

## INSPECTION REPORT

**Lowerhouses C of E (Controlled) Junior, Infant and Early  
Years School**

LEA area: Kirklees

Unique reference number: 107698

Headteacher: Mrs Ann Walker

Lead inspector: John Brennan

Dates of inspection: 19–21 January 2004

Inspection number: 265791

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:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	3–11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	183
School address:	Lowerhouses Lane Almondbury Huddersfield West Yorkshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Rita Chambers
Date of previous inspection:	26 April 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Lowerhouses Primary School serves a housing estate in Huddersfield with many of the problems associated with high unemployment. Since the last inspection changes to the social context of the school have placed increasing pressures upon it. There have been many changes to the estate, which has led to many families moving in and out of the estate, resulting in instability in school numbers and a very high level of mobility. The proportion of pupils attending from an area of more settled private housing has diminished. At present, 56 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is well above average and is on an upward trend. With 200 pupils on roll the school is of average size and includes a Nursery currently attended by 30 children. Most children begin Nursery with a level of attainment well below that typically expected of children for their age. The school admits a large number of pupils who have special educational needs. The school operates a resource provision for pupils who are deaf. There are currently nine deaf pupils attending the school. In addition, in the Foundation Stage, there is a further special needs unit for children with speech and communication needs. Six children currently attend this but many leave the unit school at the end of Reception. Including pupils in these units a total of 19 pupils have Statements for Special Educational Needs, with the nature of needs broadening to include moderate learning needs and social, emotional and behavioural needs. The proportion of pupils with statements is very high when compared to that in other schools. Two pupils are at the early stages of speaking English, both of whom are deaf. Other pupils attending from minority ethnic backgrounds speak English as fluently as their peers. The school is involved in the Leadership Development Strategy for Primary Schools. This entails working closely with a consultant leader on key priorities the school has identified.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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23667	Elizabeth Coleman	Lay inspector	
2512	Brian Emery	Team inspector	Music Physical education Personal social and health education Special educational needs
31012	Ann Welch	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology English as an additional language Foundation Stage Mathematics
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a satisfactory and increasingly effective school.** Strong leadership has seen the school through a difficult period. Teaching is good and, although standards are improving, they are still low. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve well and pupils who are deaf, very well. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school's leaders, and especially the headteacher, have done well to see the school through a testing period of significant change and to establish consistent practice and policy to guide staff.
- Shortcomings in the Foundation Stage curriculum hold Reception-aged children back.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs is very good.
- Although teaching is good in most subjects, it is not as strong in writing and science, where there are some shortcomings.
- Effective leadership ensures that pupils behave well and respect difference. The school successfully welcomes all pupils and provides very well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Although tackling the right weaknesses, the School Development Plan lacks important detail and does not enable some key staff to measure the impact of actions on the quality of learning.
- The quality of marking does not help pupils improve their work well enough.
- The school takes very good care of its pupils and works very well with other schools to help transition to the next stage of education.

Since the last inspection changes to the social context of the school have increased the challenges it faces. Coupled with high levels of pupil mobility and several staff changes, standards have declined since the last inspection and, although now on an upward trend, have yet to fully recover. The school now gives pupils more opportunities to write in subjects other than English and Literacy but the tasks are of variable quality. Practice in the Foundation Stage has not kept pace with changes to the curriculum and provision is not as strong as it was. The school has developed a good homework policy and sends work home regularly but many families do not return it. This reduces its impact. The governors have taken useful actions to improve their effectiveness.

### 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*	E	D
Mathematics	E	E	E	C
Science	E	E	E	C

*Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average  
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals*

Many pupils leave or join the school other than at the usual start times. Because of this grades which compare performance with that of similar schools are based on the percentage of free school meals. E\* means performance was in the bottom five per cent of schools.

**Achievement is satisfactory.** Despite significant improvements in national test scores in English and mathematics over the past two years, standards in English and mathematics are still well below average. When compared to those of similar schools, results are below average in English and average in mathematics and science. Through Years 1 to 6 pupils make good progress in reading

and in speaking and listening and steady progress in writing, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Standards in science are well below average at the end of Year 6 and in ICT are below average. Reception-aged children in the Foundation Stage do not make enough progress in learning to read or write. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress, with those who are deaf making very good progress.

Pupils are expected to work hard and relationships are very good. Pupils have positive attitudes towards school and behave well. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good.** Attendance, however, is well below average but pupils are usually punctual.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching is good.**

Although teaching in the Foundation Stage is often good, deficiencies in curriculum planning and assessment undermine how well pupils learn. Pupils who have special educational needs are well taught and deaf pupils very well taught. Teaching assistants make a telling difference, not only to children's progress but to learning by all pupils, particularly in reading. Good systems for managing behaviour and questioning that involves all pupils mean that pupils join in lessons well. There are some shortcomings in the teaching of writing and science, which hold progress back. Marking does not consistently show pupils what they need to do to improve and is too accepting of poorly presented work.

The curriculum is enhanced by a number of trips and visitors and the quality of accommodation and resources is good. The school takes very good care of pupils and tracks their progress well. Procedures for transferring pupils to secondary school are very effective. Links with parents are good and with the community, satisfactory.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good.** Effective leadership has helped overcome major obstacles to success and has built a harmonious school that welcomes all pupils. Management is not as strong because of some shortcomings in the way the school plans for the future and checks up on the impact of its work. Governors are well organised and proactive. They fulfil their statutory duties.

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

Parents think well of the school. They feel able to approach the school with their concerns. However, many do not respond well to the school's attempts to work in partnership with them. Pupils like school. They feel that they are listened to and that they have an adult they can talk to. Some parents and pupils expressed concerns about behaviour. Inspectors do not share these concerns and found that pupils behaved well. Any boisterous behaviour is dealt with promptly.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important aspects the school should tackle to improve are:

- weaknesses in provision for writing and science;
- the curriculum in the Foundation Stage;
- the way the school plans for the future and how its set about evaluating the impact of its actions;
- the quality of marking.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

In the Foundation Stage achievement is satisfactory, with Nursery children progressing at a quicker rate than Reception-aged children because of shortcomings in the curriculum for the latter's literacy and language development. Achievement through Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory overall, with good achievement being made in mathematics, reading and speaking and listening. Despite this standards are currently well below average in Year 2 and 6. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress.

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

- There have been recent improvements to achievement and to standards in aspects of English and mathematics.
- Because of shortcomings in provision, children's progress in writing and science is slower than in other subjects.
- Pupils who have special educational needs, including those who attend the resource unit in Foundation Stage, are learning at a good rate. Deaf pupils make very good progress.
- Reception-aged children do not make enough progress in learning to read and write.

#### **Commentary**

1. From a low starting base, children in the Foundation Stage achieve differently in various areas of learning. Most children make good progress in social and personal education and begin school ready to learn. However, too little direct teaching of reading and writing for Reception-aged children means that children do not learn at quick enough rate and they begin school with skills that are well below those typically found. Children make satisfactory progress in mathematics.
2. The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs is good, including children in the Foundation Stage, and for pupils who are deaf it is very good. Deaf pupils benefit from fully joining in all classes and are working at levels close to their hearing peers, particularly in subjects where language and literacy are less demanding. Deaf pupils who are the early stages of learning English also make good progress. Children in the Foundation Stage gain from working in small groups and from the close attention of adults who guide their learning and exploit the learning potential of activities.
3. There are a number of important factors that need to be taken into consideration when looking for trends in attainment and achievement in national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Most of these result from the redevelopment of the local housing estate which the school serves:
  - Since the last inspection many pupils left the school, only to return at a later date. This fragmented their experience of school.
  - New families moved onto the re-developed estate from other areas and provided a further group of children whose education has been disrupted. Because of both these factors mobility is very high.
  - Although now more settled, the nature of the estate has changed and there is a higher proportion of families with severe social and economic needs.
  - There is a greater proportion of pupils joining the school with abilities that are well below those typical for their age and conversely fewer children with experiences that prepare them well for school.
4. Results in the national tests for Year 2 and Year 6 were well below average in English, mathematics and science in 2003. When compared to those of similar schools, results at the

end of Year 2 in the national tests of 2003 were above average in reading, average in writing and below average in mathematics and at the end of Year 6 they were below average in English and average in mathematics and science. But this doesn't tell the full story. Results in English and mathematics are recovering and in both subjects there have been marked improvements in the proportion of pupils reaching expected levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Minority ethnic pupils who are not deaf progress at the same rate as other pupils in the school. There are no significant gender differences in attainment. A more settled context for the school to operate in, including a more settled workforce and the impact of good leadership, has turned results around. Results are on an upward trend but have yet to make up for the decline in standards the school suffered after the last inspection. The school sets statutory targets for results in national tests at the end of Year 6, but over time these can become meaningless because of changes in pupil numbers. The school now sets shorter-term targets for individuals and monitors progress towards these carefully.

5. The introduction of a structured programme for teaching the sounds letters make is having a positive effect on achievement in reading, and pupils in Years 1 and 2 are now learning to read at a good rate. A more varied and regular reading diet through Years 3 to 6 is broadening pupils' experience of books and their ability to carry out research. However, a lack of basic skills, particularly in writing, continues to hold achievement back in several subjects besides English. The presentation of pupils' work is often untidy and on the whole writing lacks flair.
6. In mathematics through Years 1 to 6 pupils have underdeveloped counting skills and find it difficult to apply skills to problem solving but because of good teaching, which ensures that pupils are kept on their toes, they are now achieving at a good rate. It is here that results have risen most dramatically. In the past two years the school has doubled the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in national tests at the end of Year 6. In science pupils achieve at a steady rate but poor writing skills make it difficult for them to write convincingly about science. Teaching which encourages pupils to explain their thinking reveals a deeper level of knowledge than written work would suggest. However, the patchy approach to teaching investigational skills does not help pupils to develop the wherewithal to plan and carry out experiments of their own.
7. A well-planned curriculum and improved facilities result in satisfactory progress in ICT. From a low base pupils develop skills that are below average by Year 6. In RE pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of Christianity and other faiths.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	14.4 (12.9)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	12.3 (9.2)	14.6 (14.4 )
mathematics	13.8 (14.5 )	16.3 (16.5 )

*There were 21 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	23.4 (23.1)	26.8 (27.0 )
mathematics	24.4 (25.2)	26.8 (26.7 )
science	26.1(26.0)	28.6 (28.3 )

*There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Pupils have good attitudes towards school. They behave well in lessons and around the school and respond well to the school's very good provision for their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. Attendance is well below average although, pupils are usually punctual.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Consistent and effective behaviour management strategies ensure that pupils behave well both in and outside the classroom and keep incidents of boisterous behaviour to a minimum.
- The commitment the school shows for meeting the differing needs of pupils, especially those who have special educational needs, results in their working and playing together well.
- Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development develops sensitive awareness and understanding of others.
- There are good strategies to combat racism and to raise the self-esteem of all pupils.
- Despite good monitoring and strong intervention, attendance is well below average.

**Commentary**

8. Consistent and imaginative behaviour management strategies are a strength of the school and their high profile contributes well both to effective teaching and to the learning of pupils. Pupils are regularly reminded of conduct and class rules by all the adults in the school and this contributes to good and trusting relationships between adults and pupils. There are reward systems for good behaviour with weekly certificates being awarded and displayed. There is "Thank you for being good" time where the privilege of being able to choose activities is lost for poor behaviour. These motivate pupils well. On the whole they work hard to achieve the varied rewards on offer. A written behaviour policy is given to parents when their child joins the school and is clearly displayed in classrooms. This ensures that the many families new to the school are aware of expectations from the start and helps pupils to settle into school well. Persistent bad behaviour is tackled effectively and the school takes tough action when necessary. There were two temporary exclusions last year. However, the emphasis is on rewarding good behaviour and this is effective in raising pupils' self-esteem and creating a harmonious community.

**Exclusions**

***Ethnic background of pupils***

***Exclusions in the last school year***

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	157	2	2

9. The school has a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, who are fully involved in school. Many pupils and most adults working in the school learn sign language in order to communicate more effectively with deaf pupils. This helps pupils work and play alongside each other. Pupils have positive attitudes to the deaf. In the Foundation Stage the emphasis given to children's personal and social needs helps children with a wide variety of special needs to join in activities well and make the most of their time in school. This sensitive awareness of others' needs contributes to pupils' social and moral development and is further enhanced by initiatives such as 'befrienders', where pupils take responsibility for the welfare of others at playtime. This is particularly helpful to pupils new to the school and ensures that they have someone to play with. Staff provide good role models and their willingness to respond to pupils' differences sets a good tone for pupils to follow.

## EXAMPLE OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

**In this example it is possible to see the impact of the inclusion of deaf pupils on the personal development of all and how the teacher also draws on a pupil's cultural background to improve the learning of all.**

During a Year 4 citizenship lesson on marriage the teacher asked the pupils to select a partner in order to discuss the topic. A white hearing pupil purposefully chose a Pakistani deaf pupil as her partner and they proceeded to discuss the topic using a combination of speech and British Sign Language. Later in the whole class discussion the deaf pupil wanted to make a contribution about marriage in Pakistan. The teacher, recognizing this, asked the communicator to translate the girl's contribution so that all the class could hear about the custom of spreading flower petals on the floor for the married couple to walk on.

10. Provision for spiritual education is very good. The school provides a daily act of collective worship and assemblies are thoughtful and of a high quality. Pupils respond enthusiastically and spontaneously to the music they are encouraged to choose for themselves and are well behaved and attentive throughout. Visitors from different denominations are encouraged to take part from time to time. Cultural education is also very strong, ranging from organised visits to a local craft museum to "around the world week" and visits from a Sikh teacher and Zulu dancers. Various displays and artwork throughout the school reflect the experiences gained. This results in high levels of awareness and respect for people of all backgrounds and beliefs. This is backed by a well thought out race equality policy, which is carefully implemented and monitored. There are varied opportunities to appreciate music and dance through extra-curricular clubs and these enhance learning in other areas of the curriculum.
11. The school reinforces awareness of the difference between right and wrong by a programme of personal, moral and social development. This is introduced in the Foundation Stage and continues throughout the school with topics such as race, drugs, bullying and mediation in arguments, giving a context for pupils to consider the consequences of actions.
12. Attendance, though well below average, is effectively monitored and there are good strategies in place, which are applied consistently by the school. However, this does not always result in individual improvement. There is an attendance handbook, individual and class awards and close liaison between the education welfare officer and the school. A few pupils are persistent non-attenders and are closely monitored.

### Attendance

#### ***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)***

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.8	School data	0.4
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

13. Several pupils and some parents expressed concerns about bullying in the playground. This was not seen during the inspection but there was boisterous behaviour by some pupils. The school has good strategies to deal with such incidents. Midday assistants are on hand in all areas of the playground and 'befrienders' are also on duty. There was no reluctance to report any incidents to an adult or older pupil. Although the school has an extensive playground, there are relatively few pieces of stimulating playground equipment to enrich pupils' playtime experiences.

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

The quality of education is good. Teaching is good and standards are beginning to rise. The curriculum is enriched by a number of visits and trips but there are shortcomings in the Foundation Stage curriculum. On the other hand, provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good and for deaf pupils, very good. The school takes very good care of its pupils and has established strong links with other schools, which help pupils progress smoothly to the next stage of education.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is often good but learning is hindered by a poorly organised curriculum. The quality of teaching through Years 1 to 6 is good; pupils are now learning at a good rate, but are yet to make up for lost ground. The teaching of mathematics is consistently good, as is the teaching of reading. There are wider variations in the teaching of writing, with some strong teaching in Years 2 and 6. Satisfactory teaching of writing elsewhere has some shortcomings and holds learning back. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs is good and of pupils who are deaf, sometimes very good. Assessment through Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory but is unsatisfactory in the Foundation Stage.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers manage pupils well, establish good relationships and create good conditions for learning.
- Not enough is done to keep track of children's learning in the Foundation Stage and adjust the level of activities to children's differing needs.
- Expert teaching of pupils who are deaf ensures that they make very good progress.
- Teaching assistants ensure that provision for other pupils who have special educational needs is good.
- Good questioning helps pupils join in lessons and speeds up learning in speaking and listening.
- In some lessons teaching expects too little of pupils.
- There are weaknesses in marking which reduces its impact on helping pupils improve their work.

### **Commentary**

14. Poor curriculum organisation undermines the often good quality of teaching to be found in the Foundation Stage. It places too much emphasis on pupils choosing activities and too little on direct teaching. In addition, daily planning does not give enough detail about what children are to learn and assessment procedures are not rigorous enough to keep track of what children have learnt from the activities they choose to do. This makes future planning difficult and results in activities that are not matched to children's needs well enough. This is particularly the case for Reception children.
15. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs is never less than good and sometimes very good. In the Foundation Stage, children are taught alongside their peers in small groups with specific, short teaching lessons to promote their communication, language and literacy. These work well in developing both social and language skills. Deaf pupils in the Foundation Stage benefit from skilled teaching by a teacher of the deaf, enabling them to be fully included in activities. In Years 1 to 6 all pupils who have special educational needs are fully included in all classroom activities and work is usually matched to their needs. Strong partnerships with class teachers and the careful deployment of teaching assistants mean that the latter make a telling difference to the learning of all pupils who have special educational needs. Deaf pupils are taught alongside their peers and because of the expert use of British Sign Language by a specialist teacher and teaching assistants, and because many pupils are able to sign, they join in lessons very well. On occasion lower-attaining deaf pupils are taught in a dedicated group by a specialist teacher. Teaching here is of a high quality, with detailed

assessment and an in depth knowledge of pupils' needs ensuring that pupils progress very quickly. The professional knowledge and understanding staff have for deaf pupils, along with their high expectations and level of challenge, are strengths of the school. In general, assessment arrangements for pupils who have special educational needs are thorough, but some individual learning plans are too general.

16. There are some strengths in teaching found in the vast majority of lessons:
  - Teachers establish good relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils feel able to give their opinions and feel able to ask for help when necessary. The well-thought-out behaviour policy is applied very well by all staff, including teaching assistants. Pupils know where they stand and what is expected of them. All of this creates good conditions for learning and means that very little time is wasted on dealing with behaviour.
  - Teachers consistently exploit this atmosphere by using good questioning techniques. The use of white boards for pupils to record answers is common. Pupils have to be alert as in most instances all are required to answer questions. These often give pupils a chance to explain their thinking and in the best instances teachers get pupils to talk to each other about answers before sharing them with the rest of the class. As well as enabling teachers to test understanding, approaches to questioning ensure that pupils achieve well in speaking and listening and help pupils work together.
17. Questioning techniques have developed out of the successful implementation of approaches recommended in the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. These have not only equipped teachers well with appropriate skills in teaching literacy and numeracy but have a positive knock-on effect into other subjects. On the whole, teachers apply approaches recommended for numeracy more confidently than those for literacy, where some shortcomings in the teaching of writing are evident.
18. Where teaching is very good, mostly in Years 2 and 6, teachers adopt a lively approach in which pupils are not given a moment's rest. Energetic teaching sets tasks that capture pupils' imagination and foster independence. For example, in a literacy lesson in Year 2 a group of higher-attaining pupils had to write a suitable passport description for the Big Bad Wolf to help him escape from Little Red Riding Hood. It is in these classes that the teaching of writing is more secure, with better connections made between exploring the qualities of reading material and pupils' writing tasks.
19. Less successful teaching, evident in a few lessons, is characterised by tasks which do not demand enough of pupils. At its extreme, pupils learn little. For instance, in a literacy lesson in Year 3, good early assessment, which showed that pupils understood how to write a set of instructions, was not acted upon. Instead, too much time was spent looking at books with instructions, with many pupils enjoying making paper aeroplanes or a wriggly worm from instructions rather than getting on with writing. In some science lessons a lack of confidence in allowing pupils to experiment reduces their role to that of a spectator, while the teacher demonstrates an experiment. Such teaching does little to engage pupils and in some instances they switch off or become restless.
20. The school has put in place good systems for tracking pupils' progress, and, in English and mathematics, regular assessment enables teachers to assess progress. In English, assessments are used well to set individual targets for pupils. However, these are undermined by weaknesses in marking. Although there are instances of evaluative marking, too much does not address targets and gives no opportunity for pupils to make corrections or challenges poorly presented work.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 31 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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0	5 (16%)	19 ( 61%)	6 ( 20%)	1 (3%)	0	0
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*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

## **The curriculum**

Curriculum provision is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. There are good opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully included in school life and have fair and equal access to the curriculum.
- Not enough notice has been taken of the government guidance for the curriculum in the Foundation Stage.
- The school provides a good range of visits and visitors to improve pupils' experience of school. The school is beginning to experiment with the curriculum to further develop pupils' interest in learning.
- The school has a well-structured programme for personal, social and health education that makes good use of the expertise of outside agencies.

### **Commentary**

21. Teachers plan a curriculum that avoids repetition and enables progression. This has helped maintain an appropriate curriculum through a period of significant staff change. The more settled staffing structure is now enabling the school to experiment with some innovative approaches. This has centred on Year 6, where the use of short bursts of work in various subjects and concerted attempts to link subjects leads to interesting work which motivates pupils very well. However, the school is not evaluating the effectiveness of this approach closely enough and this undermines its potential to improve the curriculum for all.
22. Too little has been done to implement the Foundation Stage curriculum. Aspects of the curriculum are unsatisfactory, with Reception-aged children not progressing quickly enough in learning to read and write. Although pupils from this point progress at a quicker rate, poor basic skills hold achievement back in a number of subjects. Better provision is made in the Foundation Stage for children's personal development and this helps them make the best of their time in class and prepares them well for work in Year 1. On the whole not enough control is exercised over the choice of activities that children make and this can result in an uneven pattern of experience over the course of time.
23. The range of special educational needs in the school is diverse and the proportion of pupils with statements for their needs is high. The school does all that it can to make sure the curriculum is as rich for them as for other pupils. A significant number of pupils are deaf. They have good access to the curriculum because they are helped by British Sign Language interpreters. Deaf pupils spend the vast majority of their time working alongside their peers. This is mutually beneficial and has a positive impact on the personal development of pupils. Staff know all pupils well and plan effectively to meet their needs with reference to individual learning plans where applicable. The quality and quantity of specialist staff and teaching assistants are a major reason why pupils with special educational needs progress as well as they do. Good use is made of local and national funding to support work with targeted groups of pupils across the school, including literacy support for Years 1 and 2 pupils and 'catch up' lessons for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6. The school has recently established a list of pupils with particular talents and gifts, although, as yet, no special provision is made for these pupils.
24. There is a well-devised programme for personal, social and health education. This is linked to aspects of the science curriculum and makes particularly good use of the school nurse to

teach sex education and of the local police, who are directly involved in the teaching of the use and misuse of drugs.

25. The curriculum is further enriched by subject-related visits. The residential visit for pupils in Year 6 has been re-instated to help foster pupils' independence and social development. The school makes very good use of a wide range of visitors, ranging from a theatre company and local football and rugby clubs to Indian dancers, Zulu warriors and a Jamaican deaf choir. Many of these enhance the cultural education of pupils. There are also example of teachers, especially in RE, drawing on the cultural background of pupils in school to build on this further. Not only does this add to the education of all but boosts the self-esteem of minority ethnic pupils. There are a satisfactory number of club activities.

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

The school takes very good care of the emotional and physical needs of its pupils and there is very good support and guidance. The school seeks and act on pupils' views.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are very good relationships between adults and pupils.
- There are very good arrangements for induction of new pupils and transition to new schools.
- The school keeps a close eye on health and welfare and acts swiftly to support academic needs.

### **Commentary**

26. The very good relationships between adults and pupils are a considerable strength of the school. From the moment pupils arrive, members of staff are on hand and there is a warm and welcoming atmosphere that inspires confidence and gets the day off to a good start. Teachers are well aware of the individual circumstances of each pupil and the pupils in turn trust teachers. This is an aspect of the school that is recognised and valued by parents. On occasion, former pupils of the school return to ask for advice from members of staff. A designated member of staff is responsible for child protection and another teacher, who has been trained by Childline, provides additional valuable guidance to pupils. There are very good links with the local community policeman, who is a frequent visitor at the school. This leads to a good social and learning environment, described as a "sanctuary" by one visitor. The school seeks pupils' views by regularly surveying them. Findings are collected as a first step in acting or further researching pupils' points of view.
27. There are very good procedures for introducing new children into the school, both at the Foundation Stage and more importantly, in view of high mobility, throughout the school. Each new child is paired with a "buddy" and there is a comprehensive and relevant introduction pack issued prior to arrival. Members of staff make home visits wherever possible. Transition arrangements are also well thought out, with individual strategies for each pupil depending on his/her destination. Teachers from local schools give "taster" lessons, there are organised visits and every effort is made to make transition as smooth as possible.
28. There are good systems in place to monitor progress which informs provision of extra support. The deployment of support teachers is effective and there is a systematic volunteer scheme to reinforce reading, speaking and social skills that produces good results.

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

Partnership with parents is good. Links with other schools are very good. Links with the community are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has the confidence of parents who think highly of the school.
- Volunteers from the local community provide valuable help in literacy.
- The school makes strenuous efforts to forge good relationships with parents.

- Procedures for transferring pupils to secondary school are very well thought out.

### **Commentary**

29. Constant change in the estate which forms the centre of the school's community has made it difficult for the school to sustain widespread links. Nevertheless a member of staff acts as a point of contact to work with volunteers from the community providing extra help in literacy in school. The quality of the provision is good but at present there are only a few volunteers. The school's arrangements and procedures for identification, assessment and provision for pupils who have special educational needs are communicated very effectively to parents. Parents are always kept fully informed of their child's progress and closely involved in setting goals for the future. The school has met with some success in helping parents learn British Sign Language so that they are better able to help their children at home. Courses designed to help parents and carers to support literacy have been sparsely attended. The school has met with more success in working with local social agencies and acts as first point of contact for parents
30. The school tries hard to maintain a dialogue with parents. A parents' survey has been in operation for three years and the results are analysed and acted upon. Annual written reports are detailed and tailored to the needs of individual pupils. The information given to parents includes advice to help their children to achieve individual targets through homework and home activities. This advice is not always heeded and the response to homework is patchy. There is an 'open door' policy and parents are encouraged to approach the school with any difficulties. This is valued and is a successful point of contact helping to deal with any problems at an early stage.
31. The school's very good links with other local schools ensure smooth continuity between the primary and secondary stages of education. Lowerhouses' pupils have close contacts with their new schools and benefit from an introduction to some of the new courses they will take. Detailed information is made available to the new school and there is a particularly valuable mentoring scheme, which puts pupils in contact with similar pupils in the secondary school. Originally designed to help minority ethnic pupils while settling in, it is of benefit to other groups. Contacts are also being developed with other local primary schools and sports matches, newly introduced to the school, are giving a new confidence and sense of purpose to some of the pupils.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The quality of leadership is good and is stronger than management, which is satisfactory. Governors provide good support for the school. Leadership is helping the school overcome major obstacles to success and has arrested a decline in standards.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Strong leadership has seen the school through a difficult period of significant change. A decline in standards has been arrested and recent improvements made in standards and achievement.
- Principled leadership ensures that the school is committed to achieving the best for pupils' personal and academic development and has created conditions in which pupils respect difference.
- Although the School Development Plan contains the right priorities for improvement, plans to address these lack detail.
- Governors have analysed their effectiveness well and have taken positive actions to become more organised and proactive.

## Commentary

32. Since the last inspection school leaders have been faced with significant barriers to overcome – most notably:
- changes to the local estate resulting in increased mobility, greater intensity of need among pupils and a falling school roll;
  - high staff and governor turnover;
  - declining standards of attainment.
33. Because of good leadership, particularly by the headteacher, barriers to success are being overcome. Staffing structures are now more stable, but it is only recently that the school has enjoyed a staffing structure which covers all the major management functions of a school. The decline in standards has been reversed and results are now on an upward trend, parents have confidence in the school and pupils say that they enjoy school. These have been significant achievements.
34. The school prioritised the maintenance of standards of behaviour and the bedding in of new staff to ensure consistency of approaches. They have been successful in achieving these. Pastoral care systems are strong and are carefully monitored. These systems have been further strengthened by the addition of a race equality policy and well-thought-out systems to implement and monitor its impact. There is a determination to meet the needs of differing groups of pupils, especially those who have special educational needs and those whose education has been disrupted by changing schools. The school is successful in monitoring the performance of differing groups and assessing and acting upon the needs of these groups. With adults acting as good role models and the maintenance of very clear pastoral systems, leadership has created conditions which ensure the school operates as a harmonious community.
35. Careful thought has been given to the induction of new staff and appointments have been made with a clear staffing structure in mind. Much has depended upon the headteacher, who, because of changes to staffing and governors, has had a dwindling number of staff to help share in management responsibilities. The school has now come through this period, with the recent appointment of a deputy headteacher and a new Early Years manager completing the senior management team. This team is increasingly influential in ensuring the smooth running of the school. The leadership of the special needs co-ordinator and the head of provision for deaf pupils is very good. They have clear aims and priorities and, together with the headteacher, have created a school in which diverse needs are met and in which special educational needs provision has a positive impact on the education of all. The partnership established with an experienced headteacher from another school under the Leadership Development Strategy is at an early stage but has been targeted at areas of the school in most need of development. The considered recruitment of staff and some shifting of responsibilities have given the school a solid base from which to move forward.
36. Until of late there has been a tendency to concentrate on managing on a day-to-day basis and holding the school together. Much of the development work of leadership has concentrated on establishing systems and practices to bind staff together. This has been done well. Most staff have accepted change well and there is a good deal of consistency in practice. The exception to this is the early years department, where the pace of change has been slow and the willingness to adopt new ways of working less marked. Where necessary the school has made good use of support from the local education authority and from other sources to train staff, but follow-up to this has focused on whether or not staff are complying with policy and rather than evaluating the impact of change.
37. The drive to succeed is helped by improved systems for assessing pupils' progress and collecting and analysing data. This has helped the school to pinpoint areas that are in most need of improvement. However, there are weaknesses in development planning, in particular:

- Rather than detailing specific changes to teaching and the effect the school hopes this will have on learning, curriculum and organisational changes are outlined. So that although staff generally attempt to implement change, this is done with varying degrees of success.
  - The lack of detail undermines the significant monitoring work the headteacher undertakes; too much is to do with checking compliance rather than evaluating quality. She has gathered an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching through more informal monitoring and by ensuring that she visits classrooms regularly. But shortcomings in the development plan mean that purposeful monitoring against the most important areas for improvement is not common.
  - Too few staff are involved in monitoring and evaluation, so the school does not always make the most of harnessing individuals' talents. For example, the knowledgeable literacy co-ordinator has a good idea of what needs to be done to improve aspects of English but is not given time to follow this up with staff and to check how well changes are being implemented.
  - Clear targets for academic improvement are made but timescales can be long. Milestones are rarely described, so the school is not able to make interim checks to measure how well they are moving towards their target.
  - Statutory performance management of teachers is not linked closely enough to priorities in the plan. Although all teachers are expected to improve pupils' performance by a defined amount, the development of professional competencies to achieve this is not thought through in enough detail. This makes it hard to determine the training needs of individuals and to make it clear to teachers what they need to do to improve their performance.
38. The governing body has achieved a good balance between supporting and challenging the school. An action plan for improvement and well-thought-out guidelines for checking up on the work of the school have helped improve effectiveness. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have an increasing say in future developments. However, they have too little input into the school development plan, which does not provide a useful tool to aid monitoring. The exception to this is in the area of ICT, where a more detailed action plan has led to incisive monitoring and provides a good model to guide the monitoring the work of other governors. A planned calendar of governors' activities ensures that they fulfil statutory obligations.
39. Recent devolvement of substantial funding for special educational needs and the difficulties of managing a budget with a falling school roll have tested financial management. However, a recent external audit highlighted only a few concerns of a minor nature and, on the whole, the school has done well to overcome these complexities. Governors monitor spending on a regular basis and the school seeks to get the most from its spending decisions. Because of uncertainty over pupil numbers and staffing levels, governors have maintained a reasonable contingency fund so that any changes to spending or reductions in funds can be phased in without sharp and potentially unsettling adjustments being made.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	632,233
Total expenditure	587,233
Expenditure per pupil	2,916

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	47,041
Balance carried forward to the next	45,000



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

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

Provision for children in the Early Years Unit is satisfactory overall. This is not as strong as reported at the time of the last inspection. The decline is mainly due to weaknesses in the planning and implementation of the curriculum, particularly for Reception children. For these children, not enough time is planned for direct teaching, particularly for the teaching of reading and writing skills, and they spend too much time choosing their own activities from the continuous curriculum. Also, although a range of interesting and exciting activities are on offer, planning for what children are to learn from these experiences is very brief. It does not differentiate enough between Nursery and Reception children or take account of the wide range of ability within each year group. When children have so much choice, it follows that keeping track of all their movements and learning is an onerous task. Although there are good spontaneous observations of children's learning made by all staff, these fall short of assessing and recording progress in the main aspects of the six areas of learning. However, some improvements to planning have recently been made so that Reception children spend some time each day being directly taught literacy and numeracy skills. During these sessions, teaching is good overall and children achieve well. However, these improvements are too recent to have had enough impact to raise children's attainment in reading and writing, which remain well below expectations.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Because of good care and encouraging relationships, children quickly adapt to the school's routines and expectations.
- Children develop confidence and independence in a secure setting.
- Children thrive when encouraged to work together at imaginative activities.

### **Commentary**

40. Children's personal, social and emotional development is a strong feature of the Early Years provision. Staff provide very good role models for children to follow. They are warm and encouraging and treat children with respect and courtesy. As a result, children arrive at school knowing that they can trust their teachers and Nursery nurses. All staff engage children in the routines of the class. Nursery children are quickly made aware that they are all expected to register their own name on arrival and will share in tidying the room at the end of activities. Children are taught to look after themselves and be aware of the needs of others. This helps children to be kind and considerate and to care for each other. One Reception child quickly came to the aid of a Nursery child who was trying to put on his coat, while one girl said to her friend, who was struggling to make a puppet, 'Let me hold it for you.' Children are particularly caring towards pupils with special educational needs. Staff ensure that these children are included in all activities and consequently, all children, regardless of their ability or needs, work together in a very natural way. Adults promote children's personal, social and emotional development well in everything they do. By the time children leave the Reception class, much ground has been covered.

## COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision for communication, language and literacy is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and support staff make many opportunities to develop children's speaking and listening skills.
- Not enough time is spent on direct teaching of reading and writing for Reception children.
- Resources are used well to engage children's interest.

### Commentary

41. A good feature of the provision is that staff pay particular attention to developing children's communication skills. Almost every activity involves asking questions and emphasising words and names. Children are encouraged to talk about themselves and to explain what they have done. Although teaching is good in this aspect of communication skills, not enough adult-led groups are provided to give children an opportunity to speak to an audience.
42. All children are given opportunities to look at books and to listen to stories in attractive comfortable reading areas. However, until recently, not enough emphasis has been placed on children learning to recognise either the sounds of letters or how to write them correctly. During the direct teaching sessions of these skills, now taking place on a daily basis, children achieve well overall. They enjoy these sessions because the good teaching makes effective use of resources such as toys and puppets to motivate and maintain their interest. They benefit from sharing good quality picture and story books, with all staff, and this helps them to develop their reading skills. However, apart from brief daily phonics sessions, there is too little direct teaching of reading and the records of children's achievements in this area are too brief. There is no reading scheme to run alongside 'real' books to give the structure needed for children who are at the very early stages of reading, particularly those who are less able. Although, during direct teaching sessions, children now achieve well, these sessions only take up a small part of each day and they are still 'catching up'. As a result, their achievement over time has been unsatisfactory. The attainment of children in Reception in this area of learning is still well below that expected and few are likely to achieve the national Early Learning Goals.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff have a good knowledge of how to teach basic numeracy skills through talk and the use of resources.

### Commentary

43. In the Nursery children are given opportunities to count and recall numbers as they sing a range of counting songs. Reception children achieve well during the recently introduced daily direct teaching sessions where good teaching makes learning fun. Staff choose resources particularly well to develop children's interest in number and shape. As children make a sandwich they use a 'square' cutter, butter a 'rectangular' slice of bread and cut it into two 'triangles'. Reception children count the number present for the register, which helps them to remember the sequence of numbers to twenty. Although children achieve well during direct teaching sessions, achievement over time is satisfactory, not good, because there is still some lost ground to catch up and until recently teaching has not targeted mathematical development well enough. Although children's attainment is improving at a faster rate than

previously, it is still below that expected for their age and most are unlikely to achieve all the learning goals by the end of the Reception year.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

44. Not enough work was seen to make an overall judgement of provision in this area of learning. Although brief, planning shows a range of activities to help widen their understanding of the world and stimulate their curiosity.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

45. It was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards. However, there are many opportunities for children to develop skills in handling tools, including pencils, scissors, glue sticks, hammers and nails. An area for development is the use of the outdoor area. Too often, children's play is not structured and they are left too much to their own devices, particularly when using wheeled toys.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

46. Again, it was not possible to make an overall judgement of provision or standards. The work on display indicates a variety of media being used. Role play is stimulated by the 'home corner' where children 'prepare', for example, a birthday party.

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

### **English**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The actions taken to improve achievement in reading have been successful and pupils now achieve well.
- There are not enough opportunities for the subject co-ordinator to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.
- There are some shortcomings in the teaching of writing.
- Good questioning gives pupils opportunities to talk but not all teachers plan for the purposeful development of speaking and listening.
- Teachers manage pupils well and with the help of teaching assistants create calm conditions for learning.
- There are variations in the quality of marking and in how pupils are made aware of what they need to do to improve.

### **Commentary**

47. Over a third more pupils in Year 6 reached national expectations in 2003 than two years previously but, despite this significant increase, results were well below national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and, although recovering, were not as high as they were at the time of the last inspection. Recent improvements have been achieved through a more consistent approach to planning and decisive leadership ensuring approaches recommended in the National Literacy Strategy are being increasingly well used.
48. The emphasis the school places on teaching individuals to read, teaching reading to groups of pupils and increasing the variety of books in school is paying dividends. Very good use is made of teaching assistants, so that reading sessions are staffed by at least two and often three or more adults. Because of the success pupils now feel and the variety of reading

material they can choose from, pupils have positive attitudes to reading and they are achieving well. However, their knowledge of the sounds letters make and subsequently their ability to read words by breaking them into different parts are weak. The recent introduction of regular bursts of short lessons which target this is leading to rapid improvements, particularly in Years 1 and 2, but is yet to make up for past deficiencies.

49. Close partnerships between teaching assistants and teachers ensure that pupils who have special education needs make good progress. The effective deployment of assistants to work with groups and individuals and the use of specialist assistants and teachers for deaf pupils mean that they join in lessons well and work systematically towards the targets for them.
50. The impact of teaching assistants goes beyond pupils who have special educational needs and, because they back teachers up in applying the school's strategies for managing behaviour, classrooms are calm places where pupils can learn in peace. Little time is wasted and teachers can confidently set partner and group work which helps pupils personal development and speaking and listening skills. By and large teachers exploit this by using questioning techniques that require all pupils to contribute. On occasions, however, questioning does not include all pupils and writing tasks can be mundane. When this happens pupils lose concentration and do not give of their best. On the whole, though, opportunities to speak and listen are plentiful and pupils are now achieving well. The best teaching builds on this general approach by planning tasks with speaking and listening in mind. In Year 6, for example, pupils watched a video with intense concentration because they had to make notes to use in future work. However, such a considered approach is not widespread.
51. Responding to declining standards in writing, the school made several changes to teaching. However, this has met with mixed success and so achievement in writing lags behind other areas of English. This is because not enough has been done to check that teachers have been following through changes effectively or to evaluate the impact of changes in approach on the quality of pupils' writing. There have been some positive aspects to the recent changes in approach. The limited use of worksheets means that pupils often make choices about how to set work out and are given more opportunities to write for themselves. The emphasis on improving character descriptions and the beginnings of stories is leading to some improvement in the creative use of language and the range of punctuation used is also improving. However, important shortcomings remain:
  - Much of the writing is fragmented, so that, although pupils write short pieces of more interesting prose, they often do not consider how to fit it into a fuller piece. Plot lines, for example, remain simple and the effect of more interesting sentences is lost.
  - In some classes, most notably Year 2 and Year 6, teachers are good at using quality reading material to help pupils look behind a writer's intention and to consider the effect of words and phrases. This is helping pupils think like writers. However, this is not common and, on the whole, the link between reading and writing is not strong enough. For example, in Year 5 pupils completed an exercise on words that sounded the same. This rather mundane work lacked enterprise and did little to improve the creative quality of pupils' writing.
  - There are too few opportunities for pupils to write for particular reasons, so that writing is still seen as an exercise to complete rather than a thoughtful way of communicating with different audiences.
  - The increased emphasis given to handwriting is undermined by the acceptance of shoddy work.
52. Recent improvements to assessment procedures ensure that pupils' progress is more carefully tracked and that teachers are better at judging the quality of work. This has been extended into setting specific targets for pupils to work towards. However, the quality of marking does not make the most of this. Although work is marked conscientiously and some evaluative comments given, few of these relate to the targets pupils are working on. It is also rare for teachers to refer to these in lessons, apart from in Year 2 and Year 6, where the teaching of writing is of a higher quality than elsewhere in the school. The co-ordinator

possesses the knowledge and enthusiasm to move the subject forward but, because of lack of opportunity to monitor the subject, is at present providing satisfactory leadership and management.

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

53. The school has responded positively to this area of weakness noted in the last inspection. Pupils are now given many more opportunities to write in other subjects and are helped in this by the limited use of worksheets. Older pupils are given the opportunity to carry out research and have a satisfactory knowledge of how to go about finding information in the school library. However, some of the links between literacy skills and other subjects are incidental and there is scope for a more considered approach to ensure that particular aspects of English are more purposefully planned for. Monitoring of writing across the curriculum has concentrated on whether pupils are writing enough and not on the purpose or quality of what they write.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

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

- Pupils achieve well because of the consistently good teaching.
- Teachers are good at encouraging the active involvement of pupils throughout lessons.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to use their speaking and listening skills.
- Less able pupils and those with special educational needs achieve very well because of the extra help from teaching assistants.
- Not enough attention is given to marking and assessment to set targets for future work.
- Homework is used well to reinforce and extend pupils' learning in class.

#### **Commentary**

54. In the last two years the school has doubled the number of pupils reaching expected levels by the end of Year 6 but, despite this, standards are well below expectations by the end of Years 2 and 6. However, provision for mathematics is improving. Considering the well above average number of special needs pupils, the high number of pupils who join the school part-way through and a period of staff instability, this achievement is even more commendable. Improvements stem in part from training and support from the local education authority's advisory team. Better planning now ensures a consistent approach to teaching throughout the school and teachers use the methods recommended in the National Numeracy Strategy with increasing confidence.
55. There are a number of positive features about teaching that make it good. All pupils are expected to take part; no one is allowed to sit back and leave it to someone else. White boards are used frequently, which not only makes everyone have a go but provides the teacher with good assessment information as pupils show their answers. At other times pupils work with a partner or in a group to solve problems and report back to the rest of the class. The benefits here are threefold. Firstly, as pupils explain their thinking and listen to the explanations of others, they build up their own range of strategies and realise that no one way is the correct way to calculate an answer. Secondly, their speaking and listening skills improve as they use mathematical terms to describe their methods, and thirdly, teachers can pick up on common errors and misconceptions in pupils' reasoning. The good relationships enjoyed between teachers and pupils make this approach to teaching possible. Teachers are positive about pupils' abilities and this raises their self-esteem and drives them on to try even harder

and live up to their teacher's expectations. Pupils in Year 6 were almost bursting with enthusiasm to share their methods of calculation, needed to solve some very challenging 'real life' problems. In addition, it gave pupils the opportunity to put into practice their previously learnt skills.

56. Teachers ensure that pupils with special educational needs do as well as they can. These pupils gain from working in small groups where they are given detailed explanations of the work by skilled and caring teaching assistants. This guidance and extra help contribute to the good progress pupils make in overcoming their difficulties with mathematics. Since the previous inspection, the provision for homework has improved. Teachers now give it on a regular basis, generally as a supplement to the work in school. However, the response is disappointing at times.
57. There are weaknesses in teaching which prevent it from being very good. Teachers are not using their marking consistently to reinforce points made in lessons and to indicate how pupils can improve. Pupils are not required to correct work. At times, as seen in pupils' books, the starting point for activities is the same for all pupils and on occasions this makes it hard for less able pupils to keep up.
58. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Standards are rising and procedures for assessing and recording pupils' learning have improved since the last inspection. Thorough analysis of tests has highlighted several gaps in provision including the need to improve pupils' problem solving skills. The co-ordinator is aware that further work on target setting for pupils is necessary if standards are to continue to rise.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

59. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in other subjects, especially science, ICT, history and geography. For example, pupils in Year 1 used a block graph to show how many cars passed the school in a specific time.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

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

- Teachers use science well to develop pupils' knowledge, help speaking and listening skills and increase their scientific vocabulary.
- Some teaching plays safe so that pupils watch rather than carry out experiments.
- A lack of basic skills in writing holds back achievement and undermines the impact of good teaching.
- The monitoring role of the subject leader is under-developed as she has little opportunity to see work at first hand.

#### **Commentary**

60. Teachers encourage pupils to ask questions about the subject and give them opportunities to explain their work and offer rational explanations for scientific concepts. Pupils enjoy this approach and it helps them to remember something of what they have done, even when they have produced limited written work. It also supports the school's drive to improving pupils' speaking and listening skills as pupils have to explain their thinking to the class.
61. The quality of teaching is good because teachers have high expectations of all pupils and use questioning well to ensure all are kept on task. Learning is satisfactory because many pupils have difficulty remembering new vocabulary despite its being repeated frequently throughout the lesson. Scientific learning is restricted by their poor literacy and numeracy skills. This is

not helped by the overuse of worksheets for younger pupils, which limits the chance they have to write about science, and the untidy presentation of work by a large number of older pupils. Although improving, standards remain well below average in Years 2 and 6 and are lower than those identified in the previous inspection.

62. The school's policy on investigational work can on occasion be undermined by teaching which restricts pupils' chances to experiment for themselves. In a lesson in Year 4, for example, the teacher took pupils step by step through an experiment. Pupils behaved well through this but were under-involved; this held back the achievement of higher attaining pupils in particular. This can be contrasted with a livelier lesson in Year 6 where pupils designed an experiment to test various liquids. Lively discussion ensued and pupils showed an understanding of the concept of fair testing. However, homework, set to prepare pupils for the lesson, was not completed by many pupils and in general the patchy response to homework reduced its impact.
63. Subject co-ordination is restricted to the monitoring of planning. There is little opportunity created for the co-ordinator to observe lessons or examine pupils' work and she, therefore, has a limited view of science provision. She is consequently unable to evaluate where weaknesses in teaching and learning remain. This is hampering development.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Resources have been significantly increased and, as a result, the range of pupils' skills is expanding.
- An increasingly high level of teacher expertise underpins good teaching and promotes satisfactory learning.
- Class-based computers are insufficiently used to support learning in other subjects.
- Very good subject leadership continues to drive the curriculum forward.

### **Commentary**

64. The number of computers available in school has been increased significantly since the time of the last inspection. In particular, the addition of a well-equipped computer suite for whole-class teaching allows pupils more 'hands-on' experience and is developing their skills more rapidly than before. Good teaching means that in dedicated computer lessons pupils achieve well. However, although each classroom has at least one computer and a good range of software, these are not used often enough for pupils to practise skills or use ICT well enough in other subjects. Achievement overall, therefore, is satisfactory. Pupils start from a low base of learning and few have access to computers outside of school, so that despite satisfactory achievement standards are below average in Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve well, benefiting from the help of teaching assistants and access to a good range of software designed specifically to meet their needs.
65. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are beginning to make effective use of two newly installed large screens, which enable them to demonstrate new skills clearly to the whole class. Teachers focus on extending pupils' vocabulary and provide opportunities for pupils to explain thinking; they model new techniques well, ensuring that pupils have followed each step of a process. Pupils are, consequently, beginning to develop into confident users. In a Year 2 lesson where pupils were being taught to use tools from the program 'Dazzle', pupils were not fazed when mistakes occurred, as they knew how to wipe the screen and start again. By the time pupils reach Year 6, clear teaching and a well-thought-out curriculum have

given them opportunities to incorporate sounds and images into text and to use other equipment such as a digital microscope. Pupils develop positive attitudes because of the success they experience and the enjoyment they get from working with computers.

66. The well-organised co-ordinator has developed a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject, partly as a result of a programme of lesson observations. She is comparing several systems for assessing pupils' work before choosing the one to implement and recognises that a consistent model for recording pupils' attainment throughout the school will enable her to gain a better understanding of their progress. She has already written an action plan for the subject, in which she identifies other equipment, such as a camcorder, that the school still needs to acquire. The plan provides sufficient information for an ICT governor to join in the monitoring of provision.

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

67. During the inspection, pupils were seen using information from other areas of the curriculum such as literacy and geography in the computer suite. Teachers use these sessions to link with other subjects. However, opportunities for pupils to use class-based computers to support individual aspects of their learning is underdeveloped.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History and geography**

68. It is not possible to make an overall judgement about provision as only one lesson was seen. Teachers' planning was looked at, a sample of pupils' work checked and discussions held with the subject co-ordinators. History and geography are taught through themes, with study alternating between the two subjects. Both co-ordinators check planning to ensure that the National Curriculum for both subjects is taught. In the one lesson seen teaching and learning were good because the teacher's imaginative presentation about child labour in Victorian times caught pupils' interest. In both subjects, however, pupils' poor literacy skills restrict the volume and the quality of work. The school makes good use of a museum loans service to borrow artefacts that help bring history to life.

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- RE is used to good effect to develop pupils' spiritual awareness and speaking and listening skills.
- Some of the written tasks for pupils are too restricting.

### **Commentary**

69. The curriculum for RE is well organised. Pupils study a range of other religions and have a satisfactory understanding of other faiths. Older pupils understand the relevance of RE as a guiding force as to how many people live. Pupils in Year 2 have a satisfactory knowledge of significant religious characters and festivals. These range across a suitably broad number of faiths. This element of RE is brought to life by planned visits from a Sikh leader. This helps give pupils an empathy and respect for the beliefs of others that carries forward into their personal behaviour. The school has worked hard to make up for the closure of the local church and recent links with a nearby Baptist church have ensured that pupils have some experience of visiting a place of worship.

70. Teaching strikes a good balance in using RE to develop pupils' speaking and listening and writing skills. For younger pupils especially, the emphasis given to speaking and listening works well in helping them express their views. In a well-thought-out lesson in Year 1, for example, good questioning ensured a high level of involvement as all pupils talked sensitively about the Jewish Shabbat meal. The judicious use of props helped make the experience memorable as pupils took part in a mock meal.
71. Although the growing number of opportunities for pupils to write in RE lessons represents an improvement since the last inspection, pupils are able to talk more knowledgeably about RE than their writing would suggest. Teachers meet with mixed success in using RE to develop writing skills. In Year 2, for example, much of what pupils write is copied out and is the same for all pupils, while in Year 6 pupils write on more a personal level. In exploring the concept of repentance, for instance, they wrote about what they needed to be sorry for. Such sensitive teaching uses RE well to develop pupils' spiritual awareness.
72. The RE co-ordinator is knowledgeable, has a strong commitment to RE and provides satisfactory leadership and management. However, monitoring to date has focused on how many opportunities pupils are given to write rather than on the quality of tasks teachers ask them to complete.

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

73. It was only possible to sample subjects in the following subjects and therefore no judgement can be made about overall provision in them. Only one lesson was seen, planning was looked at and discussions held with pupils.
74. In art and design, an analysis of pupils' work on display indicates that they have opportunities to develop their skills using a variety of techniques and materials. Pupils have opportunities to work in the same style as well known artists, for example Piet Mondrian and Henri Matisse. Much of the work is linked to other areas of the curriculum. Pupils in Year 1 produced a collage to show sources of light, while pupils in Year 6 use wax resist techniques to design a Sikh manta.
75. In design and technology, discussion with pupils showed that they are familiar with the whole design and technology process from the original idea through to the evaluation of the finished product. They were particularly pleased about the way their models of playground shelters had turned out. The leadership and management of the subject have been on hold for some time but a new co-ordinator has recently been appointed.
76. The music co-ordinator was absent from the school during the inspection. However, from the one lesson seen, observation of pupils in assembly and scrutiny of teachers' planning, it is evident that the subject is covered well. Pupils' singing in assembly is satisfactory.
77. In physical education it is evident that all strands of the subject are regularly taught. Pupils swim during Year 4 and most reach the National Curriculum target of 25 metres; those that do not reach this standard continue during Year 5. The school is currently introducing more opportunities for pupils to engage in inter-school matches in, for example, soccer and netball. Resources for the teaching of the subject are good.

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

78. Only one lesson was observed during the inspection and no judgement on provision can be made. Here a Year 4 class were addressing customs – in this case marriage in different cultures and beliefs. The lesson was good and pupils achieved well. This was helped by drawing on the personal knowledge pupils had from their differing backgrounds. Pupils had good knowledge of basic facts about aspects of marriage both in religious and non-religious contexts. Scrutiny of teachers' planning and discussions with staff and pupils indicate that the subject is making an effective contribution to pupils' personal, social and spiritual development.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>6</b>
Pupils' achievement	4
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<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	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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