

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HIGHWORTH COMBINED SCHOOL AND NURSERY**

High Wycombe

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110403

Headteacher: Graeme Kilner

Lead inspector: Tom Canham

Dates of inspection: 17th - 20th May 2004

Inspection number: 256429

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	422
School address:	Highworth Close High Wycombe Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP13 7PH
Telephone number:	01494 525534
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Appropriate authority:	Buckinghamshire County Council
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Chris Bocking
Date of previous inspection:	6 <sup>th</sup> July 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Highworth Combined School is a large primary school with 422 pupils on roll aged between three and 11 years. Children are admitted part-time into a nursery class, and join reception in September, January or April. There are about the same number of girls as boys.

The school is housed in modern, single storey buildings with a pleasant courtyard, playgrounds and a playing field. Most pupils come from owner-occupied homes, but some are from rented accommodation. The school population includes a range of ethnic minorities, of whom Asians form by far the largest minority group, and 14 children who speak English as an additional language are at an early stage of doing so. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below average, but the social and economic circumstances of pupils overall are average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals, about nine per cent, is below the national average. Pupil turnover is comparable to other schools.

There is a hearing impaired department. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs overall is above the national average; apart from hearing impaired pupils, most have specific learning difficulties or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of those with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (16 pupils) is above the national average.

The headteacher has been in post since the school opened as a combined school in 1996.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7523	Tom Canham	Lead inspector	Science Music Design and technology Personal, social and health education and citizenship
9561	Husain Akhtar	Lay inspector	
2756	Michael Barron	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology (ICT) Physical education (PE)
23300	Lily Evans	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Special educational needs (SEN) Hearing impaired department
10270	Sandra Teacher	Team Inspector	Art and design Religious education (RE) Foundation Stage English as an additional language (EAL)

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Highworth Combined School is a good school, with many strengths.** Staff and governors work very hard and reflectively to achieve the best possible education for the pupils, creating a very happy school where all pupils learn well, including those from different ethnic groups and those with special educational needs (SEN). The school represents very good value for money, since very good leadership and management, and good teaching, help pupils to achieve well and attain standards that at least match national averages, at very modest cost.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' very good behaviour, and attitudes to school, their work and each other, with a very high level of racial harmony and of support for their peers with SEN.
- Very good SEN provision and inclusion, and a good hearing impaired department.
- Very good leadership by the headteacher, senior staff and governors.
- Nursery and reception have strengths in leadership, assessment and curriculum.
- Much good and very good teaching, with a powerful impact on learning, but a need to extend the very good English and mathematics assessment in a manageable way to other subjects.
- A curriculum rich in activities after and outside school, and very successful in sport, but not as strong in opportunities to learn about other cultures as it could be.
- Some shortcomings in the school's accommodation, alongside some very good features.
- Parents are very supportive of the school, which needs to succeed in involving all of them in school and in their children's learning at school and at home.

The school had a successful inspection some six years ago, and has made considerable strides since. Major improvements have been made in standards achieved in ICT, science and mathematics, in assessment in English and mathematics, in resources and facilities, and in its popularity with local parents; all key issues for action in the last report have been well tackled. Improvement has been good.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Achievement is good overall**, due to enthusiastic and well-planned teaching, and very good management and engagement of children. It is good in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception), Years 1 and 2, and Years 3 to 6.

Standards seen overall match national averages. About two-thirds of children in the Foundation Stage will reach the expected goals by the end of reception, and some will exceed them. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, and those in Years 3 to 6 attain average standards in English, mathematics and science overall. However, standards seen in some aspects of science were above national average levels, and standards achieved in ICT were generally above.

**Pupils' personal qualities are very good.** Pupils are very polite, have very good relationships with other pupils and teachers, and are very interested in their work. Their spiritual, moral, and social development is very good, but their cultural development is only satisfactory. Pupils throughout the school display very good attitudes towards school and each other, and behave very well. Attendance levels are satisfactory and pupils are particularly punctual and very quick to settle in lessons.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good overall,** with many strengths. Teachers are very good at engaging pupils' interest and at managing them, expect them to work hard and independently, and provide challenging work, resulting in good learning.

The quality of teaching coupled with very good support from well-briefed and trained non-teaching staff, and a broad and well-balanced curriculum results in good learning. Pupils work and try hard and make good gains in their understanding and skills. Management is improving teachers' skills.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, with very good planning and leadership, and support from non-teaching staff. Provision in most subjects is good. Nursery and reception provision for areas of learning is very good. Good care and guidance are provided, and there are good partnerships with parents and others.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are both very good** (as when last inspected). The headteacher and leadership team monitor and analyse the school's performance carefully, plan very effectively how to improve standards and work as a very strong team with other staff to achieve their aims.

The school is very well run day to day, with very effective use made of limited financial resources. Subject management is good overall.

The governing body is very effective; it is very well organised, independent minded and very supportive, and looks ahead and takes initiatives. It meets all its statutory duties.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents are very pleased with the school. They willingly support the school and their children. They think the teaching, leadership and management are good and that the staff are approachable.

Pupils like being at this school, enjoy their lessons and get the help they need. They are very clear about teachers' expectations, and know what to do to improve their English and mathematics.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Extend opportunities for preparing pupils for life in a culturally diverse society, and widen community understanding and support, by finding ways of attracting ethnic minority parents and representatives into school and by adding significant cultural visits to the existing very good range.
- Extend the school's best practice in assessment to foundation subjects including RE.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement overall in the nursery and reception, in Years 1 and 2, and Years 3 to 6, is good. Two-thirds of children are likely to reach the national goals expected by the end of reception, which is the national expectation, and standards reached by the end of Years 2 and 6 in literacy and numeracy also match national expectations. ICT standards at the end of both Years 2 and 6, however, are better than those expected nationally, which is a major improvement since the last inspection when they were below average. Mathematics too has improved, since standards are now average in Year 6, compared with below average when last inspected.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement of pupils in the nursery and reception is good overall, but very good in two areas of learning (personal, social and emotional development, and communication, language and literacy development).
- Standards in some aspects of science are above average.
- Achievement of pupils with SEN, of EAL pupils and more able pupils, is good.

#### Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	15.4 (14.5)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	15.2 (13.2)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	16.0 (15.7)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 58 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.9 (25.4)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	27.8 (25.3)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	29.8 (26.7)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 52 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

1. Attainment on entry to the school is below average, due to low achievement in speaking and listening, and in personal, social and emotional development. However the very good provision made in the nursery and reception means that most are likely to attain the Early Learning Goals by the end of reception as expected nationally, and some will exceed them.
2. Attainment in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 2 was better than average in writing, but below average in reading and mathematics, nevertheless, this was a good improvement on 2002 results. Although over several years improvement has been slightly below the national trend, with the very good provision in the nursery and reception, results are likely to improve faster. Results in the national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 were average in English, but above average in mathematics and science, again a much better performance than in 2002.



3. The results in Year 6 are overall better than those gained by schools with similar results in Year 2. This indicates that the pupils achieved well. The school exceeded its English and mathematics targets in 2003, the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels increased and the improvement trend over time is above schools nationally.
4. The school tracks the performance of pupils from ethnic minorities, those who are speakers of English as an additional language and the separate performance of boys and girls, in order to assess relative achievement. Identified underachievement in writing by Asian girls has led to changes in provision. Concern about the needs of more able pupils led to the appointment of a co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils and the creation and implementation of a strategy for meeting their needs.
5. By Year 2 observed standards in reading and writing match national expectations. Standards in listening and speaking are less well developed. Standards in mathematics are average, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The school recognises the importance of these skills and provides many opportunities in the school day for all pupils, including those for whom English is not their first language, to use them.
6. By Year 6, standards seen in English overall are in line with national expectations, but speaking and listening are again less well developed. Standards in mathematics and science, however, are similar to those achieved nationally and in some science lessons seen pupils achieved above average standards. ICT standards are above national levels at both Years 2 and 6. Standards in foundation subjects also generally meet national expectations, although in music they are sometimes higher.
7. Achievement is good overall in the nursery and reception, and good for pupils in Years 1 and 2, and in Years 3 to 6. This is due to lively teaching, challenging and interesting activities and very good relationships between teachers and pupils. More able pupils also achieve well in most lessons, as do pupils with SEN and those who are speakers of English as an additional language.
8. There is no significant differential in achievement between different year groups or groups of pupils. This good achievement is likely to lead to above average standards. The achievement of pupils in the hearing impaired department is good. From a very low starting point pupils make good progress in acquiring language skills. By the end of Year 6, a few pupils achieve standards comparable to nationally expected levels in core subjects. Those pupils with more complex needs achieve well in signing communication and make steady progress in the core subjects.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

As at the time of previous inspection, pupils' personal qualities are very good. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good. However, the multicultural aspect of their cultural development, very good then, is now only satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory. Behaviour and attitudes are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are very interested in learning at the school and participate enthusiastically in all available activities.
- Pupils behave very well as a result of high expectations set by adults; relationships in the school are very good.
- Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social development, is very well supported.
- There are not many opportunities for pupils to experience the richness and diversity of cultures and faiths which are now present in Britain's multicultural society.

## Commentary

9. Pupils' very good personal qualities are evident throughout the different groups, including younger pupils and those with hearing impairment. Through the curriculum, including PSHEC and rich extra-curricular activities, pupils learn social skills and moral choices well and are motivated to see the rewards for their efforts. Their good performance is suitably rewarded. Pupils develop right ways to react when frustrated or angered through circle time and good opportunities in lessons. They have very good understanding of the difference between right and wrong, even if a very small number do not always act accordingly. Adults, through example, effectively promote calmness. In the school council, pupils develop their understanding of democratic processes and their responsibilities, and make a real contribution to the development of school practices and facilities.
10. Areas of the curriculum like religious education and assemblies, together with teachers' alertness to opportunities for wonder and reflection, raise pupils' spiritual awareness very effectively. Performing arts activities and visits support their cultural development, but there are not many opportunities to widen pupils' experiences of the cultures and faiths found in Britain today. There are few visits to places of worship or visitors from faith or ethnic minority groups to enrich the curriculum. Very good opportunities to participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities, including a wide range of sporting competitions, extend pupils' experiences and help them to become independent and self-reliant.
11. In class, pupils are willing to do their best especially as the work is generally well suited to their ability and interest. Outside, all groups of pupils play together happily. A little immaturity is evident, especially in a small number of younger pupils but any antisocial behaviour like bullying is not a problem. Relationships are very good. Exclusions are not a feature of the school. Pupils with special educational or language needs work very well with the support staff. The personal and social skills programme for pupils in the hearing impaired department is of a high quality and led by a deaf parent who addresses issues with pupils relating to their deafness and raising awareness of life as a deaf person. Pupils from mainstream classes work within unit classes if it is appropriate for them, thus strengthening inclusion and understanding.
12. Most pupils attend regularly and promptly. Authorised absences are due to illness and a little because of family holidays during the term time. Unauthorised absence is negligible. There is no truancy.

### ***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year***

Authorised absence	
School data:	5.1
National data:	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0.1
National data:	0.4

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

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

**The quality of education provided is good overall.** Teaching is good throughout the school, and assessment is good overall. Both are well supported by a broad and balanced curriculum and good accommodation and resources, very good care and support of pupils and satisfactory links with parents.

### **Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching is **good** overall throughout the school. The quality of learning is also good in all three key stages. Assessment is good.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' lively teaching engages pupils' interest very effectively so that all pupils are well motivated to learn.
- Teachers have very high expectations with regard to pupil effort, achievement and behaviour, and present challenging, but well matched, activities.
- Pupils are very well managed so that behaviour and concentration are very good.
- Non-teaching staff are knowledgeable, well briefed and deployed very effectively throughout school to support good pupil progress.
- There is no common assessment system for foundation subjects and RE.
- ICT is not sufficiently used more to support other subjects in the classroom.

## Commentary

13. Four-fifths of lessons seen were good or better; this is a good picture, and slightly better than when last inspected.
14. Teachers plan challenging and stimulating learning activities, which ensure that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are systematically developed over time in ways that are interesting to pupils. Planning is well thought out with clear learning objectives, at appropriate levels, shared with pupils at the start of lessons and checked with them at the end to assess how far learning has been achieved. This works well because pupils know precisely what to do and develop the ability to assess their own learning. Teachers promote literacy and numeracy skills well in other subjects. Reading and writing are taught well throughout the school and teachers use questions adroitly to check pupils' understanding of the text they read. Explanation, questioning and discussion are particularly good and ensure good learning with well-motivated pupils who behave well as a consequence.
15. Teaching is at its best when there is a high level of challenge for all pupils, when pupils are highly motivated by the task or the role assigned to them (e.g. forensic scientists, authors) and when the teacher has carefully foreseen how each step of the lesson will proceed. It is occasionally less successful, when tasks are not adequately differentiated for differing abilities or when the skills demanded by tasks divert learning from the subject being taught.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 58 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	19 (33%)	28 (48%)	11 (19%)	0	0	0

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

16. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with SEN is very good. Pupils who require additional support are identified as soon as possible when they begin school. Work is planned at the right level and is matched closely to very good individual education plan targets. Targets are very well constructed, and regularly updated and renewed. Teaching assistants give very good support in class and teachers set written work to match pupils' literacy skills. The co-ordinator for pupils with SEN works closely with all staff to ensure that pupils are given appropriate support and, consequently, pupils achieve well. Teachers provide equally well for pupils with SEN, those who speak English as an additional language, more able pupils and for boys and girls.
17. The quality of teaching in the hearing impaired department is mostly of a high standard. The teaching of language skills by teachers and speech and language therapists is very good because teachers are knowledgeable and prepare thoroughly, using detailed records of each

pupil. The good resources employed and effective signing communication ensure that pupils enjoy learning and have a very clear understanding as they steadily build their knowledge of language. English and mathematics are taught well, and every effort is made to ensure that pupils learn from personal and practical experiences.

18. Very good relationships are a significant feature of all lessons. Pupils are valued and respected and they live up to the very high expectations that teachers have of them. They also appreciate their teachers' sense of humour and fun. They rise to the challenge because they know that their efforts are valued and will be rewarded through praise and encouragement. Standards of behaviour are very high, consequently, no time is wasted dealing with inappropriate conduct and pupils can get on and learn. Homework is used well overall to support learning.
19. The quality of teaching is the result of strenuous efforts by the leadership team to raise standards through careful staff selection, good support, monitoring and evaluation, and it is a key contributor to the standards achieved.
20. The school has very good systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science. Rigorous tracking of every pupil's progress through the school enables teachers to set challenging targets for improvement. Assessment in foundation subjects and RE is less well developed and now needs a common system that makes the minimum of demands on teachers' time, to ensure that pupils and teachers know what pupils have learned and what they need to learn next. Marking is regularly and positively carried out, usually with clear direction to pupils as to how to improve their work.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum provided by the school is **good**. It is broad and well balanced across all subjects and fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Opportunities for enrichment are very good. Resources and accommodation are good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides a good breadth of learning opportunities for pupils in Years 1 to 6 and a very good breadth in the Foundation Stage.
- The curriculum is well planned and is enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities and competitive sport, at which the school is very successful.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good throughout the school.
- Pupils are prepared well for transfer to the next stages of their education.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of other cultures are limited.

## **Commentary**

21. The curriculum provided for pupils is broad, well planned and suitably balanced in all subjects. Interesting and relevant topics are chosen and presented to pupils in a lively fashion. A strength of the school's provision is the wide range of well-planned extra-curricular activities provided for pupils. These enrich and promote learning in many subject areas. The school's involvement and success in sports activities and the performing arts also contributes significantly to the achievement of pupils. However, the school's curriculum at present allows few opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of the multicultural nature of modern society. This affects pupils' understanding of the nature of the broader world in which they live and that society is made up of people from many different cultures and beliefs. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been well implemented and both literacy and numeracy are promoted effectively in other subjects. Concerns voiced by the previous inspection regarding weaknesses in the provision of ICT have been addressed very well, although the use of ICT to support other subject areas in the classroom has yet to be consistently developed throughout the school.

22. Pupils in the hearing impaired department have full access to the National Curriculum, adapted appropriately in teachers' plans to ensure that it matches their needs. Unit pupils have individual programmes of integration into main classes and groups, and are very well supported so they take a full part in the lessons. However, at times pupils miss out on non-core subjects, which are made up for when possible. The curriculum is enhanced by regular educational visits and visitors. Unit pupils participate in after-school clubs of their own choosing. Classrooms are well equipped with listening aids and are carpeted, so that pupils are able to make the best of their hearing aids and participate in lessons.
23. Others who encounter difficulties in learning are well supported through the very effective use of competent learning support assistants and this enables them to take a full and active part in lessons and achieve well. For example, a pupil with severe hearing impairment took part in all activities in a Year 6 gymnastics lesson because of the quality of support received from a very effective and dedicated learning support assistant. As a result, the pupil made good progress and thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of the activities. Individual education plan targets for pupils with SEN are very good, and are regularly updated and renewed. Support is well focused on improving individuals' reading and writing skills and working towards targets. Teaching assistants give very good support in class and teachers level written work to match pupils' literacy skills. Pupils with SEN are included very well in school life as are pupils with EAL. There is a need, however, to develop further opportunities for enrichment and in particular to celebrate the diversity of each individual culture. Satisfactory resources in a range of languages ensure access to the curriculum and help parents to understand how to support their children.
24. The curriculum for children in the school's Foundation Stage classes has very good breadth and is well balanced and promotes the nationally required areas of learning well. Pupils are prepared for the later stages of their education well.
25. The school is well resourced for teaching all aspects of the National Curriculum, and resources for teaching physical education and ICT are especially good. However, the school's accommodation, whilst satisfactory overall, has several weaknesses. The playgrounds are cramped, and the present school hall is unsuitable for teaching some aspects of physical education and is too small for whole-school assemblies. In addition, as the number of pupils on the school roll has risen, the school has had to make best use of available indoor space and, as a result, there are now only limited areas for use for storing resources and larger equipment.

### **Care, guidance and support**

Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. Support, advice and guidance for pupils to improve their work are good. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is also good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very caring ethos of the school promotes good learning.
- A good admission process helps pupils to settle in quickly.
- Health and safety measures are in place; pupils feel safe and secure.
- Child protection arrangements are good; vulnerable pupils are looked after kindly.
- Assessment procedures and records have improved.

### **Commentary**

26. The very strong commitment of staff to the welfare and happiness of all pupils creates a good learning atmosphere. Parents are rightly confident that their children are fairly treated and well cared for. Vulnerable pupils, including those with hearing impairment, are very effectively supported and integrated. Regular risk assessments of the site ensure that any perceived hazards are dealt with. There are several first-aiders who look after unwell pupils with kindness.

The SEN co-ordinator, who is the child protection liaison officer, is suitably trained and keeps others informed of issues. Supervision at break-time and lunch-time is sufficient. The personal, health, social and citizenship education effectively raises pupils' awareness of relevant matters, such as problems caused by drugs in society, as well as providing opportunities to discuss personal worries. Staff responsible for the well-being of the youngest children ensure that they settle in happily and that they and their parents quickly feel at home. Transfer to secondary schools is well supported by good contacts and preparation.

27. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection. Termly assessment and testing weeks to monitor and track pupils' progress are very effective. The systems to check individual achievement and use this information to support pupils' performance are good. The school recognises the need to use the target tracking process more effectively. Exchange of pastoral information amongst staff and records of rewards provide effective means to monitor pupils' personal development. This, along with the very good system of rewards and sanctions, promotes an atmosphere where there is virtually no oppressive behaviour such as bullying. Pastoral needs of vulnerable pupils are well met and their progress is effectively monitored.
28. The school council, class councils and pupil questionnaires provide effective means to gauge pupils' views and involve them to a good extent in shaping the work of the school. Pupils feel that they are listened to and taken seriously.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

Parents are very supportive of the school, but links with them are limited in respect of Asian parents. Effective links with other schools and colleges support transfer and the curriculum. Satisfactory links with the wider community extend pupils' experiences usefully.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents' confidence in the school is high.
- The school communicates with and supports parents in many effective ways.
- Links with Asian parents are not well developed.
- Links with parents of young children in the community, other schools and colleges are good.

### **Commentary**

29. Parents are kept informed about the school, what has been taught and how pupils' progress is checked. The combined prospectus and governors' annual report contains much useful information and meets the legal requirements. Parents are invited to individual and collective consultations where the curriculum and pupils' progress are discussed. Pupils' annual reports do not inform parents about pupils' progress in foundation subjects as well as that for English, mathematics and science, and give little advice on what parents can do to raise their children's achievement. However, the school welcomes parents to come and discuss their children's progress, and several programmed opportunities are available as well as informal meetings. A little information is translated into other languages.
30. Parents' attendance at formal and informal meetings is good. Some parents voluntarily help in the library and classes, particularly in younger classes. The school has a significant number of Asian parents, but their participation in the school is low. These parents are not reached equally as well as others. Whilst many of them are involved in younger classes, this is not so across the school. The partnership with parents, therefore, is limited in this respect. Pupil reading records are well supported. Parents helpfully support social events and raise money for the school. The parents' association is active.
31. Mutual support has resulted through links with the community. The school is a part of Parents as First Teachers and Primary Leadership programmes. Links with the pre-school providers and receiving secondary schools are good and ensure smooth transition. The school provides

outreach support for hearing impaired pupils at a local secondary school. Pupils benefit from educational visits and visiting specialists. However, the use of the local Asian community to extend pupils' experiences is not well developed beyond the nursery and reception. Direct links with businesses help with ICT, but they are limited overall.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Both leadership and management are very good. Governance is very good as is the leadership of key staff.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher and senior staff have a very clear vision of what needs to be done to improve the school, and respond very effectively.
- Self-evaluation and the use of performance data and the views of others are very good.
- The governing body is very well organised, proactive, independent minded and very supportive.
- Financial management is very effective in spite of considerable constraints.
- Foundation subject co-ordinators need opportunities to observe colleagues' teaching as soon as funds permit.

### **Commentary**

32. Since the opening of Highworth Combined School some eight years ago, the headteacher has formed and successfully developed a strong team of teachers and other staff. This has resulted in consistent implementation of policies, mutual support and the tangible ethos of high standards of work, behaviour and respect for all individuals that pervades the school. The strength in leadership and management reported by the last inspection has been maintained. The long hours that staff willingly work is a testament to the very considerable commitment they have to achieving the best for children.
33. The headteacher and the senior management team make very good use of performance data from national tests and teacher assessments, along with scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work, and lesson observations, to create and update a picture of the school's current strengths and weaknesses and develop action plans and targets in response. The school's leadership is very successful in promoting inclusion throughout the school, and the recent appointment of a co-ordinator for more able pupils is an example of this aim in practice. The leadership team works hard to achieve equal opportunities for all pupils, and has achieved and maintained very strong racial harmony. The school's aims are very well supported by the school improvement plan, which is clear and thorough, but realistic about what can be achieved. The school's leadership had already identified the need to improve links with Asian parents and to extend assessment to foundation subjects, which are recommended areas for improvement.
34. Curriculum co-ordinators contribute well overall to the development of the curriculum. They are enthusiastic and have good development plans for raising standards in their subjects. They all carry out some monitoring of pupils' achievements in their subjects and of teachers' planning, but foundation subject co-ordinators need opportunities to observe their colleagues teaching or to teach alongside them, as soon as funds permit.
35. Performance management is very well employed both in the case of the headteacher and other teachers, whose objectives relate to the school improvement plan and, therefore, contribute to better learning. A full programme of professional development for both teachers and non-teaching staff, directly related to the school's needs, was completed last year and is planned for this year. Induction of teachers is well supported by mentoring arrangements by senior staff, and is supplemented by the CD-ROM staff handbook that sets out numerous plans and policy and guidance documents. The school is very successful in attracting and retaining staff, and is rightly uncompromising in its approach to staff selection.

36. The governing body is very supportive of the school, but takes an independent view of issues both major and minor, and is forward looking. Governors have regular opportunities to visit and get to know the school. They are very well organised with appropriate committees that debate issues and proposals. They have coped well with difficult decisions on staffing, buildings and funding, and are well able to act as management's 'critical friend'. They have a very clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and expect and obtain full and detailed performance information, including reports from subject leaders. Individual governors have specific roles related to health and safety, SEN, literacy, numeracy and other defined areas.
37. The governing body, through the receipt of regular reports and its own observations, ensures that the school meets its statutory duties, together with the promotion of inclusive policies in relation to SEN, race equality, disability and sex.
38. Resource management is very good. The school appointed a deputy headteacher without a class responsibility, but with the brief of raising standards through performance data analysis and interpretation, curriculum development with staff and the teaching of booster lessons to targeted pupils. The latter enables teachers to have release to prepare lessons and curricular material, complete records and to meet to discuss professional matters. The very competent non-teaching staff are very well briefed and deployed, and make a major contribution to pupils' progress. Financial expenditure is very well planned to meet school priorities without waste and is controlled very effectively. Office staff are very efficient and welcoming, and the school is very clean and tidy. Due to a regular delay in reimbursement of certain expenses, the school has to cope with a deficit budget for some of the year, but overall is in balance.
39. Best value principles are very well employed. For example, money and staff time have been saved by the purchase of an expensive copier that is much faster and produces the school prospectus in-house instead of requiring costly external printing. Performance data for similar schools are obtained and carefully analysed, and parents and pupils are consulted on significant proposals. Competitive tendering, and comparison of prices and specifications, are a regular feature of the purchase of goods and services.
40. The school represents very good value for money, since very good leadership and management, and good teaching, help pupils to achieve well and attain at least average standards, at very modest cost, excluding the hearing impaired department.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,222,365
Total expenditure	1,212,942
Expenditure per pupil	2,603

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-756
Balance carried forward to the next	8,667



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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

41. The Foundation Stage is a strength of the school. Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good; this high quality has been maintained since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is good or very good in every one of the six areas of learning, which are effectively linked together to reinforce concepts in children's minds. Children make good progress in their learning and achieve well. In communication, language and literacy, and in their personal, social and emotional development, children's achievement is very good, as is their progress in these areas. Children join the nursery with below average levels of attainment.
42. There are 53 children in the reception classes, and 91 part-time children in the nursery. Almost half of the children come from minority ethnic backgrounds and nine are still at the early stages of learning English. There are also nine children with special educational needs including hearing impairment. These groups of children make very good progress in their learning and achieve very well. It is likely that a good proportion of children, although not all, will achieve the expected standards in most areas of learning by the end of the reception year.
43. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator provides a very good role model for her colleagues and for the nursery nurses. She has instituted a very appropriate curriculum for the under fives, with very good planning, assessment practices and recording procedures. These enable very good profiling of children's progress and sharp matching of challenges to their capabilities and previous learning. All staff are experienced and well qualified. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the needs of young children. Learning resources are good and are well used by children and staff to provide many activities to further children's learning. Accommodation is only satisfactory, as the reception class areas can seem cramped at active times of the day, and the nursery outdoor area needs development to match the stimulating adventure playground available to reception. The staff work very well together, planning, assessing and recording as a team, ensuring that all children receive a well-planned, safe, happy and appropriate start to their school life. Day-to-day liaison with parents is very good and there are very good induction procedures in place.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children listen well and concentrate in lessons.
- Children work well as part of a group, and are beginning to form trusting relationships with others.
- Opportunities for children to initiate their own activities are very good.
- Children behave very well and have very positive attitudes to learning.

#### **Commentary**

44. Children make good progress in this area of development and achieve very well, including those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Most children are likely to meet expectations, by the time they join Year 1. Children show a thorough, developing confidence in trying new activities. All children concentrate on their lessons and activities well and sit quietly and listen to their teachers when required. This is especially noticeable when they are listening to a story and during the planning time. Children also take their turn before talking or answering a question

and most listen very attentively to their classmates without interruption. All children are beginning to form good, trusting relationships with adults and their peers. They work as part of a group or a whole class, taking turns, sharing fairly and beginning to understand the need for a code of good behaviour to enable them to work harmoniously. They understand the classroom rules and behave very well.

45. Children are given plenty of very good opportunities to work and play together in small groups, and are beginning to develop independence by managing their own personal hygiene. Children are also provided with opportunities to initiate their own activities. Nearly all children put on their coats and deal with their own clothing needs for physical education sessions. They recognise their names when participating in 'free choice' activities. All staff expect high standards of behaviour and this results in a quiet working atmosphere in all activity areas. The staff are very good role models for the children's social development.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good quality of teaching in this area helps children to achieve very well.
- The cross-curricular links made by teachers ensure that children receive constant messages.
- Children enjoy books and handle them with care.

### **Commentary**

46. Children make very good progress in this area of learning and achieve very well. By the time they join Year 1 it is likely that more than half of the children will meet the expected standards. All children listen attentively to stories. They listen well and can express their ideas confidently. Lessons are well targeted to the needs of individuals. Children practise writing their names on their work at the beginning of sessions. Most children can identify some letter sounds, and these are constantly reinforced through a range of differing activities. For example, when writing about frogs and their life cycle children can find the initial sound of a word before recording words such as 'spawn', 'tadpoles' and 'pond'.
47. Spoken language is developing well, as staff use every available opportunity to encourage 'talk', particularly for those children with special educational needs and for those children who are bilingual and for whom English is not their home language. Role-play sessions are used well to help develop children's speaking skills, and all the children benefit from the visual signing. For example, in the 'bug hunt' area, children are scientists, keeping written records of the minibeasts they find. In reading, some children have begun to read simple books whilst others still explore print. The higher attaining children are reading their own books. The quality of record keeping by staff assists this process. During the 'free choice' time the children often choose to look at books in a quiet area.
48. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and all staff encourage children to speak by asking questions, responding positively and giving encouragement to their answers. Children choose to 'write' invitations to Green Day and many are competent at writing their names. ICT is used very well to enrich learning. For example, children practise their mouse control skills by drawing frogs. Very good links are made between literacy development, art and design, and ICT as children, both in the nursery and reception, develop and practise skills in a range of activities.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well in relation to their prior attainment because of the good quality of teaching and learning.
- There is a good range of incidental opportunities to reinforce mathematical ideas across the curriculum.

## Commentary

49. In their mathematical development just over half of the children, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, are on course to meet national expectations when they join Year 1. Most count with confidence up to ten and can recognise and use these numbers. Some children recognise larger numbers from registration periods and from their everyday life. Pupil participation in role play in the outside area, for example, when counting the snails, also helps them to count small numbers and this is actively encouraged. Most children recognise and name two-dimensional shapes such as, squares, rectangles, triangles and circles. The links with other aspects of the curriculum are strong as children use ICT to 'dress teddy' and to count items for a party. In reception, when adding two groups of objects together, children draw five tangerines in one basket and five bananas in the other. Higher attaining children write these as 'sums'.
50. The quality of teaching and learning is good and children achieve well due to the organisation and management of mathematical sessions that give all children the opportunity to practise 'hands on' what they have learnt in whole-class lessons. Learning resources are organised well to give children the opportunity to participate in various planned and 'free choice' activities.

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and this enables children to achieve well.
- There are good opportunities for children to learn about the natural world.
- The provision for information and communication technology is good.

## Commentary

51. The majority of the children, will achieve the recommended targets by the time they join Year 1. All children are developing their scientific skills well, for example, when growing beans in reception classes, and digging the nursery garden. In the nursery, children experience pushing and pulling concepts whilst playing with blocks and trikes in the outside area. Children learn about other faiths and cultures, when they think about things that are personally special or precious. They show a good developing use of the control 'mouse' in their work on the computer, controlling and moving symbols into the appropriate place. Children's ICT skills are well developed for children of this age.
52. The sand and water trays are used and enjoyed by all children to look closely at differences and change. They identify the different features of objects when used with sand and water, for example, in their work on floating and sinking. Floating their boats in the nursery helps children to be aware of these concepts through play; this is a strength of the provision. Children use a range of positional vocabulary and staff encourage this development during the 'free choice' times.

53. The quality of teaching is good and children of all abilities make good progress, particularly in the scientific aspect of area of learning. This makes a great contribution to their spiritual development through the wonder of nature. A wide selection of objects, materials and equipment is provided for children to use and handle in their everyday activities, including computers, to further their knowledge and understanding of their immediate locality and the world about them.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning in this area of learning are good and enable children to achieve well.
- Good opportunities for children to develop their spatial awareness.
- Limited continuous access to the outside area for reception classes.
- Limited continuous access to large scale climbing equipment for the nursery.

### **Commentary**

54. By the time they join Year 1, most children, including those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, are on course to meet the recommended standards for their physical development. When changing for their physical development lessons, most show good independence in undressing and dressing with little assistance needed from adult staff. Children show a good awareness of space, and a good ability to control their own bodies in hall sessions. They show an awareness of the space around them such as when they are jumping as frogs, but not all can co-ordinate sufficiently well to skip. Children who speak English as an additional language receive good support from other adults and their peers during hall sessions.
55. The curriculum planning affords children with many good opportunities to practise their skills. For example, they make their own choices where to work; many choose the outside area in the nursery. The staffing allows some continuous access to the outside area where children can experience a range of opportunities including clambering, riding trikes around a course, balancing on blocks and on a balance bench. However, the limited space is shared by the nursery and reception. There are good plans for improvement. Children are learning to handle tools, objects and construction materials safely in nearly all aspects of their school day. The manual dexterity of the children in using pencils, crayons, paint brushes and other colouring implements is well developed. The quality of teaching and learning is good and full use is made of the available resources and materials. All staff teach, support and work with children in their use of apparatus, tools and equipment to help them gain confidence in using the space and equipment imaginatively and safely.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good and enable children to achieve well.
- Good opportunities for independent learning.

### **Commentary**

56. All children make good progress in developing their creative skills, including those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, and most are likely

to achieve the expected standards by the time they leave the reception classes. This is due to good use of plentiful resources and opportunities for independent work, for example, in use of play dough to create shapes in 'free choice' sessions. They all enjoy learning and singing new songs. A range of instruments is available and some children access these during 'free choice' time.

57. Nearly all children show the ability to use their imagination to initiate and use role play in the play areas of their respective classrooms, and in the outside area where nursery and reception children play together. Opportunities for painting, drawing, cutting and sticking, and exploring different fabrics for modelling are always available. There are good examples of the children using painting to express their own ideas in the colourful displays of work in the classrooms and activity areas. For example, collective murals of the Rainforest or Foot Patterns. The quality of teaching and learning is good and the many activities for this area of learning are well resourced and organised to ensure that children of all abilities have the opportunity to participate in creative work.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good and this helps pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are very good.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Assessment procedures are used well to monitor pupils' progress.
- The presentation of pupils' work is sometimes untidy.
- The standard of pupils' speaking and listening is not as good as other areas of English.

#### **Commentary**

58. Pupils attain standards overall in English that are comparable to those attained nationally in both Years 2 and 6, although standards of pupils' speaking and listening in Year 6 are slightly below the national average. The school has managed to maintain standards that are comparable to those reported by the last inspection. This has been evident in national test results over the last few years, although there have been some variations year by year because of the make up of particular groups of pupils. This represents good progress from entry, when many pupils did not do as well as their peers, and is the result of very efficient whole-school planning, the good use of the National Literacy Strategy and effective teaching and assessment.
59. The quality of teaching is good and in observed lessons ranged from satisfactory to very good. Teachers' display good subject knowledge and learning support assistants are used very effectively in lessons to help the less able to achieve well. Pupils are encouraged to try hard and there is an emphasis on helping pupils to develop their literacy skills through purposeful activities. As a result, attitudes to the subject are very good and pupils enjoy learning. All pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups, pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils, achieve well throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs, especially those from the school's hearing impaired department, are well cared for and every effort is made by staff to raise their attainment by carefully planned work and good support and encouragement.
60. Progress in developing reading skills is good in all year groups. Year 2 pupils are able to read with accuracy and understanding whilst pupils in Year 6 use inference and deduction well to

explain the meaning of texts and characters in stories. Many have begun to develop preferences for different authors and are able to identify key points in stories.

61. The quality of pupils' handwriting and their presentation of written work are not always of a high standard. However, it contains evidence of good progress and achievement. Year 2 pupils use simple punctuation well when using descriptive language in their writing. Pupils in Year 5 are able to investigate the use of persuasive texts whilst a majority of Year 6 pupils write in a lively, thoughtful manner and with a good understanding of composition. Higher attaining pupils are able to select vocabulary in order to make their work interesting to the reader. Teachers' marking is usually diagnostic and helps pupils to understand how they can improve their work.
62. Whilst many pupils display an outward confidence when speaking and appear to have developed effective listening skills, a minority are limited in their understanding of language by their restricted vocabulary. For example, during a Year 6 lesson one pupil thought that 'deduce' meant to reduce in size. The school is aware that improving pupils' understanding of less common words needs developing and this is reflected in current school improvement planning. Teachers work hard to help pupils extend their spoken language by, for example, ensuring that pupils have opportunities to talk to each other through activities such as paired conversations. In several observed literacy lessons teachers used questioning techniques skilfully to introduce new vocabulary and to encourage discussions.
63. The subject is well led and managed by the co-ordinator, who has a clear understanding of the subject's strengths and of the need to, for example, further develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. The co-ordinator monitors teaching and planning on a regular basis and has ensured that procedures to track pupils' progress are used well to assist the future planning of lessons. Resources are good and are used effectively to enhance learning.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

64. Cross-curricular links are used effectively to develop literacy and language skills in other subject areas, with an emphasis on the continuing need to further develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. However, even though the school's ICT suite is used effectively to develop language skills, the use of ICT to support learning in the classroom remains an area for further development.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The provision is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well, because of good teaching.
- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is often very good.
- Teachers plan work very well to meet the needs of individuals.
- Homework is used well.
- The well-directed focus on mathematics this year has not yet had time to show its impact on standards.
- The use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

65. Standards in mathematics by the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with national expectations. Achievement is good overall across the school from a below average start on entry to the nursery. Variations in proportions of special educational needs pupils, as well as those whose home language is not English, have impacted on variations in standards as well as staffing difficulties, for example, in 2002. Evidence of the inspection shows recent good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics with high proportions of very good lessons

observed. This is because teachers have focused on setting, improving mental mathematics and on teaching the vocabulary for mathematics. The Year 5 higher attaining group is much larger than the equivalent Year 6 group and should easily achieve Level 5 in next year's standard tests.

66. All pupils now have the key learning objectives in the front of their books and teachers mark off when they are achieved. Pupils move on to the equivalent next year's objective when earlier ones are reached. This ensures a firm foundation on which skills build up and enables pupils to work well at the appropriate level. In very good quality lessons, pupils have good opportunities for defining key words such as 'equivalence' and explaining, for example, a hypothesis and an investigation. In many lessons learning is fun and teachers motivate, inspire and challenge pupils very well so that they are well motivated and have a sense of success. In lower ability groups pupils feel well supported by work that is well targeted and they work diligently. Scrutiny of work suggests that in a number of classes this current, often very good, progress is relatively recent; that there are gaps in knowledge from previous years because pupils at times complete very little work or make a high proportion of errors when previous skills have not been mastered. Where teaching is less successful, teachers do not appear to follow up difficulties as well as they could or have pupils put right their work. Homework is regular even in Years 1 and 2 and supports learning from lessons in class.
67. The management of the subject is good and improvements are well targeted including the introduction of a tracking programme to predict and set targets for individuals' learning based on prior achievement. There are plans to analyse responses in optional standard tests this year and to identify weak areas. Improvement is good since the last inspection in areas identified except the use of information and communication technology software.

### **Numeracy across the curriculum**

68. This is applied well through mapping skills in geography, dates and chronology in history, making pie charts and graphs to record data in science.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Topics are exciting and well taught.
- Standards overall are average, but in some aspects are above average.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes lead to good learning.
- There is a strong emphasis on enquiry skills throughout the school.
- Insufficient use was seen of ICT to support science.

### **Commentary**

69. Standards in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2003 were above the national average, and this was also the case for standards achieved in the national tests at the end of Year 6. Results in the national tests over recent years indicate a faster rate of improvement in science by the end of Year 6 than schools nationally.
70. By Year 2, pupils in lessons observed were generally attaining standards reached by children nationally, and some higher. They are learning good skills of observation, can suggest simple hypotheses for events they have observed, and can suggest and carry out simple investigations to check their hypotheses. For example, Year 1 pupils decided to cover up one plant to compare its growth without light with an identical one. They communicate their findings clearly and with impact.

71. By Year 6, pupils have developed their skills and knowledge further, attaining average standards and in some cases higher. They have good skills in establishing hypotheses for observed events, due to good emphasis on this in teaching, and most have fully grasped the notion of a fair test. Their scientific knowledge is appropriately broad, including, for example, using elastic bands and Newton meters to measure forces, surveying the most common illnesses amongst children in a study of micro-organisms, and using branching keys to identify plants. They can present their findings in handwritten tables and block graphs, but little evidence was seen of pupils achieving this with computers. They have a good grasp of scientific vocabulary.
72. Teaching is good overall, and sometimes very good. Teachers choose very interesting topics, such as forensic investigation to identify a fictional murderer in a story they had studied, which coupled with very competent management of pupils and strong subject knowledge provides a powerful combination to extend pupils' learning.
73. Speaking and listening are practised well in science lessons, and lessons make good use of numeracy and other subjects. For example, a Year 4 class used design and technology skills to make a model of an arm with elastic bands for muscles, and looked for a correlation between muscle size and strength by squashing plasticine under controlled conditions. A table was prepared of the results, which could have extended learning even further by use of a computer spreadsheet.
74. Achievement is good for all pupils, both in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 3 to 6, and they make good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, those with SEN and more able pupils all achieve well in science due to well-chosen topics and good support.
75. Leadership is good. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and hardworking, and is well aware of current standards. There is a good action plan for science development, but the co-ordinator does not have opportunities for observing his colleagues' lessons, which limits his knowledge of strengths and weaknesses in science and, therefore, his ability to help his colleagues raise standards.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in ICT is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards attained by pupils are above national expectations.
- Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are very good.
- The subject is managed well by the co-ordinator.
- Procedures to assess pupils' progress are not sufficiently well developed.
- ICT is not used consistently in classrooms to support learning in other subjects.

### **Commentary**

76. Standards of attainment in ICT are above those expected nationally in both Years 2 and 6 and all pupils, including those with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is not the first home language, make good progress and achieve well, due to good teaching and resources. Resources for teaching ICT are up to date and the school has a good ratio of computers to pupils. This represents very good improvement overall since the last inspection, which criticised both provision and resourcing in ICT as well as the standards pupils attained, which were then below average in Year 6 and in line with national expectations in Year 2.
77. Provision and standards have improved significantly because:



- The school management and governing body have made a conscious decision to improve all aspects of ICT provision since the last inspection.
- Funding has been used effectively to invest in up to date ICT equipment and in the building and resourcing of an ICT suite.
- The school has implemented a scheme of work based on the National Curriculum Programme of Study.
- The subject is well managed by a co-ordinator who has a good idea of how provision should be developed further if standards are to continue to rise.
- Teachers have had training in how to teach ICT and now display a positive and confident approach to teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching of ICT is good overall throughout the school and ranged from satisfactory to very good in observed lessons.

78. The school's use of national guidance as the basis for planning has also ensured that pupils now have regular opportunities to build up their knowledge, skills and understanding of ICT in all year groups. Pupils really enjoy their work in ICT and are keen to learn more. Year 1 pupils talk about their work enthusiastically and display a growing level of skill development when, for example, using ICT to collect data and create pictograms and pie charts. Year 2 pupils are able to save and retrieve data when using ICT to search CD-ROMs for specific information. Older pupils learn to use ICT for word-processing, spreadsheets, the Internet and data handling as well as control technology. Year 6 pupils talk about their work with enthusiasm and a good level of understanding regardless of their gender. Their attendance at the school's popular lunch-time computer club is so high that there is a limit to how many times each pupil is allowed to attend in any one week!
79. Whilst standards and provision in ICT have improved significantly since the last inspection, issues concerning the lack of suitable assessment systems and their use are still current. As a result, teachers presently have only limited informal means of assessing pupils' progress in the subject or using assessment information when planning work.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

80. ICT skills are not used consistently to develop learning across the curriculum within classrooms. Whilst opportunities to use the facilities of the ICT suite to augment learning in, for example, mathematics and literacy, are good, there is only limited evidence of the use of ICT to enhance learning in class-based lessons. The subject co-ordinator is aware that this is an area for future development.

### **HUMANITIES**

Evidence for humanities is drawn from three lessons of history, scrutiny and discussions. Geography was only sampled on this occasion. The regular planned opportunities for educational visits enhance pupils' experiences well and help to promote good attitudes to geography and history.

#### **History**

The provision for history is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is good by the end of Year 6.
- Good teaching is enhanced by visitors and a planned programme of educational visits to support each unit of work.
- Cross-curricular work in art and design, literacy and ICT is good.
- The quality of written work is good and supports writing in literacy.
- There are not enough opportunities for independent research and use of ICT in history.
- Assessment in history is underdeveloped.



## Commentary

81. Standards in history are average by the end of Year 6 and pupils have a keen interest in the subject making good progress over time. Visitors are used effectively to support pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject giving vivid first-hand accounts, for example, of evacuation in the Second World War and seaside holidays in the 1950s. Such accounts were seen to fire the imagination and enthral.
82. Teaching is consistently good throughout the school; an improvement since last time. Teachers prepare well, use drama and role play effectively to enhance understanding, and in one lesson observed pupils were given photographic and picture clues of the Aztecs and had to guess what the learning objective would be for the lesson. History enhances pupils' skills in writing, especially as teachers level written tasks according to pupils' skills levels. Opportunities for independent research are too limited.
83. The management of history is good and since the last inspection there has been good improvement in developing the curriculum, monitoring planning and teaching, levelling work samples and extending resources, which are now good. Assessment of skills has been identified as a development area.

## Religious education

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good opportunities for pupils to reflect and express their views.
- Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory and often good.
- Teachers at times lack subject knowledge and expertise.
- Children treat the subject seriously and are willing to think for themselves.
- There are few visits or visitors from other faith communities.
- There are no formal assessment systems.

## Commentary

84. Teachers put a lot of effort and thought into the weekly lessons. Children enjoy grappling with ideas and building their own beliefs. A good range of topics covers the major religions and the way that religion brings meaning and purpose to human lives, often helped by teachers using Muslim children as "my experts". All children make satisfactory and steady progress, and most reach standards that are expected by the locally agreed syllabus by the end of Years 2 and 6. Achievement is satisfactory and could be better if assessment systems were in place to help teachers and pupils know how to improve their work. When teaching is satisfactory rather than good, this is because teachers' lack of expertise misses the religious significance of activities or because the tasks do not stretch the children, especially the more able. Resources are not always fully used. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.
85. Leadership is good. The new subject leader is enthusiastic and potentially very effective. She realises that there is more to do. Her strength is in her determination to succeed and her sense of direction; her enthusiasm inspires others. Reflective assemblies benefit religious education, encouraging quiet thought about serious matters. Both ways of building spiritual and cultural development would benefit from being structured around the festivals of world religions, allowing children to celebrate rather than just learn about these special events. The subject leader plans to make links with local faith communities and this is necessary.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

*Physical education is reported in full below and art and design, design and technology and music were sampled*

### **Art and design**

86. Evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, displays around the school and discussions with Year 6 pupils confirm that standards in art and design are average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Improvement is satisfactory since the last inspection. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In the lessons seen, teachers planned and prepared for lessons well, and introduced topics and techniques clearly. Pupils gained confidence in using a range of media and made satisfactory progress in acquiring a variety of skills. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 2, pupils developed their sketching skills by drawing fruit. They had very good control of fine paintbrushes and mixed watercolours and oil pastels with care and imagination. They used shading well to make the paintings more effective. Years 5 and 6 were involved in three-dimensional work designing and making clay containers and using paper sculptures to design headdresses. This is well integrated into design and technology. The evidence also indicates that some pupils have experiences of working with a wider range of media, such as clay, dye and pastels.
87. Pupils explore art from other cultures, for example, pupils in Year 2 studied the work of Aboriginal artists and created their own pictures using appropriate earth colours and brush techniques. Displays around the school celebrate different cultures both contemporary and from the past. A significant contribution to the pupils' experiences across the arts is made through book week. Pupils illustrated their stories and poems. The event also made significant contributions to the pupils' personal, social and emotional development. Displays in science, such as the life cycle of a frog, show effective use of collage. ICT is used effectively and graphics software is used to create Mondrian designs. Although the co-ordinator for art and design offers enthusiastic leadership, she has limited time to monitor teaching in the subject. There are no formal systems for assessment for teachers to check progress year by year and for pupils to be able to know how to improve their work.

### **Design and technology**

88. Lessons seen indicated very good teaching using well-chosen activities that caught pupils' imagination and enabled them to extend their learning very well. Standards achieved were average.
89. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has already made a good impact through advice on collecting pupils' work for comparison, and rationalisation and improvement of resources to match pupils' needs. Further appropriate developments are planned. Currently there is no common scheme of assessment of pupils' progress in DT and this needs to be drawn up, in order to know what skills and knowledge individual pupils have acquired and what they need to learn next.

### **Music**

90. Standards seen were above average in both key stages, and all pupils, including those with SEN and those speaking English as an additional language, achieved well. Pupils made good progress and lessons were challenging and enjoyable. Younger pupils understood rhythm, beat and tempo, and could add percussion instruments and clapping as accompaniment to songs, achieving a complex pattern. Older pupils could sing a four-part round effectively, and most could sing in tune. A Year 4 class successfully skipped in time to playground skipping rhymes, with useful gains for co-ordination and control in PE as well as music.

91. Teaching seen was good, and often very good, motivating pupils highly and ensuring that learning was of a high standard. Teachers are enthusiastic, and several are themselves musicians. Younger pupils responded positively when, for example, they were in groups and were called 'musicians'. Visiting specialist teachers enhance and extend learning and attainment through instrumental tuition for a wide range of instruments. Concerts, a choir and other musical opportunities outside and after school reflect a strong school interest in music and extend pupils' learning effectively. Good singing, in tune and with good expression, was heard in assembly, but no music was played on entry or exit.
92. There is a temporary subject co-ordinator pending a permanent appointment. Planning is clear and linked to National Curriculum requirements, and resources and accommodation are well organised and readily accessible for teaching and learning. There is, however, no assessment scheme to check on pupils' individual progress in music.

## **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Extra-curricular activities make a positive contribution to physical education.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good.
- Resources are very good and used effectively to aid achievement.
- The use of assessment to aid future learning has yet to be developed.

### **Commentary**

93. Pupils reach average standards in physical education in both Years 2 and 6. This represents good achievement given the limitations of the indoor accommodation and reflects the quality of teaching of the subject, which is good overall and was never less than satisfactory in lessons observed during the inspection.
94. Enthusiastic and very effective subject leadership over recent years has provided good opportunities for pupils to engage in competitive sport with local schools. In addition, a very good range of popular after-school clubs, open to both girls and boys, has helped develop games' skills further. Physical education has a high profile within the school and pupils' attitudes towards a subject they really enjoy are very good. Year 6 pupils state that physical education is their favourite subject.
95. Year 1 pupils build up skills in, for example, throwing and catching, whilst Year 5 pupils display an appropriate level of development in gymnastics and are able to perform actions with control and use skills consistently when working at improving co-ordinated body movements when jumping and landing. By Year 6 pupils use counterbalance well during paired gymnastics work and are able to use apparatus and space safely and appropriately. More able pupils are developing a good understanding of tactics in team games. However, pupils presently only receive swimming lessons in Year 3.
96. Strengths in teaching include good control of pupils, well-structured and well-developed lessons and the effective use of resources to aid learning. In most lessons tasks are challenging and time is used effectively. This leads to pupils achieving well. In addition, pupils needing extra help are very well supported by effective learning support assistants. Pupils with severe hearing difficulties, for example, make good progress in learning as a result of such effective support and this can be seen in the way they develop and improve their skills during lessons.
97. Resources for teaching all aspects of physical education are very good and used well. Whilst leadership and management of the subject are very good and have ensured the high profile of physical education as a subject, there are presently no whole-school assessment procedures to

check pupils' progress and achievement in physical education. The school is well aware that this is an area for future development.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

98. Personal, social and health education and citizenship was sampled. The programme linked to circle time when required is good, and helps pupils to understand themselves and how to have successful relationships with others. Assemblies are used well to raise pupils' self-esteem and to develop social skills, such as showing appreciation for the achievements of others. Speakers from the community such as a teacher's parent who experienced the evacuation, a MP and a local police officer have visited PSHEC lessons and provided first-hand insights for the pupils. Drug and alcohol abuse and sex education and relationships lessons are well provided.
99. Teaching seen was very good. Teachers showed sensitivity to pupils' feelings and engaged well with them, resulting in lessons where pupils learnt well through their ability to contribute personal reflections in a safe setting. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has drawn up a good scheme of work for staff to follow.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
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	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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