

INSPECTION REPORT

HAMILTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

High Wycombe

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110520

Headteacher: Mrs S Woolgar

Lead inspector: Mr George Crowther

Dates of inspection: 14th – 17th June 2004

Inspection number: 256324

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	691
School address:	Priory Avenue High Wycombe Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP13 6SG
Telephone number:	01494 522231
Fax number:	01494 440576
E-mail:	office@hamilton-school.co.uk
Website:	http://www.hamilton-school.co.uk
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C S Wells
Date of previous inspection:	8 th – 12 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hamilton is a very large, foundation primary school for boys and girls who are 4 -11 years old. At the time of the last inspection, it was a grant maintained combined school with pupils aged 4 -12. It has 631 pupils organised in 21 classes, and 60 children who attend part-time in the nursery. The school is situated in central High Wycombe and draws pupils from an area in which there are families from a very wide range of ethnic backgrounds. About half of the pupils are white British, and a third of Pakistani origin. Many of the pupils live near to the school, but about a half of the families choose to send their children to Hamilton from a distance. The school is popular and over-subscribed. The school serves families from a range of social circumstances but, taken together, these are similar to the national picture. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Overall, pupils' attainment when they start school is about the same as that expected for their age, though a significant proportion begin whilst still learning English as an additional language. Seventy-two pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Eighty-nine pupils, an average proportion, have been identified as having special educational needs. These needs vary from moderate learning difficulties to physical disabilities. Eight pupils have a statement outlining particular special needs. The school has Investors in People status, which recognises that it has good systems to support and train its staff. In 2001, Hamilton gained a Schools Achievement Award for good results in national tests.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18814	George Crowther	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage, art and design, music
9053	Vivienne Phillips	Lay inspector	
32483	Kate Chandler	Team inspector	English, English as an additional language
35067	Robert Edom	Team inspector	Mathematics, design and technology, physical education
23487	Patricia Kitley	Team inspector	Geography, history, religious education, special educational needs
27225	Anna Sketchley	Team inspector	Science, information and communication technology

The inspection contractor was:

e-Qualitas Limited

Langshaw
Pastens Road
Limpsfield Chart
Oxted
Surrey
RH8 0RE

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	18
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Hamilton is a good, effective school with many outstanding features. Pupils thrive in an atmosphere that fosters enthusiasm for learning. They achieve well because the quality of teaching is good with several very strong aspects. Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds value their differences and similarities because of the way the school celebrates these and promotes respect for others. As a result, relationships are excellent. Good leadership and effective management ensure that the school runs very smoothly from day to day, with a clear focus on maintaining and improving good standards. They also promote a very positive culture in which both teachers and children expect to do well. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school and reach above average standards in many subjects
- Pupils learn quickly because the quality of teaching is good
- Pupils behave very well and are very keen to learn because the school nurtures their personal development and self-belief very strongly
- The curriculum is rich, relevant and enhanced by an excellent range of activities outside lessons
- The school keeps a good check on pupils' progress, but without always identifying clearly enough the next step pupils need to take in their learning and then acting on this information
- Good leadership and management, with very strong support from governors, helps the school to sustain and improve the quality of pupils' work, but the leadership of subjects has weaknesses

Since the school was inspected in 1998, improvement has been good. High standards have been maintained in a number of aspects of pupils' work. Results in the Year 2 national tests have improved and, in Year 6, above-average results have been maintained. The school has dealt with all the key issues from the previous inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' achievement is good. When children start school, overall attainment is normally about the same as expected for their ages. In the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception classes) children achieve well. A good range of interesting activities stimulate their learning and adults give them the confidence to do well. Normally, most children reach the goals expected nationally by the time they join Year 1, but the current reception year has a high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs, and so standards are below average. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils achieve well, in a wide range of subjects, owing to good teaching and a well-planned curriculum. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 builds well on this solid foundation

and enables the pupils to achieve well and reach above-average standards in many subjects. The results of national tests, given in the table above, show that the pupils do well. In the current Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in music are very high. Pupils who have special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language do as well as other pupils.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are fostered very well. Very positive attitudes to work result from the confidence to 'have a go' that the school instils in pupils, along with a belief that they can find something in which to excel. Pupils are very well behaved. Excellent relationships underpin a very harmonious community where each pupil feels valued and learns to value others. The school nurtures pupils' personal qualities with great care to a high level of maturity by Year 6. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

The quality of teaching is good, with some very strong features. In the Foundation Stage, a good range of well-planned activities, well supported by adults, encourages pupils' learning effectively. Whole-class sessions, however, are not always as effective in promoting learning as small group tasks. Throughout the rest of the school, learning is good in the great majority of lessons because teachers plan work carefully, use imaginative methods to capture and hold pupils' interest and give them the confidence to do well. Teachers are good at getting pupils fully involved in lessons through clear explanations and good management of learning. Where teaching is very good, occasionally excellent, teachers' outstanding expertise in the subject enables them to cover a lot of ground. Teachers use quick-fire questions skilfully to encourage curiosity and stimulate thinking, which gets the best out of the pupils. In such lessons, pupils are very keen to join in and determined to succeed. In a few lessons, work is not matched closely enough to pupils' needs, so they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

The curriculum is well planned and provides a good range of work, which is enriched by the excellent range and quality of activities outside lessons. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment and checking on their progress are good at a whole-school level, but less well developed for day-to-day use in some classes. As a result, individual targets for improving pupils' work are not always used well enough. The school provides very good care and support for its pupils and has created a very good partnership with its parents and the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership of the school is good. The headteacher provides a strong lead in sustaining the purposeful climate for teaching and learning. She values the school's tradition of seeking high standards in all aspects of its work and is successful in transmitting this to both staff and pupils. The relatively new senior management team also provides an effective lead in developing aspects of the school's work. The leadership of subjects, however, is inconsistent and not focused firmly enough on raising standards across the whole school. Governors fulfil their role very effectively. They have considerable expertise, a very good knowledge of the school, and provide the right balance of support and challenge.

Management of the school is good with a clear view of what the school does well and what needs to be improved. Targets for improvement are well chosen, based on a thorough evaluation of pupils' existing achievements. The complex day-to-day management of a very large school, on two sites, is handled very efficiently. Staff are well supported in building their expertise.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views of the school and the great majority feel that their children are doing well. They particularly appreciate the warm, friendly atmosphere. Pupils are very proud of the school, enjoy being here, find lessons interesting and fun, and know they are expected to work hard.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to build upon its current success are

- Draw on existing good practice to ensure that teachers identify more consistently what pupils need to learn next, so that work can be best matched to their needs
- Improve the way in which work in subjects is managed and developed

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is good. They get a good start in the nursery and reception classes. By the time they join Year 1, most children reach the expected standards, and many exceed them. Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' achievement is good in a wide range of subjects. By Year 6, above-average standards in English, mathematics and science are maintained, and standards are also better than expected in ICT, geography, history, music and religious education. Pupils who have special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language achieve just as well as others because teachers plan work for them carefully, involve them fully in lessons and ensure they are well supported in their learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in a wide range of subjects because the quality of teaching is good
- All groups of pupils achieve well because their particular needs are met effectively
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are high, which breeds confidence and success
- Some pupils do not achieve well enough in writing
- Pupils achieve particularly well in music and standards are very high

Commentary

National test results and other performance data

1. The results of the 2003 national tests for pupils in Year 2 are better than those reported at the last inspection, particularly in reading and writing. Over the past three years, the results have improved at a faster rate than for most schools. In 2003, almost all the pupils reached the expected level and, in reading and mathematics, about a third gained the higher Level 3. Overall, the results were better than those gained by pupils in *similar schools*.*

* *'Similar schools' are those with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals*

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.7 (16.8)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	15.5 (15.3)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.7 (17.1)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 87 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In Year 6, the 2003 results are about the same as those reported at the last inspection. Over the past three years, results have fluctuated according to the ability of the group of pupils taking the tests, and were particularly high in 2001. The rate of improvement is similar to the national picture. In 2003, the results were above average in mathematics and science and, in these subjects, pupils did better than those in other schools who gained the same scores in the Year 2 tests. In English, the results were average, with pupils making similar progress to others who gained the same scores in Year 2. Weaknesses in some pupils' writing prevented them from reaching the higher Level 5.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
---------------	----------------	------------------

English	26.9 (27.8)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.9 (26.9)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.5 (28.4)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 86 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Given that children start school with attainment that is average overall, and a significant proportion are learning English as an additional language, the test results, and the standard of work seen in pupils' books, represent good achievement. Good teaching throughout the school, with a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching, means that pupils make good progress at each stage, building their knowledge, skills and understanding well. The school's own data, tracking pupils' progress between Year 2 and Year 6, shows that almost all pupils make at least the expected progress, many do better, and very few make less than the expected progress. The very positive environment for learning, with high expectations of what pupils can achieve, plays a significant part in giving each child the confidence to be successful.

Foundation Stage (nursery and reception classes)

4. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage. Adults provide a very good range of activities to ensure that the children build their skills well in all areas of the curriculum, and learning is interesting and fun. The richness of the activities, the good quality of the teaching, and the good support provided by adults help the children to make good progress. As a result, the children are well prepared to join Year 1. In the reception classes, pupils did not achieve well enough in some whole-class sessions seen because they were restless and the teachers did not manage their behaviour effectively enough. Much better achievement was seen in many small group activities.

Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2

5. Pupils' achievement is good. In English, pupils achieve well in reading. Teachers give them an enthusiasm for reading through the books they read to them, and they give them the skills they need to tackle unknown words through good teaching of basic skills, such as letter sounds. Parents play a significant part in sharing books with their children and ensuring the frequent practice that breeds success. In writing, pupils make good progress, but some of the older, more-able pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their skills by writing at length for a range of purposes. In mathematics, pupils make good progress because the teaching is challenging and lively, and so pupils enjoy their lessons. In science, lots of practical activities encourage pupils to think carefully about scientific problems and help them to make good progress. In all other subjects where there was sufficient evidence to make a judgement, pupils achieve well.

Pupils in Years 3 to 6

6. The good quality of most of the teaching, and the outstanding work of specialist teachers, helps these pupils to achieve well. Progress in reading continues to be good, with many pupils reaching high standards by Year 6. In writing, whilst most pupils make steady progress, there are too few opportunities for them to develop their own style and to write at length, and so standards are average by Year 6. The more-able pupils, in particular, do not develop the above-average skills that are a feature of most aspects of their work. The school has identified this issue and is tackling it. Pupils achieve well in mathematics and science because lessons are challenging and teachers use an imaginative range of methods. In music, pupils' achievements are excellent because the teaching is outstanding and pupils excel in a wide range of activities outside lessons. Very good facilities for ICT, and very good specialist

teaching ensure that pupils do well. Pupils' achievement is also good in geography, history and religious education.

Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language

7. These pupils achieve as well as others. The school welcomes all pupils, whatever their special educational needs, and makes sure that they are involved fully in all aspects of school life. The school makes good provision to support these pupils both academically and emotionally. During the inspection many lessons were observed where pupils with special needs made good progress because of the encouragement from staff, with teaching assistants playing a particularly effective role. As a result, pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the clear and attainable targets set for them. Pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress. Good teaching and excellent relationships help their learning. Teachers value the contributions they make and provide a positive learning environment with high expectations.

8. At the previous inspection, pupils' achievement was good overall, with most progress being made in Years 3 to 6. Pupils' achievement is now good across the whole school, with a significant improvement in Years 1 and 2. The new nursery is successful. The school has done well to maintain pupils' good achievement in many subjects and improve it still further in subjects such as ICT, music and religious education. There is no sign of complacency. The school is continuing to strive for even higher standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and their personal qualities blossom very well as a result of the school's very good attention to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has built further on the good provision noted at the last inspection. There are no exclusions. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good.

Main strengths

- Very positive attitudes to work result from the confidence to 'have a go' that the school instils in pupils along with a belief that they can find something in which to excel
- Behaviour is very good and a significant factor in all that pupils achieve
- Excellent relationships underpin a very harmonious community where each pupil feels valued and learns to value others
- The school nurtures pupils' personal qualities with great care to a high level of maturity by Year 6, helped by a very good personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme
- Attendance has improved as a result of very good efforts by the school to reduce extended term time holiday absences

Commentary

9. Teachers expect to make learning interesting and fun, so pupils of all ages and backgrounds are keen to be involved in sparkling activities in lessons. For instance, Year 3 pupils learnt a lot in a mathematics lesson because the teacher skilfully introduced the link between multiplication and division facts using lively practical work, such as sharing sweets among printed smiley faces. Pupils are intrigued by stimulating activities and happy to attempt something new, or answer a tricky question, because they are praised for trying. "It's alright to be wrong as long as you have a go and do your best". Several times, pupils made the point that the school does all it can to find something that a child can do well so that everyone knows what success feels like and wants to do even better.
10. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. In an excellent Year 2 mathematics lesson, their rapt attention, immaculate behaviour, drive and snappy self-assessment – "One, two, three, show me!" and the children put thumbs up, level or down – fuelled striking progress. In spite of occasionally oppressive heat during the inspection, pupils remained very helpful, considerate and courteous. They did their best to do as teachers asked, even when, on occasion, activities had not been explained clearly enough. Pupils' very good manners, listening skills and perseverance contribute strongly to how well they learn, and enhance their personal development.
11. The school is very welcoming to all because of the way pupils' similarities and differences are valued, respected and celebrated. Pupils are very tolerant and understand very clearly how to get on with each other – "We are all friends, even if we don't always like each other" – so relationships are first rate. Pupils take genuine pleasure in one another's achievements and huge interest in experiences different from their own, such as how it feels to have roots in another faith or culture.
12. Stunning teaching in the very best lessons inspires pupils to marvel at what they see and hear, to think for themselves and ask excited, searching questions, as seen in a science lesson where pupils were spellbound by sound-wave patterns projected from an oscilloscope to a screen. The school gives high priority to all aspects of personal development, so teachers give praise and encouragement naturally and consistently to shape pupils' behaviour and nurture self-belief – "I like the support the teachers give you when you don't feel confident in yourself". The school lives its motto that *Children are the future* through its commitment to a high quality PSHE programme that is designed to prepare them very well for life as the next generation of citizens. Year 6 pupils quoted the motto to explain articulately how they helped to improve school life by working as peer mediators and

by persuading staff and parents to provide better resources for play. Through PSHE and school council debate, pupils decided to create their own garden. This has enriched the environment and transformed individual interest in school, as pupils watch things grow and tend the area – “We must be the only school with a gnome monitor!”

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.3
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

13. Attendance was slightly below the national average in 2002-3 but has improved significantly since then as a result of the school’s very firm action and emphasis on the link between high attendance and achievement. Pupils who take extended absence beyond the time authorised, without exceptionally good reason, lose their place at the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good education for its pupils, and a number of aspects are very good. Teaching is good overall, with some very strong features. The curriculum is good, with strengths in many subjects and an excellent quality and range of activities outside lessons, particularly in music. Key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are used and developed well as part of work in other subjects. Good whole-school systems are in place for assessing pupils’ developing knowledge and skills. At classroom level, however, information about what pupils already know and can do is not always used well enough to plan the next steps in their learning. Pupils are cared for and supported very well. The school has a very good partnership with parents, and very good links with other schools and the community.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good. Children learn well in the nursery and reception classes, which gives them a firm foundation for future progress. Throughout the rest of the school, teaching is good for all subjects, and excellent for music. Any weaknesses are relatively minor and were only observed in a few lessons. As a result, pupils learn a lot in most lessons, and the pace of their learning in many lessons is outstanding. The proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers’ subject knowledge is usually very good and specialist teaching helps pupils reach high standards in a number of subjects
- Teachers make lessons interesting and fun, and so pupils are well motivated
- Teachers use a good range of well-chosen methods to help pupils learn effectively
- Pupils achieve well because they work hard and try their best with the tasks they are given
- The excellent relationships adults have with the pupils help them to manage learning and pupils’ behaviour very effectively
- Assessment of pupils’ attainment and progress is good at a whole-school level, but teachers do not always make best use of this information to plan appropriately challenging work

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 62 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
-----------	-----------	------	--------------	----------------	------	-----------

6 (10%)	15 (24%)	23 (37%)	18 (29%)			
----------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	--	--	--

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.

14. The teachers' very good knowledge of the subjects they teach plays a large part in the very good progress pupils make in many lessons. In the Foundation Stage, teachers have a good understanding of how young children learn best, and so they plan a wide range of interesting, practical activities that excite the children's interest and help them to learn. For example, a group of reception children was fascinated by the bubbles they blew using a variety of liquids. As one particularly large bubble drifted over the school roof, it burst to cries of "Wow!" Adults use such activities very skilfully to develop pupils' language and their understanding of the world around them.
15. Throughout the rest of the school, teachers' subject expertise gives them the confidence to teach at a brisk pace, to explain new work very clearly, to ask searching questions and to set work that really challenges the pupils. For example, an excellent mathematics lesson for Year 2 pupils began with a series of mental tasks, counting in 3s, 4s and 5s, followed by halving and doubling. When the pupils showed that they all knew $\frac{1}{2}$ of 8, the teacher cleverly extended the pattern by introducing $\frac{1}{2}$ of 80, $\frac{1}{2}$ of 800 and $\frac{1}{2}$ of 8000. Because the teaching was so clear, the pupils quickly gasped the connection. Within 20 minutes, the teacher had covered as much work as is often seen in a whole lesson. In a very good English lesson for Year 1, the teacher used the book *Elmer and the Lost Teddy* to help the pupils learn the difference between narrative and speech. Because she was very clear about what the pupils already knew, and what she wanted them to learn, the teacher used a range of skilfully targeted questions, which pushed their understanding forward effectively. A high level of expertise enabled learning to proceed at a rapid pace.
16. In Years 3 to 6, the school uses banding (placing pupils in ability groups) for English and mathematics extending this to science in years 5 to 6, and also has specialist teachers for subjects such as ICT, music and French. The quality of teaching in these lessons is usually very good and often excellent. These teachers have an assured knowledge of their specialist subject and an enthusiasm that is transmitted to the pupils. For example, very good teaching in a Year 6 science lesson resulted in pupils thinking of a good range of sensible questions to investigate the characteristics of wood lice. The teacher maintained a strong focus on scientific enquiry, and so the pupils were quickly able to say how they would find the answer to the question, "What might make a difference to where wood lice live?" Skilled teaching helped almost all of these lower band pupils to reach standards similar to those expected for their age. Year 4 pupils made rapid progress in a very good ICT lesson, creating patterns and using a variety of functions within a graphics program. The teacher's excellent knowledge of ICT enabled him to provide a good balance of support and challenge. The last inspection identified weaknesses in the teaching of French. The lesson seen during this inspection was very good, with a high level of participation by the pupils, and a lot of new vocabulary learnt and used. The teacher's expertise in French was the main reason for the pupils' very good progress. A number of excellent music lessons were observed in which the teacher's outstanding musical skills helped the pupils to learn rapidly. The overall impact of specialist teaching is that pupils reach high standards in a range of subjects.
17. Teachers make most lessons interesting and enjoyable. They capture pupils' attention at the beginning of the lesson, explain what pupils will be doing and ensure that pupils are fully involved in learning. For example, Year 5 pupils were fascinated by a science lesson about pitch and loudness because the teacher had gathered a good selection of musical instruments which caught their interest immediately. The pupils learnt a lot through practical experimentation, and the teacher's searching questions helped them to make sense of what they were finding out. When the teacher then showed the pupils what sound looks like, by using an oscilloscope linked to a computer, the pupils were spellbound and highly motivated. Similarly interesting work in many lessons ensures a fast pace of learning. Pupils are also well motivated because adults are very positive when they make an effort, and praise them when they get something right. As a result, in most lessons, pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well.
18. Teachers use a good range of methods to help pupils to learn effectively. Lively, whole-class sessions were a good feature of many lessons. In a reception class, the children thoroughly enjoyed learning letter sounds because the teacher made the work interesting and involved everyone. At times, however, whole-class sessions for the youngest children last too long and their attention wanes. A very good mathematics lesson for Year 3 started with a good mixture of mental activities, which helped pupils of all abilities to do well. In many lessons, teachers also use group and individual work effectively to reinforce and extend pupils' learning. For example, in a design and technology

lesson for Year 6, pupils worked in threes designing structures, which they later made. The pupils showed a high degree of co-operation and, in questioning each other's decisions, they learnt a lot about the demands of the task. Group work was most effective when the tasks were practical. In some lessons, when the teacher used work sheets to follow up whole-class teaching, these did not challenge pupils sufficiently, particularly the more able.

19. The good quality of teaching is matched by the pupils' very positive approach to their learning. In the great majority of lessons, the pupils are very keen to learn, they want to be involved, and they make a good effort with the tasks they are given. For example, in a Year 6 music lesson, all the pupils practised hard and learned their parts for an accompaniment to one of the songs in the forthcoming production of *Hoodwinked*. As a result, the final performance was of a very high standard, with concentration written all over the pupils' faces. When a visitor joined a Year 3 class to explain his part in translating the Bible into pidgin for the people of Papua New Guinea, the pupils were totally absorbed and asked pertinent questions. Even when the work is not so interesting, or pupils find it difficult, they persevere. Adults play a big part in encouraging pupils' productivity by involving them in discussions, valuing their ideas and helping them to be successful with their work.
20. Teachers organise pupils' learning very well. Lessons are planned carefully so that activities flow smoothly. Well-established routines support learning well, particularly in the classes with younger children. Teachers have a good range of ways to ensure that pupils pay attention, get on with their work and, therefore, make as much progress as possible. Teachers are able to do this because they know the children well and they have built excellent relationships with them. Discipline is almost always positive, highlighting pupils who are doing the right thing so that others fall in line. As a result of all this, pupils know what is expected of them, which helps them to get the most from their lessons. Learning support assistants work well with individuals and groups of pupils, making a significant contribution to their learning.
21. Teachers and classroom assistants know when individual children need help, so those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are particularly well supported and make good progress. Because pupils receive good encouragement, they tackle their work confidently and make good gains in learning in many lessons. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, the teacher planned short, attainable activities so that pupils maintained their concentration and achieved well. Good communication between teachers and other adults results in a good balance between explanation to help pupils' understanding and opportunities for them to work independently. In a small minority of lessons classroom assistants were unsure of their role during whole class sessions.
22. Since the last inspection, the school has put in place far better systems for checking on pupils' progress. At a whole-school level, a good range of testing ensures that teachers have good information about pupils' attainment at particular times. The school also uses this data to show the value added from when pupils join the school to the time they leave. Day-to-day assessment, and its use to plan the next steps in pupils' learning, is not as good. In some classes, teachers use targets to make clear to pupils what they need to learn next. Although some of these systems are at early stages of development, they are helpful. At present, however, such measures are not consistent across the school and, as a result, work seen in some lessons was not matched well enough to pupils' needs. Marking is generally thorough, and offers lots of praise and encouragement, but rarely identifies what pupils need to do next to improve their work.

The curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum, which has some very strong features. The extensive range of high-quality activities outside lessons contributes significantly to pupils' learning. The school makes very good use of teachers' varied specialist skills. Good quality resources support learning effectively. The accommodation is satisfactory, with good features.

Main strengths

- Very good personal, social and health education (PSHE) develops pupils' personal skills very well and supports all their learning very effectively
- The school's equal opportunities policy is evident in its daily life because everyone is valued and respected
- Pupils who have special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language do well because the curriculum caters for them effectively
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy, and gain a lot from, the excellent range of activities outside lessons
- Banding arrangements in Years 3 to 6 are an effective way of making the best of teachers' expertise to further pupils' learning

Commentary

23. The school believes that pupils' capacity to learn is linked strongly to their sense of personal worth, and the extent to which they develop respect for themselves and others. The school community is made up of pupils from a rich diversity of ethnic backgrounds, and it actively pursues a policy of equal opportunities, valuing all regardless of background.
24. The school's policy of respecting individual worth, and recognising the importance of encouraging pupils' social skills, was well illustrated by a lesson in PSHE. Year 4 pupils read a poem about Sharon, a child, who, because of her unkindness and thoughtlessness towards others, was difficult to like. Pupils were given opportunities to reflect and draw from personal experiences on how they would deal with the 'Sharons of this world'. Not only did the pupils learn through discussion, but the teacher also provided an excellent role model. She succeeded in communicating respect for the pupils by listening carefully and valuing the contributions they made. There is also a strong emphasis on pupils being happy and healthy. As part of its health education programme the school is rightly proud of having achieved a Healthy Schools Award.
25. Because the school is very positive about meeting the needs of all pupils, provision for those with special educational needs is good. Pupils' special needs are identified quickly, their progress is monitored carefully, and reviews are carried out at appropriate intervals. Pupils with a statement of educational need are very well supported by all adults in the school and take a full and active part in the school community. Reviews of their progress take full account of the views of parents, outside agencies and the pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them.
26. The needs of the younger pupils who are at the early stages of learning English are well met through the support of bilingual teaching assistants who forge a valuable link between home and school when children first start in the nursery. The use of a familiar language is welcoming and helps pupils settle in and understand what is going on more rapidly. Bilingual teaching assistants make an effective contribution to the development of literacy skills for pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. For example, in Year 1, they provide small group work, creating additional opportunities for pupils to listen and speak when learning the sounds and letters of English. The use of home language and the sympathetic grouping enhances understanding and encourages the development of pupils' English language skills. Throughout the school, good provision helps these pupils to do well.
27. The school's provision of activities outside lessons is excellent, and closely linked to the aim that everyone should have the chance to excel. The choice is extensive, including sports and art, numerous musical clubs, practical activities, languages, and chess. The school has an orchestra, various recorder and stringed instruments groups, and both Asian and Caribbean dance groups. A very wide range of interests is catered for and pupils gain much enjoyment and learning from their participation. The staff give generously of their own time to enable

pupils to enhance their learning through these activities. Frequent visits to places of interest, and residential visits take place. Visitors to school enrich the pupils' learning. Pupils were fascinated by the visit of a member of the Wycliffe Bible Translators who talked about how the Bible has been written in pidgin for the people of Papua New Guinea. During the inspection, a group of Year 3 pupils had a very enjoyable and informative Victorian day at Hughenden Manor.

28. Resources for learning are good. The school has a computer suite on each site. This has enabled staff to teach ICT more effectively. In Years 3 to 6 the pupils are grouped for English and mathematics by ability extending this to science in years 5 to 6. This arrangement enables teachers to specialise in the subject that is their area of particular expertise. The school's accommodation is adequate.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides very good care and support for all its pupils, including very good attention to health, safety and child protection.

Main strengths

- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils, including procedures for child protection, are very good
- Induction arrangements are good so children settle in quickly and happily
- The school is very active in seeking and acting upon pupils' views, which builds very strong trust

Commentary

29. The school has improved further on the good quality of care reported at the last inspection. Health and safety procedures, first aid and other medical support are thorough, and the school has made provision for a first aid room on each site. Regular maintenance ensures that buildings and equipment are safe on both sites.
30. Pupils' personal development is very well guided and supported. All adults in the school work very successfully to promote a culture where all children believe they are good at something. As a result, confidence is high and pupils are not afraid to make mistakes. Adults have a clear view of how well individuals are doing and celebrate academic and social progress with certificates for achievement and endeavour. The school's increasing focus on its assessment procedures, subject by subject and child by child, are likely to enable teachers to give pupils clear advice on how they can improve.
31. There are very good systems in place that reassure pupils and parents new to the school and help them to settle in quickly. These are also important when pupils transfer between the two different sites that make up the school. Pupils operate a buddy system to help each other find their way around. They value the peer mediation system and class charters and are quick to say that they don't have to like each other to be friends.
32. Planning for pupils who have special educational needs is good. Individual education plans for each pupil are drawn up by the special educational needs co-ordinator in consultation with teachers and classroom assistants. Pupils are involved in assessing their progress towards clear and attainable targets.
33. Pupils' views are taken seriously. They have their own notice board with photos of the school councillors and the agenda for the next meeting. They have influenced decisions about playtime and wrote persuasive letters to the Friends' Association to set out what new resources they would like and why. High-quality mutual care, respect and security are evident at playtimes on both sites. This is in line with the ethos of the school and indicative of excellent relationships.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, the community and other schools are very good, and have continued to thrive since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the school and actively involved in their children's learning, which makes a very good contribution to children's achievement
- Information for parents about their children's progress, though detailed, is not always timely or clear enough to ensure they can work closely with the school on specific improvements
- The school's strong links and great commitment to its community help to enrich pupils' experiences very effectively
- Links with local schools, particularly those to which most pupils transfer, are very good and help to build pupils' skills and confidence successfully

Commentary

34. Parents are very supportive of the school, which is heavily over-subscribed. They are also demanding of it, and occasionally critical of what is not perfect or of benefit to their own child. Nevertheless, the partnership is robust and enhances what children achieve both academically and in personal terms. Parents are very active on the governing body and in the Friends of Hamilton. They bring an impressive range of skills and talents to benefit the school's governance, its everyday life and pupils' experiences.
35. The school sends home a huge range of good quality information regularly so parents know what is happening. Newsletters and school documents are available on the Internet. Although parents feel very well informed about school events, they are not wholly confident of being kept up to date with how well their children are doing during the year. Occasionally, the first they know of a possible problem is in the annual report. Reports are immensely detailed, sometimes to the point of obscuring whether achievement is good enough, given the pupil's capabilities, age and starting point. Over-use of jargon can result in confusion. For example, a pupil's mathematics work was described as "outstanding" in the section on personal development, but comments under the numeracy heading did not explain the pupil's achievement clearly, so the parent misunderstood – "I'm concerned that you mentioned progress in mathematics. I hope that next year he will be able to improve his mathematical skills". The best reports include perceptive comments from the pupil and outline the key points in a parent-friendly way, leaving no doubt about how well the pupil has done – "She has made super progress (particularly in literacy and numeracy) which is reflected in her SATs result (Level 3) ... and is always prepared to listen to advice and act on it as a way of improving the standard of her work".
36. Community links are highly valued by the school, particularly those with local places of worship, arts centres, museums and beauty spots that enrich pupils' cultural development, so very good use is made of visitors and visits locally and further afield. The Safer Routes to School initiative is a high priority and success story for the school in ensuring that pupils of all ages use local roads safely. The Friends of Hamilton raise impressive sums of money for the school and provide a rich range of events designed to strengthen community links, such as a Bonfire Night party and Asian Music evening. Parents, pupils and visitors enthused about the recent Caribbean evening. The school benefits from very strong links with a local school with specialist sports college status, which have extended pupils' opportunities for active participation in competitive sport. A carefully planned programme of very helpful visits and meetings facilitates a smooth transfer to secondary school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The governance is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governing body is very effective because it has a strong focus on supporting the school to raise the achievement of its pupils
- The leadership of the headteacher and other senior staff is good because there is a strong sense of shared direction
- The leadership of subjects is not focused firmly enough on raising standards across the school
- The day-to-day management of the school is very good
- The school management and improvement plan has been developed as a result of high-quality analysis and evaluation

Commentary

37. The headteacher provides strong leadership. She has successfully led the school through a period of transition, following the retirement of the previous long-serving headteacher, maintaining its strong ethos and setting a purposeful climate for teaching and learning. She values the school's tradition of seeking high standards and has a very clear view of what the school should now be trying to achieve. Her vision for the future – 'making the best better' – is shared by the senior management team, which includes the two deputy headteachers, whose roles are clearly defined. Rigorous analysis of standards and detailed self-evaluation have

resulted in good strategic planning, as for example in ICT. A good school management and improvement plan (SMIP) outlines priorities for what needs to be done to raise standards.

38. Year leaders play a key role in creating effective teams of teachers and teaching assistants. They lead regular planning meetings so that all pupils across the year have similar opportunities for learning. These meetings create a sense of shared purpose, while ensuring mutual support amongst staff and allowing individuals within the teams work to their strengths. The leadership of subjects is less effective overall because it is not always focused clearly enough on securing improvement across the whole school.
39. The school is managed well. Systems and procedures are well established and manageable so that teachers can concentrate on pupils' learning. Managers provide helpful induction for new staff. Teachers have good opportunities to develop their skills through lesson observations and demonstrations. Targets for the management of performance are clearly linked to priorities in the SMIP. Valuable opportunities for professional development are provided, often from within the school itself. Lines of responsibility are clear so that everyone has their part to play in the organisation and everything runs very smoothly. The day-to-day management of a very complex organisation is handled efficiently.
40. The management of provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is satisfactory, but does not fully take into account the needs of the more advanced learners of English by targeting those older pupils who still need help with developing literacy skills. Targeted teaching in Year 6 supports a small number of pupils who are not making the expected progress, but overall support is limited to the younger pupils. Close monitoring of achievement has identified the need to extend the additional support more widely across the school and the school has plans to do this.
41. The governing body makes a major contribution to the leadership of the school. Governors care passionately about the school and are well aware of its strengths and areas that need to be improved. One of their own priorities for development is to extend the representation of minority ethnic groups within the governing body so that it reflects the composition of the school community more accurately. Governors keep themselves well informed about the work of the school and maintain a good, open working relationship with the headteacher. They have considerable expertise and all take a lead on an area of school life, linking closely with staff. For example, a group of governors reviews curriculum policy and development planning. In addition, their regular visits to the school help to reinforce the partnership and inform their view of learning and pupils' achievements. Governors know and carry out their statutory responsibilities. They understand the challenges the school faces, and are prepared to contest decisions which do not directly support the achievement of the pupils.
42. Day-to-day management of financial matters is efficient. The school seeks to provide best value for money within the budget and the finance committee closely monitors spending, questioning decisions and looking at alternative approaches to ensure that money is spent wisely for the benefit of the pupils. Recent financial constraints have led to the governing body setting a deficit budget, but there are firm plans to rectify this.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,579,091	Balance from previous year	111
Total expenditure	1,594,488	Balance carried forward to the next	- 15,286
Expenditure per pupil	2,412		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

43. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained good provision for children in the reception classes and added a successful nursery. Procedures for starting nursery are good, and parents say their children settle quickly, owing to the welcoming approach of the staff and the interesting activities. The children achieve well, particularly in developing their social, language and creative skills. In the reception classes, children continue to achieve well. Examples of their work show they make good progress in important skills, such as writing. Normally, almost all children reach the nationally expected standard by the end of the reception year, and quite a few exceed it. The current reception year, however, has a larger proportion of less-able children than is usual for the school and so, overall, standards are below expectations. Children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make good progress because they are fully involved in all activities and have extra support.
44. Teaching is good in the nursery, with some very good features. Good routines encourage learning well. The whole-class time at the beginning of a session has a reassuring pattern, welcoming everyone, thinking about days of the week and sharing any special news. 'Fruit time' provides another regular occasion when language and social skills are developed well. An exciting range of very carefully planned activities develops all aspects of children's learning. For example, a group of children worked very well with the teacher making a game in which Incy Wincy Spider climbed the board when a dice was thrown. Lots of talk during the making, work with numbers 1 to 10, and the development of physical skills cutting out the 'spiders' all led to very good learning. In an excellent session observed, the teacher put a card by each activity, which explained the intended learning. This helped the wide range of adults, including two parents, to make sure that the children gained a lot from the very interesting activities. In some activities, however, the quality of adult interaction does not extend children's learning enough.
45. Teaching is good in the reception classes, though a few of the lessons observed had weaknesses. Teachers continue to provide a good range of activities, and the best of these are very stimulating. For example, a group of children built a house of bricks for *The Three Little Pigs*, using plastic bricks and sand mixed with water. The good quality of the resources and careful guidance from an adult led to a practical activity in which a wide range of skills was developed very well. Some whole-class sessions are also very effective, such as when children learnt letter sounds through a lively, structured programme. There are times, however, when children's behaviour is not managed well enough in whole-class sessions and so they do not concentrate on the learning. Some of these sessions last too long. Throughout the Foundation Stage, excellent relationships between adults and children support learning well. Adults are always ready to listen and quick to praise children's efforts, which gives children the motivation to have a go and the confidence to succeed. Parents say they feel this is a very strong feature of learning in these classes.
46. Systems for checking on children's progress are good, with well-kept examples of their work that show the progress they are making. Good facilities throughout the Foundation Stage, particularly the outdoor areas, encourage children's learning well. Leadership is satisfactory,

but there is only a partial understanding of strengths and weaknesses and no current plan for development.

Personal, social and emotional development

Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because adults use interesting activities to develop their curiosity, confidence and independence
- Relationships between children and with adults are very good
- In reception, good behaviour is not maintained well enough in some whole-class sessions

Commentary

47. In the nursery, adults constantly encourage the development of children's personal and social skills. Activities are very interesting, and so they capture and hold the children's attention. For example, the teacher brought in a spider she had found at home and placed it in glass cage with lots of camouflage. Because they were interested, children spent a long time looking for the spider, which developed their concentration very well. Outdoors, children have lots of opportunities to play together and, though some of the children still prefer to play alone, their co-operative skills are developing well. Activities such as 'fruit time' are used well to promote the children's understanding of sharing, being responsible for tasks and contributing to a group. Children's skills are developed further in the reception classes. They continue to be confident and eager to learn. For example, children blew bubbles using different types of liquid and were fascinated by the results. Children learn to concentrate for longer periods of time, such as when learning letter sounds, or as seen in a very enjoyable music lesson. Some whole-class sessions, however, do not hold children's attention sufficiently, and do not develop their concentration. The children learn to understand their own feelings and those of others, as seen in a circle time when they thought about what they had become better at. Most of the children are on course to reach the standard expected by the end of the reception year, except a significant number of the older boys.

Communication, language and literacy

Provision in communication, language and literacy is good.

Main strengths

- Children achieve well because skills are developed in all tasks, as well as being the focus for some activities
- Basic skills in reading and writing are taught well throughout the Foundation Stage

Commentary

48. In the nursery, adults use every opportunity to develop the children's language skills. They teach children to listen to others and they give them time to express their ideas, such as when children told the teacher what they already knew about spiders and, later, discussed things that frightened them. When working on independent activities, the best adult support encourages children to talk about what they are doing. For example, lively discussion when children were weaving spiders' webs with string developed a lot of language about direction. Children begin to learn about reading through familiar stories, such as when they put the events of *Little Miss Muffet* in order. Past work based on the rhyme *It's raining it's pouring* shows that early writing skills develop well, with some children mark making and others using their early understanding of letters to 'write' their favourite things about rain. In reception, children speak confidently in most situations. The more-able children read simple books fluently, but overall standards are below those expected because quite a few children are still at the stage of telling a story using the pictures. Well-known stories still play a large part in encouraging both reading and writing. For example, children went on a bear hunt linked to their work on *Goldilocks*. They made maps with labels and 'wrote' in their explorer's diary. The more-able pupils

can write a few sentences independently, but many cannot do this yet, and so standards in writing are below those expected.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is good.

Main strengths

- Lots of opportunities are provided to develop children's mathematical language and skills
- Teachers use routines well to reinforce number work

Commentary

49. Teachers choose themes that create good opportunities for learning about counting, comparing and ordering. For example, in the nursery, work about spiders created lots of opportunities to count legs, whilst work in reception about *The Three Bears* included lots of comparison of size. The routines in all classes are used well to develop skills, such as counting and matching things during the nursery 'fruit time', or being aware of the number of children who have arrived in a reception class and working out how many when one more arrives. Work about shapes and measuring adds to the breadth of the curriculum. For example, nursery children tessellated hexagons when they were finding out about bees. Using a sand timer, reception children found out what they could do in one minute and were surprised to find how many beads they could thread and how many sandcastles they could make. The good range of activities, well exploited by adults, ensures that most children reach the expected standard by the end of the reception year.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

In the aspects seen, provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is good.

Main strengths

- A very good range of experiences stimulates children's curiosity in the world around them
- Teachers use a good range of resources to bring learning alive

Commentary

50. Not all aspects of this wide-ranging area of learning were seen during the inspection, but the work that was seen indicates that teaching and learning are good. For example, in the nursery, the theme of 'Minibeasts' had clearly caught the children's interest in living things and was encouraging them to observe closely to find out about a fascinating subject. Many of the children talked knowledgeably about spiders, how and why they spin their webs, and they used magnifying glasses to look closely at small creatures. Children have good early skills in using computers, for example making patterns using a simple graphics program. Thinking about other parts of the world and other cultures is woven well into the children's experiences, such as when the teacher told *Anansi the Spider* stories and the children learnt about Ghana. In the reception classes, finding out about the world around them continues to be a strong aspect of children's learning. Children found out "Which liquid makes the best bubbles?" developing early science skills. They counted how long it took for the bubbles to burst, and enriched their language by describing what happened. Children know about lots of different types of materials, linked to their work on *The Three Little Pigs*' houses. Making chairs for the three bears involved lots of cutting and joining of a range of materials. Children use computers as part of most sessions and there are good examples of their early word processing and pattern making. The children compare houses in England with those in a hot climate and spot the similarities and differences. The good range and quality of experiences for this area of learning ensure that almost all the children reach the expected standard.

Physical development

Provision in physical development is good.

Main strengths

- The outdoor areas provide a good range of opportunities for physical development
- A good range of activities develop children's physical skills

Commentary

51. Children develop their physical skills well, achieving the standards expected for their age. In the nursery outdoor area, children engage in a wide range of physical activities, clambering on the climbing frame, using ride-on toys, or weaving spiders' webs through the railings. As a result, they move with increasing confidence and are not afraid to take risks to extend their skills. Their ability to control tools such as scissors and pencils is developed well through cutting, colouring and painting activities. In reception, a spacious outdoor area and good opportunities for physical activity in the hall both contribute to children developing increasing control of their movements. For example, during the outdoor times, reception children were observed with skipping ropes, bats, balls and hoops, and most showed that they can control these well. More-able pupils' handwriting shows that they have good fine control but, in the current reception year, the skills of a significant minority of children are below the expected level.

Creative development

Provision in creative development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities for art, particularly in the nursery, develop children's skills well
- Music sessions are excellent
- Role-play areas are not always sufficiently purposeful to encourage imaginative play

Commentary

52. In the nursery, children achieve very well because a wide range of creative activities develops their skills very effectively. Children's pencil drawings of minibeasts, vibrant paintings of sunflowers and collages based on *The Rainbow Fish* are all of a higher standard than normally seen. These show that the adults have very good skills in encouraging children's creative skills. Children continue to achieve well in reception, with some good work in painting, printing and collage. Throughout the Foundation Stage, as well as daily opportunities for singing and music-making, excellent sessions taught by a specialist teacher ensure that standards are well beyond those normally seen for this age. In an outstanding lesson, reception children were completely absorbed as they helped to compose a musical accompaniment for the story of *The Three Little Pigs*. At its best, creative play is well planned as a good vehicle for a wide range of learning, as when nursery children played with strands of silver paper, making floating webs in the water tray. The role-play areas in classrooms, however, are not attractive or purposeful enough to encourage children to take on roles and use their creativity.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching is good
- Teachers use questioning effectively to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills
- A good focus on the development of key skills in reading results in pupils making good progress and reaching above-average standards
- Standards in writing do not match those in reading because there are too few opportunities to develop pupils' independent, extended writing
- Management is not sufficiently focused on raising standards across the whole school

Commentary

53. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 have improved since the last inspection and have been above the national average for the past three years. In 2003, results in both reading and writing were above the national average and better than those gained by similar schools. Work seen in the current Year 2 confirms this picture of attainment. Results at the end of Year 6 had also been above average for a number of years but in 2003 they were average, both when compared with all schools and with similar schools. The main reason for this fall was that not enough pupils reached the higher Level 5 in the test. In the current Year 6, whilst there are still some weaknesses in pupils' writing, standards in the work and the lessons seen are above average.
54. Pupils' achievement in speaking and listening is good. This is because teachers constantly encourage pupils to express their views, and they praise their efforts, so that pupils develop confidence in talking, listening and learning. Teachers have very good skills in targeting questions at individual pupils, asking open-ended questions, and encouraging pupils to extend their responses – "Can you tell me a bit more?" This develops pupils' spoken language skills effectively, including those learning English as an additional language. For example, in a very

good Year 1 lesson, it was the teacher's constant use of good questions – “Did you notice that too?” “Can you think of a different word for that?” – which helped the pupils to understand the difference between speech and narrative. In a number of lessons, teachers use ‘talking partners’, which enables pupils to listen to each other. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils discussed in pairs what they should include in a book review and were developing important skills in using talk to share ideas and negotiate a joint task. It also gave them time to think and the opportunity to focus their ideas so that they all had contributions to make to the whole-class discussion. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed the lesson, and so the good pace of their learning was maintained.

55. Pupils make good progress in reading because there is good attention to the development of key skills and teachers foster an enthusiasm for books so that most pupils want to read. Teachers share the excitement of books with pupils, both in literacy lessons and in story times. Regular small group, ‘guided reading’ sessions reinforce basic skills and enable teachers to monitor pupils’ progress. There are regular opportunities for pupils to use the school libraries and these provide a good range of resources to meet their interests and abilities. The purposeful use of novels and reading journals in Year 5 encourages even the least confident readers to read more difficult and extended texts. More confident pupils in Year 6 are developing mature attitudes to literature, identifying and using complex language structures, for example when comparing the openings of two novels by Michael Morpurgo. The school is particularly effective in promoting reading at home through the home reading policy and the reading diary, which includes a good range of ideas for parents to support their child’s reading. As a result, most pupils read frequently, both at home and at school, and this enables them to make good progress throughout the school.
56. Most pupils write neatly, and their work is celebrated in attractive displays in classrooms and around the school. However, pupils’ achievement in writing is not as good as in other aspects of English because more-able pupils do not make as much progress as they could. The school is tackling this issue. Independent activities do not always provide an audience or purpose for writing and there are not always opportunities for pupils to develop their own style. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, where pupils were using words to ‘paint pictures’, more-able pupils were limited by the use of a work sheet because it did not allow them to extend the images of ‘tall, delicate sunflowers’ and ‘curly, green leaves’ into a longer piece of writing. Older children use computers well for drafting and checking their work.
57. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils enjoy most lessons, are attentive and keen to offer their ideas because teaching is lively and interesting and most lessons move at a good pace. For example, Year 4 pupils learnt about different types of poetry and had great fun experimenting with rhyme and alliteration when writing their own poems. A significant strength of the teaching is the skilfully targeted questioning which draws out the less confident pupils. Constant encouragement and praise establish a learning environment from which all pupils benefit, and relationships are excellent. All teachers have good subject knowledge and careful planning ensures a range of learning activities for pupils that are generally well matched to their ability. In a few of the lessons seen, however, after a good start, the tasks given to pupils were not challenging enough, particularly for the more-able. Teaching assistants and other adults are well briefed so that they provide good help for small groups, including those who have special educational needs or are learning English as an additional language. Work in books is regularly marked, but comments do not always offer constructive criticism to help pupils improve their work or raise their expectations.
58. Leadership and management are satisfactory, overall. There are satisfactory procedures for checking on the quality of teaching and learning across the school and also opportunities for the subject leader to model good practice. An analysis of pupils’ work has identified achievement in writing as the main priority for development and this is a main target in the school management and

improvement plan. Extended writing sessions have already been introduced in some year groups. Pupils in some classes have literacy targets but, at present, there is no consistent whole-school approach. A portfolio of pupils' writing, including some examples from across the curriculum, has been compiled to guide teachers in their assessment and development of individual pupil targets. The management of these initiatives, however, lacks coherence and a strong enough focus on raising standards in writing across the whole school. Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall because standards have risen in Year 2 and above average standards have been maintained in Year 6.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Pupils' speaking and listening skills and their basic reading and writing skills are developed well in other subjects. Teachers encourage the development of pupils' spoken language skills through the frequent use of questions which demand extended answers. Key vocabulary and phrases are displayed in classrooms and teachers emphasise the use of subject specific language. Links made with literacy through the reinforcement of spelling or emphasis on grammatical features such as identifying the singular of 'wood lice', are particularly effective for pupils learning English as an additional language. Pupils read for information in a variety of subjects and use the libraries for research materials. Younger pupils are also encouraged to read instructions and lesson learning objectives with the teacher. There are too few opportunities, however, for pupils to write at length for a range of purposes.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and reach higher standards than in similar schools
- Teachers' very good expertise in the subject helps them to make lessons lively and interesting, but work for individuals is occasionally too hard or too easy
- Specialist teaching in Years 3 to 6 has a positive impact on pupils' learning
- Systems for checking on pupils' progress and setting targets for future improvement are used inconsistently
- Management is satisfactory, but lacks a whole-school view of aspects of pupils' work that need to improve

Commentary

60. Results in national tests for Year 2 pupils have been average over the last few years. In 2003, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 was average, but about a third of the pupils reached the higher Level 3, which was above average. This indicates that more-able pupils are challenged appropriately. Standards in the current Year 2 are above national expectations because there is a further increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level. In Year 6, national tests results have fluctuated over the past few years and in 2003 they were above average, particularly in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5. The results represented good achievement since the same pupils took the Year 2 tests. Standards in the current Year 6 are better than those expected for pupils' ages.
61. Pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons very carefully so that the content develops logically, with a good balance between whole-class teaching and individual activities. The mental mathematics sessions at the beginning of lessons usually have a brisk pace and cover a variety of skills, so pupils enjoy these activities and take part eagerly. For example, a Year 3 lesson for a less-able group began with quick fire questions multiplying by 2, 5 and 10 and then moved on to division using the same numbers. The teacher's very clear explanation made it easy for the pupils to see the connection. Teachers have good skills in using questions to make pupils think, and they target the questions effectively so that the more reluctant pupils are involved well.
62. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can learn and the pace at which they can work. In a very good lesson for more-able Year 4 pupils, the teacher first checked that they understood multiplying and dividing by 10. He then introduced multiplying by 5 and 20, in which the pupils had to use halving and doubling to find the answer. The pupils found this challenging at first but, once they understood the method, they went on to solve quite difficult calculations, including some involving decimals. The pace and challenge of this lesson were outstanding and standards were well beyond those normally seen in Year 4. In a few other lessons seen,

however, pupils were well challenged during the whole-class teaching but the subsequent individual activities were too hard or too easy. As a result, some pupils did not make the progress of which they were capable.

63. Teachers use a good range of methods to catch pupils' interest and encourage them to work hard. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, the teacher used an arrangement of 10 squares with faces on them, held together with clear film. She asked the pupils, "How many faces can you see?" – and then she folded the matrix – "How many now?" and "How many can I see?" This was an interesting way of teaching early number skills. The best individual activities are carefully matched to help pupils take the next step in their learning. In many lessons, teaching assistants provide good support for groups of pupils.
64. Most teachers have a very good expertise in the subject, which helps pupils to learn quickly. For example, in an excellent lesson for Year 2 pupils, the teacher's good understanding of mathematics enabled her to move on the pupils' learning at a very brisk pace. The pupils responded eagerly to a very good range of mental activities in which the teacher was constantly extending their understanding – "If $\frac{1}{2}$ of 8 is 4, what is $\frac{1}{2}$ of 80? And $\frac{1}{2}$ of 800?" Individual tasks provided appropriate challenge for pupils of all abilities and so, by the end of the lesson, everyone had made excellent progress. In Years 3 to 6, the school organises the pupils into 'bands' according to their ability and the same teacher takes all the mathematics lessons in one year group. This is a successful arrangement because teachers teach the subject in which they have most expertise. The benefits were illustrated well in a Year 6 lesson where pupils were exploring numbers divisible by both three and five. The teacher's good expertise harnessed the pupils' ideas and helped them to find the most efficient solution to the problem. Throughout the school, the pride pupils take in their work is reflected in the high quality of presentation in most pupils' books.
65. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and the school improvement plan identifies suitable targets for developing the subject. Management does not, however, have a clear enough view of strengths and areas for development across the whole school, and targets for improvement are not specific enough. The assessment of pupils' attainment and checks on their progress are good over time, but teachers do not use day-to-day assessment consistently enough to find out what pupils need to learn next and to set individual targets. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because the quality of teaching has improved and high standards at the end of Year 6 have been maintained.

Mathematics across the curriculum

66. Pupils use and develop their mathematical skills well in other subjects. Pupils record results in graphs and tables in science. They measure accurately when making products in design and technology. In other subjects, teachers make good links with mathematics in work about dates in history or co-ordinates in geography. Teachers are always alert to ways in which mathematical skills can be reinforced through work in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved since the last inspection and are now above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6
- Teaching is good, and teachers' excellent subject knowledge and a strong emphasis on investigative work enables all pupils to achieve well
- The presentation of pupils' work is very good, indicating that they take a pride in their work and want to do well
- Good links with mathematics and ICT help pupils to practise skills in these subjects
- Weaknesses in assessing pupils' attainment hinder teachers from identifying accurately the next steps in pupils' learning

Commentary

67. In Year 2, standards in lessons and in the work seen were above those expected for pupils' ages. In the recent teachers' assessments, almost all pupils reached the nationally expected level, confirming that overall standards are above average. Results of the 2003 national tests for pupils in Year 6 were above average, with almost half of the pupils reaching the higher Level 5. In the current Year 6, standards in lessons and in the work seen show attainment that is above average overall. As last year, about a half of the pupils are likely to exceed the nationally expected standard. The banding of older pupils according to ability and the use of a specialist teacher make a significant contribution to the high standards pupils reach and ensure that pupils of all abilities achieve well. Standards are higher than at the last inspection.
68. The quality of teaching is good overall with some very good and excellent features. Pupils learn particularly well when investigating and testing for themselves. This was especially noticeable when younger pupils were exploring different materials. The teacher provided a rich variety of well-organised resources, which enthused the pupils and successfully extended their scientific language. They were given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with a wide selection of materials and then played a simple but well-explained game, which involved sorting and describing. Further challenge was introduced and the lesson maintained a good pace throughout. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge and questioning skills helped Year 5 pupils to conduct an exciting investigation into the difference between pitch and loudness. Pupils were fascinated when the teacher demonstrated what sound looked like by using an oscilloscope, projecting a "picture" of the sound through a laptop computer and onto a screen. This was highly motivating for pupils and, by the end of the lesson, many could give articulate explanations about their investigations. The emphasis placed upon investigation means that pupils are really interested in their work and take great pride in its presentation. Many books are beautifully illustrated. Less-able pupils achieve as well as others because worksheets are provided that help them organise their work.
69. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed, but there is too little emphasis on gaining an overall picture of the quality of teaching and learning so that areas for improvement can be identified precisely. Good links have been established between science, mathematics and ICT. Pupils' work shows that their mathematical and computing skills are put to good use when making calculations and designing graphs and charts. Pupils complete a variety of different assessments throughout the school, which means that there is no consistent and clear picture of standards from year to year. In addition, the checking of pupils' progress is inconsistent and does not always help teachers to plan the next stages in learning for each individual pupil. Marking of pupils' work, although conscientiously carried out, does not always indicate what pupils must do next to improve.
70. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good because many of the strong features recognised in the last report have been maintained and, as a result, standards have improved. Pupils continue to acquire a good understanding of the application of science as well as building upon their scientific knowledge. The use of ICT in science has improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is good.

Main strengths

- Standards are above national expectations and pupils achieve well
- Teaching of the subject by a specialist makes a major contribution to the good standards and is ensuring that all staff improve their own subject knowledge
- The subject is well led and managed and has very good resources
- Pupils regularly use their computer skills in other subjects and this enhances their learning

Commentary

71. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards are above those expected nationally. This is a good improvement since the last inspection when standards were found to be average. All pupils are confident when using computers and other related technology, and they achieve well. This is directly attributable to the good teaching and very good resources provided by the school.
72. From the three lessons seen and from samples of pupils' work, teaching is good with significant strengths. The excellent subject knowledge of a specialist teacher in some of the lessons seen meant that pupils of all abilities were appropriately challenged, learned quickly and had very good attitudes to their work. Older pupils, when using the computer to control traffic lights, successfully completed complicated procedures because of the very clear explanations given by the teacher. The school is improving standards further by enabling teachers to work alongside the specialist teacher during lessons to improve their own skills and assist pupils who need extra help.
73. The leadership of ICT is good. Resources are very good and the subject is well managed through a comprehensive five-year development plan focused upon raising standards still further. The two suites and additional computers in the classrooms provide pupils with interesting opportunities to learn new skills together and practise them in all areas of the curriculum. The substantial control technology resources in which the school has invested are very good and stimulate pupils' interest very well. This is having a significant impact upon standards by the end of Year 6.
74. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because the governors and the school have worked together to implement successfully a five-year development plan leading to improved resources and expert training and support for staff.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. The use of ICT across the curriculum and the consequent development of pupils' skills, are good. Pupils are given good opportunities to practise their skills across a range of subjects and their competency in other areas of the curriculum complements their learning in computing. For example, younger pupils use their mathematical skills when learning how to program the floor robot and to construct a bar chart about their favourite colours. Year 3 pupils use their word processing skills effectively when writing a book review in literacy, experimenting with text and editing their own writing. Older pupils use spreadsheets and a variety of graphs and charts in mathematics and science, as well as programs to enhance their art work.

HUMANITIES

76. In history and religious education, sufficient lessons were observed and examples of pupils' work seen to make overall judgements about provision. Only two geography lessons were observed, both in Year 5. As a result, it is not possible to make a judgement about overall provision in this subject. Enough pupils' work was available, however, from which to make a judgement about standards. Inspectors examined teachers' planning and talked to teachers and pupils. Suitable ranges of activities and adequate time allowances are provided to enable pupils to meet the National Curriculum expectations for geography and history and to reflect the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.
77. In **geography**, it is clear from pupils' work and discussion with the subject leader that standards are above those expected for pupils' ages. Since the last inspection, standards have improved, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Pupils have good knowledge of local places and explain how climate changes affect people living in contrasting countries. They make a large-scale model of a village and plan where to place services without spoiling the environment.

78. From discussions with pupils it is clear that they enjoy fieldwork and Year 5 spoke enthusiastically about their study of the River Wye. In a very good lesson, they used these geographical skills to decide where to place industrial and domestic developments on a river map. Leadership and management are good. Leadership has a clear view of the main priorities for improvement based on the careful monitoring of planning and learning.

History

Provision in history is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards are above average
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, and so pupils have a thorough understanding of particular periods in history
- Pupils have good attitudes to the subject and work is very well presented
- In some classes, the over-use of worksheets restricts opportunities for older pupils to explore the subject in more depth

Commentary

79. Work seen in Years 1 and 2 shows that all pupils have a good knowledge of history for their age. They are also developing the skills which help them to learn about the past. For example, in Year 2, pupils identify what has changed in pictures of London today and in 1666. They show good knowledge and understanding of the lives of people in the past and retell their stories as if they had been there.
80. Pupils show a keen interest in historical topics and take part enthusiastically in role play and discussions. Year 3 pupils played Victorian children's games set out in the playground. They compared toys then and now and wrote about the similarities and differences. In good Year 4 lessons, pupils received a letter from the British Museum inviting them to prepare an exhibition about life in Ancient Egypt. This stimulated a real sense of anticipation and interest. Skills were shared well between researchers, note takers, and artists as pupils planned their presentations.
81. Planning takes place in year group teams and is imaginative. Teachers ensure that pupils pose questions and analyse why things happened as they did. However, the work is not built upon systematically as pupils move through the school. Some follow-up activities, particularly in Year 6, rely too much on worksheets. These are not modified so that less-able pupils can work independently, and do not require average and more-able pupils to use their historical skills of enquiry. Visitors and visits to museums are used effectively to give pupils good experiences, which help them understand the past. Links with literacy are good. Opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills are planned well, as when Year 5 pupils write and perform Boudicca's battle speech.
82. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Management ensures that teachers have access to a wide range of good quality resources on both sites. Some year groups have started to use an assessment activity at the end of a unit of work. This is good practice. However, it is not shared and the school has yet to put in place a recommendation from the last inspection to assess and monitor pupils' progress against targets in the National Curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is good.

Main strengths

- Standards are above average and higher than at the last inspection
- The curriculum follows the locally agreed syllabus, and the well-planned programme of assemblies offers good enrichment for the subject
- The way in which the school celebrates and respects a wide range of cultures and backgrounds adds to pupils' spirituality
- The quality of teaching is good and work is planned well to build on pupils' own experiences

Commentary

83. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good understanding of aspects of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Work is planned well to help them see the links between festivals and celebrations such as Christmas and Eid. Pupils make a Torah in which they write their special rules. A variety of good teaching approaches develops pupils' literacy skills well, but some worksheets showing the inside of a synagogue are of poor quality. Less-able pupils make good progress with writing and, by the end of the year, write simple sentences to express what they hope the future holds for them.

84. Because of the diversity of their backgrounds, older pupils have a mature awareness of different religious experiences, and the significance of the Bible and other sacred texts. Work in lessons is enriched very well by visits and visitors. Year 3 pupils were fascinated by the array of artefacts brought by a visitor from the Wycliffe Bible Translators. Because so many pupils speak at least one other language at home, they appreciated the importance of translating the Bible and psalms into pidgin English so that the people of Papua New Guinea could learn about God. Stories are used effectively to help pupils understand that religions can teach them about how they should live. The use of role play helps pupils to express the consequences of actions. In a good Year 5 lesson, it was used effectively to reinforce the moral of the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*.
85. Many events take place during the year that build religious understanding and tolerance. Parents and pupils join Muslim families in school to celebrate the end of Ramadan with traditional prayers and food. All pupils know and recite the school prayer with reverence. The subject is well led and managed. Management has completed a review to improve the way in which learning builds methodically from year to year. Since the last inspection the school has prepared a very clear guide to supplement teachers' own subject knowledge. Checking on pupils' attainment and progress, however, is still based on informal assessment, which does not give enough information to help teachers plan appropriately challenging work.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

86. Four music lessons were observed and, as music is taught by two specialists, it was possible to make a judgement about overall provision. Three physical education lessons were observed, but it was not possible to see the full range of the curriculum. Only one lesson was seen in design and technology, and no art lessons were observed. As a result, it is not possible to make judgements about overall provision in three of the subjects in this area of learning. In art and design and design and technology, an adequate range of pupils' work was available from which to make judgements about standards. Teachers' planning and the views of subject leaders were also taken into account.
87. Standards in **art and design** are as expected for pupils' ages, and they experience a satisfactory range of work, which helps them to build their skills steadily. Year 1 pupils have made a wide range of interesting sculptures, from natural materials, paper and clay. They looked at the work of famous sculptors such as Henry Moore before experimenting in their own style. Their clay faces are of good quality because the features are carefully formed. In preparation for their forthcoming visit to The National Gallery, Year 2 pupils are looking at the work of a range of famous artists. Inspired by the work of Kandinski, pupils produced abstract paintings, pastel work and collage, some of which are of high quality. Attractive sunflower drawings and paintings, using a range of media, stem from looking at the work of Van Gogh. Good links are made between art and other subjects. For example, teachers are using the book *Camille and the Sunflowers* in their literacy lessons, pupils' research and ICT skills are developed well when they interrogate a CD Rom about The National Gallery, and the kites pupils have made in design and technology are attractively decorated using their art skills. An art club for Year 2 is very popular.
88. Year 3 pupils' drawings of chairs, linked to their visit to a local chair museum, are of a typical standard for this age. They are currently thinking about pattern, and particularly the work of William Morris, which has led to some interesting work in sketch books about repeating patterns. Work in Year 4 is linked well to a history topic about the Ancient Egyptians, using patterns typical of their art to make attractive, decorated collars. Striking, Caribbean wall hangings, to enhance the marquee for a school social evening with a Calypso theme, show good skills in painting and a good appreciation of pattern. Past work about portraits, linked to Tudor art, is illustrated well by the montage portrait of Henry VIII in one classroom, towards

which all the pupils have contributed. Year 5 are currently thinking about landscape and have used the pointillist techniques of Seurat to produce some attractive paintings. In Year 6, pupils' work about 'containers' includes well-observed drawings, experimenting with pencil, chalks and oil pastels, clay work and making containers using moulding techniques. Art contributes well to wider ventures, such as when Year 6 pupils paint the scenery for their production, or the whole school takes a theme 'The Future' and pupils produce a wide range of art work seen on display in one of the halls. Management of the subject is satisfactory, but there is no clear overview of the quality of teaching and learning across the whole school from which areas for development could be initiated. Sketch books are used well in some classes, but practice is inconsistent.

89. In **design and technology**, standards are as expected for pupils' ages. Teaching was very good in a Year 6 lesson observed. The pupils were set the challenge of designing a tall tower that would be stable and aesthetically pleasing. They had to take into account available resources and that the tower must be built in a short period of time. The pupils worked very industriously in threes, sharing their ideas well, and the teacher kept the pace of the lesson moving by setting a time target for the completion of the design. Pupils showed they could generate a wide range of imaginative initial designs, and that they were capable of refining these, bearing in mind the constraints of the brief. In Year 5, displays show that pupils' work is of good quality. They have made biscuits, moving toys and musical instruments. Pupils' designs for their toys are evaluated well, showing that they have thought carefully about how they might improve them. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, with a sound grasp of work that is taking place across the school. A wide range of materials and resources is available to encourage pupils' learning. Teachers' planning, based on detailed schemes of work, shows that pupils receive an appropriate curriculum with opportunities to design, make and evaluate a range of products.
90. In the three lessons observed, standards in **physical education** were as expected for pupils' ages. The quality of teaching was satisfactory, though there were some weaknesses in teachers' planning of activities and in the use of time. Year 1 pupils were quick to respond to the challenge of moving with a hoop in different ways, but a lack of enough large hoops restricted their creativity. These pupils showed that they can work with a partner to improve their skills, and the teacher made effective use of good examples of pupils' work to stimulate the ideas of others. Overall, however, the lesson did not develop pupils' skills systematically enough because easier activities followed more challenging ones. Perhaps understandably on a very hot day, the pace of the lesson was not as brisk as it could have been.
91. A country dance lesson for Year 3 began with a series of skipping exercises. The teacher skilfully selected pupils to demonstrate flowing movements and this helped everyone to improve their performance. When dancing, these pupils showed the expected range of attainment. The more able were well co-ordinated and danced the steps accurately. The less able struggled at first, but patient teaching helped them to master the steps. The pace of the lesson was hindered because groups of pupils taking part in a cooking activity left and joined it. Year 6 pupils were preparing for sports' day and tried out a range of events. Pupils of all abilities joined in enthusiastically and, as the resources were well organised, they were able to develop a good range of skills. Pupils have a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities to choose from outside their normal lessons. Recently, older pupils had entered an inter-school sports competition and were proud of their achievement of winning several individual cups in activities as diverse as hockey, football, cricket and table tennis. Hamilton School was the overall winner of the competition.

Music

Provision in music is excellent.

Main strengths

- The school has a strong tradition of very high standards in a wide range of music making
- The quality of teaching is excellent
- Pupils have outstanding opportunities to extend their skills in activities outside lessons
- Facilities and resources are very good

Commentary

92. At the last inspection, pupils' achievement in music was very good. Since then, the school has built successfully on its rich musical tradition so that pupils' achievement is now excellent and many reach standards that are well beyond those normally seen in primary schools. The main reasons for this are the excellent skills of the two specialists who teach the great majority of lessons, and the outstanding quality and range of opportunities pupils have to learn to play a musical instrument, to play in musical groups, and to perform in a range of settings.
93. Right from the start, teachers have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. In an excellent lesson for reception children, the teacher helped them to compose a group accompaniment to the story of *The Three Little Pigs*. She used simple songs, rhythmic chanting of well-known passages from the story, and a wide range of instruments to help the children select the best music. For example, to make the sound of the straw house being built, one child rustled a pile of strips of paper, whilst another used a wooden instrument to make a grating sound. The involvement of the children in listening carefully, composing music and performing was exceptional. In Year 1, after listening to some 'jungle' music, pupils had an animated discussion about which instruments could be used to create the sounds. In exploring this, the pupils learnt a lot about ways of playing various instruments, and the class performance at the end of the lesson was of a far higher standard than normally seen at this age.
94. The work of the older pupils shows the benefits of consistent, high-quality teaching. They arrive at the music room eager with anticipation because they know the lesson will be enjoyable. They have very good existing knowledge and skills, which they use to tackle new, challenging experiences. For example, Year 4 pupils quickly identified a range of instruments in a piece of music played at the beginning of their lesson, and they knew that composing is, "making something new that no-one has made before". Whilst the pupils were composing their own Caribbean music, in pairs, the teacher cleverly emphasised a number of musical elements and conventions, encouraging the pupils to consider pitch, dynamics and tempo, and the importance of silence. The final performance was recorded and evaluated by the pupils. A Year 6 lesson observed was more like an orchestral rehearsal than a music lesson. Many pupils used their own instruments – violas, guitars, saxophone – or played a range of tuned and un-tuned percussion to rehearse a piece for the school's forthcoming production *Hoodwinked*. Immaculate preparation of numerous appropriate scores, very high expectations of pupils' capabilities, and excellent management of the lesson led to a highly enjoyable and productive experience. The final performance was of a very high standard with each pupil showing a very good awareness of the way their part contributed to the whole.
95. The two specialist teachers have a very high level of expertise, both musically and in working with pupils of all ages and abilities. Opportunities to make music outside lessons are myriad. In Years 4 to 6, about 140 pupils are learning to play an instrument; about 60 pupils are involved in three recorder groups; over 80 pupils sing in the school's two choirs. A string orchestra, wind band and percussion ensemble provide opportunities for more-able pupils to excel. Musical evenings, productions and performances, both in school and for outside audiences, are much enjoyed by pupils and parents. Each year, Year 4 pupils are involved in a project with Covent Garden Opera. The two music rooms provide excellent settings for music making, and resources are very good. All of this excellent provision is extremely well led and managed.

Music is an outstanding feature of the school's work, and excellent in comparison with provision normally found in primary schools.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

96. Only one lesson was seen in this subject and there was no past work completed by the pupils that could be used to evaluate the standards achieved. As a result, it was not possible to make judgements about pupils' achievements or the quality of teaching and learning. The curriculum section of this report evaluates provision for pupils' personal, social and health education as very good.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	2
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).

