for their use often have to be altered.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching and learning leads to good achievement.
- Mathematical ideas are promoted well in many situations, although some resources are worn.

Commentary

37. Most children make good progress in learning about numbers and by the end of the year standards are in line with national expectations. In addition to specific mathematics lessons, activities such as counting, sorting and matching tasks, sand, water and other play, constantly promote good learning. The use of letters from a fictional bear to set mathematical problems for children involving shape caught their interest. As the children followed instructions to make a picture of Bear's rocket they strengthened their knowledge of the properties of shapes. Some good questioning and effective use of resources helped the more able children count quickly and estimate amounts up to 20 during a guessing game. Some satisfactory use is made of ICT with children using a simple data-handling program to record information, for instance, about their favourite colours.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Enquiry skills are promoted well.
- The computers are unreliable.

Commentary

38. The teacher and teaching assistant plan well to stimulate children's curiosity and interest. During the inspection, Bear's visit to the moon encouraged children to explore more about the moon's cycle, using photographs and information books. The well-focused questions served to encourage children to give explanations. This was strengthened through appropriate role-play as children pretended to journey to the moon. The carefully thought out play area was complete with lunar buggy and technological aids which strengthened children's awareness of differences between the moon's surface and that of earth.
39. Children's computer skills are average. Most demonstrate good manipulation of the mouse. Children are keen to use these skills in class, but opportunity is limited because the computers are old and unreliable. Children have regular guided activities in developing ICT skills in the computer suite, which is ensuring that they achieve well.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

It was not possible to make a judgement about provision in this area of learning. Children co-operate well when using large equipment such as trikes. They show satisfactory control over small equipment such as scissors when cutting and sticking materials to rockets. Teachers use their observations of these sessions to target children to help them improve.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are many opportunities for children to learn skills and work imaginatively.

Commentary

40. Although a structure is often provided for modelling and artwork, children are given good opportunities to make choices and show creativity. For instance, in a modelling activity, children chose from different shapes and colours of paper to produce individualised models of rockets. Good use is made of ICT. Children produce recognisable pictures, controlling the mouse well to draw lines.
41. The music area is well stocked and children freely explore the range of instruments available and the different sounds that they make. The pretend play area is very well resourced to include dressing up clothes and props such as mobile telephones and microscopes. During the inspection this proved immensely popular and provided very good opportunities for children to use their imagination.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are achieving well and standards during the inspection are above average by Year 6.
- Teaching is good throughout the school.
- The strategies to raise achievement for the more able are well managed.
- Pupils' library skills are underdeveloped.

Commentary

42. Pupils achieve well in speaking and this is helping their written work. They are given good opportunities to speak in lessons, for example, to discuss ideas for their writing or to plan work in art lessons. There are also formal opportunities such as in drama activities and presenting the findings from research. Pupils have well-developed vocabulary and express themselves very clearly. Some good techniques such as 'hot seating' extend pupils' speaking skills. Across the school an emphasis is placed upon the development of subject specific vocabulary and effective questioning is seen in most lessons. This lifts the aspirations of all pupils. Less able pupils speak confidently and listen attentively.
43. Reading is systematically taught throughout the school. A good stock of books is readily available in classrooms and the library. Through the school, pupils read with confidence and enjoyment,

and demonstrate good understanding. They read regularly in class and are well supported at home. The additional strategies for teaching letter sounds provide a boost to the learning of less able readers and, together with the skilled support from classroom assistants, ensure they make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs also benefit from this good quality support and make good progress. Year 6, pupils' library skills are weak. Pupils do not fully understand how non-fiction books are organised in libraries. This is because these skills have not been effectively taught. The school brought forward its plans to improve the library but has not yet addressed this weakness in teachers' termly planning.

44. Writing skills are average. Pupils in year 2 have made some good gains. Handwriting is mostly joined, fluent, and developing towards a common style resulting from regular handwriting practice. The presentation of work is mostly good and written work in other subjects is marked consistently. Comments are supportive, and provide sufficient detail on how pupils can improve. For writing lessons, grouping pupils by what they have already learnt ensures that good attention is provided for all groups of pupils, with teacher and classroom assistants working in partnership to develop writing skills. Good use is made of the pupils' targets for improvement in these lessons. Pupils write industriously and some at great length, particularly in producing imaginary stories. Due to improvements in the provision pupils now write for a range of purposes including poetry, and use word processing effectively to improve their work.
45. The quality of teaching in English is consistently good. Lessons are well planned with good attention paid to the needs of the different ability groups. Teachers maintain a good dialogue with the learning support assistants, who contribute well. Teachers use good strategies to develop collaborative work. More able pupils are extended because their written work is valued. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and make lessons interesting and relevant to pupils' needs. Very imaginative and interesting projects are provided for younger pupils to develop and extend their language using role-play and puppets, and this is used effectively in support of the development of writing skills.
46. The subject leader carries out her responsibilities well. She has provided effective support and training for new members of staff in how to teach writing. This has contributed to the improvement in standards since the last inspection. She has been thorough in maintaining and analysing pupil data and teachers have been well supported in assessing pupils' work. This information has been used well to set pupils individual, short-term, targets that they understand and that help them to make progress.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

The use of literacy skills in other subjects such as history, science and ICT is good. The pupils do not have much experience of using the library, but make good use of computers to seek for information.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good emphasis on using and applying mathematics through the school but the development of vocabulary is weak.
- Teaching is good.
- There is strong leadership.

Commentary

47. The best improvement since the last inspection and one that has led to higher standards is the ability of pupils to calculate quickly and use these skills in different situations. Pupils are making good progress in calculation and working with larger numbers. By year 6 most recall multiplication facts to 10 x 10 and use them to quickly derive the corresponding division facts.
48. Teaching is good overall. Through the school teachers focus on small steps with plenty of revisiting where pupils have shown uncertainties. They insist that work is set out accurately and this avoids unnecessary mistakes. Intervention strategies for less able pupils are sound. Teachers are very clear about what pupils are to learn by the end of the week and evaluate the progress they are making. This is linked well to the targets that are then set for individuals. The lesson planning is a strong feature and older, more able, pupils are catching up much of the lost ground. Teachers follow the guidance methodically and are given good support by teaching assistants in the main part of the lesson. However, teachers do not consistently use techniques for introducing and using new vocabulary and this limits how well pupils are learning in some lessons. Lessons start with a brisk mental arithmetic session which pupils enjoy. In years 1 and 2 there is not sufficient use of questions to help them gain a quick assessment of how well the class are performing.
49. Good use is made of ICT to demonstrate strategies for problem solving. This raises the level of challenge. Teachers in years 3 to 6 make good use of the setting arrangements to group pupils effectively and help them gain a positive view about their abilities. These arrangements are reviewed every two weeks by the co-ordinator. However in years 1 and 2 the arrangements are less effective, as a number of more able pupils in year 1 are placed inappropriately in sets.
50. The co-ordinator has had a positive influence on improving the quality of teaching. In her short time at the school she has consolidated the planning and, along with the headteacher, developed the start and end of lessons. She is managing the subject well, particularly in ensuring that teachers teach pupils a range of strategies for calculation and provide a good spread of practical mathematical experiences. This has been effective in helping to raise standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

51. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory and improving. Teachers are developing pupils' numeracy skills in other subjects such as art where they use symmetry to design patterns. Data handling skills are well developed in science where pupils use pictograms, pie charts and block graphs to present information.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils achieve average standards through the school.
- Good attention is given to scientific enquiry.

Commentary

52. Standards in science by the end of year 2 and year 6 are average. Whilst this was the situation at the last inspection standards have improved after recent falls in the national test results of the last two years.
53. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils of all ages to engage in 'hands on' practical activities and investigations. In year 2 these include observing materials that change in everyday situations and within pupils own experiences. Good resources interest and motivate pupils.

Teachers plan well for pupils to work together, record their findings in different ways, and begin to learn and use the correct scientific vocabulary.

54. In year 6, challenging lessons are planned to enable pupils to build upon previous learning, for example, of forces through the introduction of the ideas of resistance and friction. They investigate by testing balanced and unbalanced forces using good quality force meters. Measurements are read carefully and accurately.
55. Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan and teach interesting lessons that ensure good learning. Good efforts are made to extend the learning of the more able pupils. They are being helped to catch-up with the use of appropriate worksheets and homework. Classroom assistants work alongside pupils with special educational needs helping them understand new vocabulary and explain their results. Teachers question pupils' ideas about testing so that they make great progress in their understanding of how to control variables and the nature of scientific explanation. On occasions they are asked to explain their findings to the class, and do so with some measure of confidence and clarity. Teachers give clear explanations and use questions effectively to assess the level of pupils' understanding. They have started to use this information to update the new assessment records.
56. The subject leader has only recently taken up the role. However she has quickly assessed where standards are and where she would like them to be. An appropriate plan has been drawn up to guide improvement in standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There have been good improvements to staff skills and resources, but as at the last inspection the school still lacks resources to teach control technology.
- The pupils have good independent skills and this is helping them to make use of computers in other subjects.

Commentary

57. The facilities for pupils to develop research skills and to communicate in a range of subjects are good. The timetabling of the well-equipped ICT suite ensures that it is used throughout the day, including lunchtimes. Guidance, in the form of lesson plans, provides good support to teachers. The regular and good use of interactive whiteboards by teachers has further benefited all pupils' confidence and in these aspects they achieve well.
58. The weakness, and one noted within the overall unsatisfactory standards and provision for ICT at the last inspection, is that the school still lacks resources to teach the control and modelling element of the curriculum. This is due to budget constraints but is being addressed as part of the phased development of ICT.
59. Teaching is good. The majority of teachers are confident users of ICT, stretching and challenging themselves and pupils to use new skills. For example, in one lesson linked to art and design work, the teacher explored with pupils a range of ways they could divide the screen to develop symmetrical patterns. Pupils learnt quickly and were keen to explore, finding that they could use a command on the screen that would reduce the number of procedures required.
60. Pupils in year 6 use art programmes and word processors that demonstrate a range of skills in line with expectations. They use the Internet to find out information and communicate with others

across the World Wide Web. Presentational skills are good and year 5 and 6 pupils have recently produced their own presentations of work done in both geography and history.

61. Leadership and the successful development of ICT was, until recently, the responsibility of the temporary headteacher. The deputy headteacher has taken over the role and has made a good contribution to developing the subject more widely, such as the introduction of an assessment and skills checklist.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

62. This has been a priority and is satisfactory overall. Opportunities to develop ICT skills are planned into much of the curriculum, but a lack of equipment limits its use in science and DT. There is some very effective use of computers to support writing skills. As pupils explained, they can transfer their work from the computers in the suite to the large whiteboard in class and 'improve it'.

HUMANITIES

One **geography** lesson for years 5 and 6 was well taught. The evidence from this lesson and scrutinising a sample of geography work indicates standards are average. Pupils are now being appropriately challenged to develop their research and mapping skills.

Religious education

Provision in religious education (RE) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good programme of visits and visitors enriches learning.

Commentary

63. Although only two lessons were seen it is clear also from looking at pupils' work and holding discussions with the subject co-ordinator and teachers that pupils at year 2 and year 6 are now achieving average standards. This is an improvement since the last inspection. An appropriate amount of time is now given to the teaching of RE. Pupils experience many opportunities to engage in discussion, role-play and activities such as 'hot-seating', which have a positive effect upon their learning. An adequate supply of resources provides particular support for learning about the main world religions. However there are no procedures for assessing pupils' levels of attainment and this limits learning.

64. The teaching is sound. It enables pupils to relate the focus of lessons to their own experiences and to communicate their feelings about relationships with family, friends and others. The visits from the RAF padre supports the work of the school, as do visits to local churches and places of worship.

History

Provision for history in years 3 to 6 is **satisfactory**. There was insufficient evidence to judge provision in years 1 and 2.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The improved curriculum has ensured pupils now develop their knowledge and skills and year 6 pupils achieve average standards.

- Good use of writing skills supports learning well.
- A good programme of visits and visitors enriches pupils' curricular experiences.

Commentary

65. The last inspection issue about limited time has now been addressed.
66. Only two lessons were observed. Teachers made the lessons interesting through the well-organised opportunities for pupils to discuss issues. This gave them an insight into how events in history had changed people's lives. The best teaching was characterised by the challenging questions that gave pupils ideas for their future research.
67. The scrutiny of pupils' history work through the school showed that teachers plan effectively to give pupils a range of writing experiences. However they do not pay enough attention to the writing skills pupils have already gained and much of the work is the same for pupils with a range of abilities. Consequently some pupils who could achieve more are not challenged.
68. Work is thoroughly planned to teach pupils about where historical information can be found. Regular visits to local museums and visiting historical theatre groups are a source of enrichment for pupils' learning. These good quality visits have developed pupils' interest and commitment and many used their own time in school to research, using the Internet websites, and non-fiction texts.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Work was sampled in design and technology (DT), music and physical education (PE), all of which were areas identified for improvement in the last report.

Discussions with pupils from years 3 and 4, and 5 and 6 about their **DT** experiences indicated that the programme of work was in place but standards are below average. Very little DT has been taught in the past two years and the systematic development of skills has not been possible. There was very little evidence available and pupils confirmed that the subject has received very little time.

The one year 5 and 6 **PE** lesson was well taught. A new scheme of work has been introduced for dance, and staff training has been provided to ensure its successful implementation. Good opportunities to participate in additional sporting activities are provided in extra-curricular clubs.

In **music** singing was sampled. The quality of singing throughout the school is now good. This is the result of some good teaching. The involvement by the school of a leading singing teacher has made a major contribution to this improvement through her expertise and involvement with pupils of all ages. Planning, using published schemes, has been combined with national guidance and has helped to fill in the gaps from previous years. Training for staff has been provided to help them become familiar with the new materials.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and are making up lost ground.

Commentary

69. Standards are now average in year 6. Teaching is good and all pupils through the school are catching up quickly. Two lessons were seen. In both teachers showed good understanding of the

techniques and skills to be taught. However, they could do more in both lessons to encourage pupils to reflect on their work. Preparation for the final drawings was a strong feature in the lesson in year 2. Whilst pupils' drawing skills at the start of the lesson were below average, they made good progress and reached average standards. A good range of resources, such as found objects and sculptures from Africa, gave all pupils plenty to focus their drawing skills on. Skills were taught systematically. Through the school teachers are enthusiastic and pupils' work is given prominent display space around the school. The fact that much is well framed and entered for local competitions has raised the profile of this subject since the last inspection. An art auction event last term raised much interest in art amongst the pupils who have since developed their critical appreciation.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

70. Provision in **personal, social and health education and citizenship** was sampled. The co-ordinator has a very clear understanding of the priorities of the provision and its impact on setting the tone to encourage pupils' learning across the curriculum. The provision has improved since the last inspection; more time has been given to the subject and a clearer focus has been established. The well-structured timetable has the advantage of flexibility so allowing pupils to express immediate concerns and not to have to wait several days until the lesson. It is also used as an occasion to draw up what action pupils are going to take to welcome a sudden newcomer. The subject forms an integral part of the caring nature of the school with the emphasis on giving pupils confidence rather than following the curriculum *per se*. Pupils look forward to the lessons and some older pupils take part in choosing topics for discussion. For example deciding what concerns they are going to talk about in circle time⁴. This has the effect of improving pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence well.

⁴ A period in which pupils sit in a circle and share their concerns, feelings and achievements.

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	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	3
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	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	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	3

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